

THEORY OF COMMUNICATION OUTLETS AND FREE EXPRESSION:

A humanocentric exploration

(Revised on July 6, 2002)

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Abstract / This essay combines the *yin-yang* complements of Chinese philosophy and the dialectic of Western philosophy to derive a humanocentric theory of communication outlets and free expression. It argues that the system of communication-outlets in most nation-states is situated between the extremes of libertarianism and authoritarianism. The meeting or clash of these two complements or antinomies at a particular point of time and space results in creating various shades of social responsibility. Cultural values determined these shades. In China, Confucianism, which provided the “middle path” of socially responsible behavior, stood between the extremes of the Daoists’ libertarian tendencies and the Legalists’ authoritarian tendencies. The essay also points out the major classical philosophies and theorists who contributed to the main concepts of the communication-outlets theory, which is applicable to all three levels of the world system: the world system as a single unit, the nation state, and the individual. Finally, the essay shows that some contemporary scholars have confused the systems of communication outlets with varying genres of journalism.

Keywords / authoritarianism, Eastern and Western philosophy, libertarianism, social responsibility, theory of communication outlets and free expression

Theory–3

[13,300 words]

This essay attempts to build a dynamic humanocentric theory of communication outlets and free expression based on concepts extracted from both Western and non-Western philosophy. Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm (1956) followed Western philosophy exclusively when they wrote the classic *Four theories of the press*. They developed a static normative theory of the press, by which they meant “all the media of mass communication” (p. 1), appropriate for their time. However, as Donohew and Palmgreen (1989) observe: “A theory comes into prominence when it is noticed and pursued by the scientific community, and it passes into history when better explanations are found” (p. 31). A theory should achieve the twin purposes of explanation and prediction¹ (Kerlinger, 1986). Moreover, as Kaplan (1964) suggests, a theory should “appear as the device for interpreting, criticizing, and unifying established laws, modifying them to fit data unanticipated in their formulation, and guiding the enterprise of discovering new and more powerful generalizations” (p. 295). This essay contends that the incorporation of established concepts and laws particularly evident in non-Western philosophy will help build a more universally applicable dynamic theory of communication outlets and free expression in comparison to the extant theories of the press.²

¹ Prediction presumes linear relations in a closed system. However, far-from-equilibrium conditions associated with interdependent open systems are prone to produce nonlinear outcomes, which defy prediction (Prigogine & Stengers, 1984). The best one could do is to estimate probabilistic outcomes.

² Hannah Arendt’s political philosophy and the critical theory of Jurgen Habermas saw the *public sphere* as a specifically political space (distinct from the state and the economy) that was home to citizen debate, deliberation, agreement, and action. A democratic political theory based on European experience, it has come under sharp attack by postmodern theorists, including Foucault, Lyotard, and Baudrillard, who question its basic presuppositions (Villa, 1992; Charney, 1998). Public/civic journalism advocates, however, trace their philosophy to the concept of the public sphere, which provides another approach to study communication-outlets vis-à-vis civil society.

Theory-4

Although Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm (1956) claimed that their book was “about the philosophical and political rationales or theories [that lay] behind the different kinds of press we have in the world today” (p. 2), their examination of those rationales or theories were vertical and separatist. Theirs was a Cold War-era typology (Braman, 2002). They drew their concepts only from Western philosophers and theorists, and yet tried to give the impression of universality to the theories they created as evident from their attempt to examine the degrees of press freedom in various non-Western countries (p. 31). Had they followed what historian Fletcher (1985) termed the horizontally integrative macrohistory approach by examining human philosophies across space and time, they would have found the concepts and laws to make their theories dynamic and more universally applicable.

To dissect the differences among the press systems [i.e., systems of communication outlets], Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm (1956) said one had to first examine the social systems in which the press [i.e., communication outlets] functioned. [The terms “press system” and “press theory” are restrictive because they tend to limit the scope and history of freedom of expression (speech) to the post-Gutenberg print press. This imparts a Eurocentric bias at the very outset. If our intent were to capture the freedom of expression available within broad social systems across time and space, better substitute terms would be “system of communication outlets” and “theories of communication outlets.”³ The term communication outlets would include all public modes of conveying news, information, and opinion at least from the first communication revolution, viz., the emergence of writing, onwards.] Furthermore, to determine the true

³ See Gunaratne (2002) for a critique of the concept of “press freedom” in current parlance.

relationship of the press to the social system, they said one had to look at certain basic beliefs and assumptions that the society held: the nature of man, the nature of society and the state, the relation of man to the state, and the nature of knowledge and truth. This meant, they argued, “in the last analysis the difference between press systems [was] one of philosophy” (p. 2). Then they fell into the Weberian trap of Eurocentrism⁴ and omitted the philosophical and political theories of the non-Western world. These pioneer mass communication gurus preceded the scholarship of the likes of Said (1978) and Amin (1989), who unraveled the distortions of Eurocentric discourse. In Amin’s view, Eurocentrism, the roots of which go back only to the 19th century Renaissance, is a systematic and important distortion “from which the majority of dominant social theories and ideologies suffer” (pp. vii-viii).

The four theories were anchored solely on Western philosophical and political theory. Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm (1956) traced the authoritarian theory to Plato (427-347 B.C.E.), Machiavelli (1469-1527), Hobbes (1588-1679), Hegel (1770-1831), and Treitschke (1834-1896). They traced the libertarian theory to Milton (1608-1674), Locke (1632-1704), [Adam] Smith (1723-1790), Paine (1737-1809), Jefferson (1743-1826), Erskine (1750-1823), and Mill (1806-1873). They traced the social responsibility theory to the Commission on Freedom of the Press. They traced the Soviet communist theory of the press to Marx (1818-1883), Lenin (1870-1924), and Stalin (1879-1953). Thus, the four theories they created to categorize the press systems of the world, not just the Western world, lacked the input of any non-Western philosophy.

⁴ Goonatilake (2001) writes: “The two grand theorists in sociology, Marx and Weber, both saw Asia as backward and static, as illustrated by Marx’s residual category, the Asiatic mode of production, and Weber’s rise of capitalism through Protestantism” (p. 5).

King (1999) says the exclusion of non-Western theory is a reflection of the frequent claim in Western philosophical literature that “philosophy began with Thales”⁵ (p. 8). Radhakrishnan (1952), however, points out that “philosophical speculations began earlier in India than in Greece” (p. 20) and that some of the earliest schools of Greek philosophy, specially the Orphic cult and the philosophy of Pythagoras (sixth century B.C.E.), show “a striking resemblance to Indian modes of thought” (p. 23). Pythagoras’ view of the transmigration of the soul—that the soul exists as an immortal entity with the body simply as its temporary home; that on the death of one body it moves to another, and that through correct behavior the soul can move on to a happier existence (Freeman, 1996, pp. 146-7)—was quite similar to that of Indian philosophy. Goonatilake (1998) highlights the resemblance between Buddhist thought and Aristotle’s doctrine of the mean, as well as Heraclitus’ belief that everything is in a state of flux (pp. 28-29). King (1999) adds that attempts to construct a linear history of [Eurocentric] philosophy are “misleading because they portray the development of Western intellectual thought in a manner [that] ‘papers over the cracks’ and avoid ruptures, heterogeneities and discontinuities of Western cultural history” (p. 9). Moreover, he says, “Philosophy has tended to function as the handmaiden of European colonial dominance” (p. 9).

Winfield. Mizuno and Beaudoin (2000) criticize the critics of the four theories as well for looking at the world from a Western perspective without examining the historical philosophies of other civilizations. They point out that in the Far East “the philosophical tenets concerning the group, the hierarchy and truth” are indirectly linked with mass

⁵ Thales of Miletus (624-546 B.C.E.) was reputedly the first to explain the world in non-mythological terms. He believed that one original substance (water) formed all other substances in the world. He described the Earth as a flat disk floating in water.

media and freedom of expression (p. 329). Similarities and differences exist between the East and the West in interpersonal communication as well. For instance, contrary to the ethnocentric Western view that rhetoric does not exist in the hierarchical Japanese society, Ishii (1992) points out common features between the five canons of Western classical rhetoric and the Agui School's principles of Buddhist preaching. On the other hand, Ishii (1988) says that in a high-context culture as Japan, "implicit nonverbal messages are of central importance" (p. 15). Therefore, "silences in communication settings are not empty and not to be filled with words, but they should be regarded as important nonverbal means of communication" (p. 4).

In the light of the preceding introduction: First, this essay will outline the socio-political philosophy and theory of the ancient civilizations of China and India⁶ to assist the uninitiated reader. Second, it will attempt to explore the elements needed to formulate a universally applicable dynamic theory of communication outlets and free expression (cf. Gunaratne, 2002), at the levels of the world system, the nation state, and the individual. The theory advanced in this essay makes no claim to be flawless. Its aim is to open up a new theoretical perspective so far overlooked by the mainstream communication scholars despite the decade-old debate on comparative communication theory (Carter, 1991; Dervin, 1991; Jacobson, 1991; Krippendorff, 1993; Pearce, 1991; Tehranian, 1991).

⁶ Bahm (1995) identifies three major historical civilizations: the Chinese, the Indian, and the European (p. 45). He draws attention to two main sets of different emphases among them. The first relates to *will*: The West idealized willfulness, India will-lessness, and China willingness. The second relates to *reason*: The West idealized definiteness, India indefiniteness, and China naturalistic analogy (p. 20). This essay attempts to capture the essence of the philosophical and political rationales of the Chinese and the Indian civilizations to the extent they relate to theories of communication outlets and free expression. Space limitations prevent the elaboration of these complex philosophies in adequate detail. Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956) have presented the angle of the European civilization but with no reference to Judaism and Islam.

Tehrani (1991) wrote: “The challenge lies in developing comparative theories that consciously avoids ... ethnocentric bias. We need to focus ... on elements that appear to be both universal and immanent in most human societies” (p. 49). Wang and Shen (2000) asserted: “If theory-building is to be successful, all human histories, experiences, philosophies, cultural traditions and values relevant to theory formulation should be given due consideration in the process” (p. 29). Braman (2002) pointed out the need “to come up with an alternative typology of media systems that is comprehensive and complex enough to be able to cope with the great variety of media systems currently in existence and emerging” (p. 401). However, Dirlik (2000) has shown that “paradigms are not just innocuous models of explanation that guide intellectual work” for they are also “expressions of social ideologies” and power (p. 126). Thus, Eurocentric power and ideology associated with the dominant typologies or paradigms have prevailed over alternative explanations.

Chinese philosophy and theory

The classical period of Chinese philosophy dawned with the Eastern Zhou dynasty’s late Spring and Autumn period (722-479 B.C.E.) and flourished during the Warring States period (479-221 B.C.E.). Commonly known as the period of the “hundred schools” of thought, it produced China’s renowned philosophers: Confucius, Mo Di (Mozi), Mencius, Laozi (?), Zhuangzi, Shang Yang, Xunzi, Sunzi, and Han Fei. They formed three main schools of thought: the Legalists (*Fa Jia*), the Confucians (*Ru Jia*), and their opposites, the Daoists (*Dao Jia*). They formed two other schools—the Mohists (*Mo Jia*), and the Naturalists (*Yin-Yang Jia*) — but they, as well as the Legalists, subsequently disappeared

into the mainstream philosophies. Scholars carved out a sixth school, the Logicians (*Ming Jia*), from among the mainstreams at a later stage.

The Legalists were the followers of Shang Yang (? - 338 B.C.E.), Shen Buhai (? - 337 B.C.E.), Shen Dao (350 - 275? B.C.E.), Han Fei (280? - 233 B.C.E.), and Li Si (? - 208 B.C.E.). Their ideas went back to those of the seventh-century B.C.E. statesman Guan Zhong, who worked to make Qi the strongest state of his time by increasing the power of the ruler. *Guanzi*, the text bearing his name, served as the earliest reference to issues such as law and order (De Bary & Bloom, 1999, p. 192). Devoted to the codification of law, the Legalists advocated an authoritarianism that came close to fascism. They were instrumental in replacing feudalism with the feudal-bureaucratic state. Rubin (1976) has shown resemblances between Legalism and Machiavellism. Both “freed the political actor from the need to observe the norms of morality and deemed all means acceptable in the struggle for power” (p. 62). However, unlike the Legalists, Machiavelli did not see despotic violence as an end in itself. The Legalists asserted that the people were a mere tool or raw material in the hands of the ruler. The Legalists’ concept of law was devoid of all moral and religious sanctions. They stressed punishment and rewards as the two handles the ruler could use “to govern effectively and achieve power and authority” (p. 66). They argued that “a dull and ignorant population [was] a source of great strength” in contrast to the Confucians’ push for education (p. 72). The Legalists represented the far “right” in political tendency while the Daoists represented the far “left.” Siebert (in Siebert, Peterson & Schramm, 1956) traced the authoritarian theory to Plato who “idealized the aristocratic form of government” (p. 12), but neglected

to mention Plato's East Asian contemporaries—Shang Yang and Shen Buhai—who expounded authoritarian views on the relation of man to the state.

Confucians were the followers of Confucius (552-479 B.C.E.), a.k.a. Kong Qiu Zhong-Ni. Mencius (c. 374-289 B.C.E.), a.k.a. Meng Ke, was one of his great followers. Xunzi (298-238? B.C.E.) was another. The Confucians propagated social justice within the framework of the feudal, or feudal bureaucratic, social order. Needham (1956) says their advocacy of freeing education from the barriers of privilege and social class was revolutionary because “it embodied some of the essential elements of modern democratic thought” (p. 7). They believed that the purpose of government was to bring about “the welfare and happiness of the whole people” through the “subtle administration of customs generally accepted as good and having the sanction of natural law” (pp.7-8). Birth, wealth or position had no necessary connection with the capacity to govern. The goal of Confucianism was “intellectual democracy” (p. 8). Government was to be paternalistic. The Confucians’ picture of nature envisaged that “man is born for uprightness” (p. 12). Mencius “developed the democratic conception that the goodwill of the people was essential in government” (p. 16). Legge (1895) quotes Mencius thus: “The people are the most important element in a nation; ... the sovereign is the lightest” (p. 483); and “Benevolence is the distinguishing characteristic of man” (p. 485). Confucians believed that knowledge was the beginning of action, and action the consummation of knowledge (Jung, 1999, p. 283). Another element of Confucianism is the doctrine of the mean (*Zhongyong*), traditionally ascribed to Zisi, the grandson of Confucius: “Let the states of equilibrium and harmony exist in perfection, and a happy order will prevail throughout heaven and earth, and all things will be nourished and flourish” (Legge, 1893,

p. 385). Rubin (1976) points out that Confucians had understood the “idea of man as a harmonious and fully developed person” long before Renaissance humanism (p. 25). Xunzi, a humanist, viewed human culture as the noblest thing in the world.⁷ Byun and Lee (2001) point out that Confucianism presents five key interrelated sets of foundational moral principles or insights collectively called “Five Constants”: *jen* or *in* (human-heartedness), *yi* or *ui* (righteousness, proper character, and a principle of rationality), *li* or *ye* (rituals and ceremonies), *zhi* or *ji* (wisdom), and *xin* or *shin* (trust). Yum (2000) has outlined the impact of Confucianism on communication patterns in East Asia. These patterns include the perception of communication as a process of infinite interpretation, the use of different linguistic codes depending on the persons involved and the situations, the emphasis on indirect communication, and receiver-centered interpretation of meaning.

Although Confucianism included numerous elements linked to the ethos of social responsibility (e.g., emphasis on knowledge and education, intellectual democracy, natural law, and moral obligations), Peterson (in Siebert, Peterson and Schramm, 1956) thought of the social responsibility theory as essentially a Western construct born out of the “intellectual climate of the twentieth century” (p. 81). This conveys the incorrect impression that the notion of social responsibility originated as a reaction to the peculiar conditions of American communication outlets in the last century. Nuyen (2001) has pointed out that Confucianism placed “a supreme value on personal freedom and autonomy” (p. 70), as well as equality, within a horizontal and vertical structure of social

⁷ The goal of Confucianism should not be confused with the misuse of the Confucian focus on harmony and cooperation by those in authority, e.g., the authoritarian-tending governments in the two Koreas and in China, particularly under Mao Zedong. In Japan, Confucianism enabled the emperor to command the intense loyalty of the people during World War II.

responsibility very similar to the Western liberal tradition.⁸ Had Peterson examined the social responsibility of communication outlets within a Confucian framework as well, he could have developed a more humanocentric theory.

Daoists were the followers of Laozi (sixth–fifth century B.C.E.) and Zhuangzi (369-286 B.C.E.). Their insight into nature was comparable to pre-Aristotelian Greek thought. They rejected the feudal society and provided the basis for Chinese science. As Rubin (1976) explains, they “looked on society as evil and called on mankind to break loose from society’s tenacious embrace, shake off the fetters of false duties and obligations, return to nature, and merge with the unsullied, simple, and genuine life of the universe” (p. 89). *Dao* meant *the way of man* (more precisely, the way of nature/universe that man should follow). Daoism, as Needham (1956) points out, was religious and poetical, as well as “strongly magical, scientific, democratic and politically revolutionary” (p. 35). Above all, the Daoists emphasized the unity of nature. They considered social “knowledge” valued by the Confucians and Legalists as rational but false. What they wished to acquire was knowledge of nature—“empirical, perhaps even liable to transcend human logic, but impersonal, universal and true” (p. 98). They opposed the feudal nobility and merchants alike, and they yearned for “some kind of primitive agrarian collectivism” (p. 100), an undifferentiated natural condition of life or pure primitive solidarity. Siebert (in Siebert, Peterson & Schramm, 1956), however, saw the libertarian theory too as essentially a modern Western construct born out of “the

⁸ Disagreement exists on the interpretation of Confucianism. Li (1999) maintains that the value systems embedded in Confucianism and democracy are incompatible. First, democracy presupposes individual rights compared to the Confucian social ideal of *jen* with the family viewed as civil society. Second, democracy emphasizes liberty whereas Confucianism emphasizes duty. Third, democracy values equality whereas Confucianism assigns unequal social roles to people. Fourth, democracy implies pluralism whereas Confucianism implies harmony and unity. However, Li argues that these two value systems can co-exist in Chinese culture as much as Buddhism and Taoism have co-existed with Confucianism for centuries.

theological doctrines of early Christianity” on “the nature of knowledge and of truth” (p. 41). The salience of Daoism to libertarian theory escaped Siebert’s mind.

The Mohists were the followers of Mo Di (c. 479-381 B.C.E.). They were chivalrous military pacifists who dabbled in scientific method. Needham (1956) says that although the earliest Mohists were interested in ethics, social life and religion, the later Mohists were more concerned with scientific logic, science and military technology (p. 166). The Mohists showed an ambiguous attitude toward feudal society. In certain places, they condemned primitive society or the state of nature, almost in anticipation of Hobbes’ description in the *Leviathan*, as a war of each against all: “In the beginning of human life ... each man had his own idea, two men had two different ideas, and ten men had ten different ideas ...; so arose mutual disapproval among men The disorder in the human life could be compared to that among birds and beasts” (Mo Di cited in Needham, p. 166). However, elsewhere they adopted an attitude similar to that of Daoists (p. 167). Overall, they were not fundamentally against feudalism as such (p. 168). They were similar to the Confucians except for “their greater interest in all that would benefit the people” (p. 168). Rubin (1976) says this concept of Mohist “utilitarianism” is comparable to that of the English philosophical school of the 18th and 19th centuries, whose main representatives were Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill (p. 35). Whereas the Confucians stressed family ties, the Mohists stressed universal love, the implementation of which they entrusted to the ruler. Thus, some consider Mo Di “the forerunner of socialism” (p. 36). One can readily see that Mohism also has much in common with the libertarian and social responsibility philosophies—a connection that escaped Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956)

The Naturalists were the followers of Zou Yan (350-270 B.C.E.), who focused on the two universal forces—*yin* and *yang*—and the five elements of which all process and all substance was composed—water, fire, wood, metal, and earth.⁹ They developed a philosophy of organic naturalism. The *yin* and the *yang* characters were connected with darkness and light respectively. Needham (1956) says the five elements were considered “five powerful forces in ever-flowing cyclical motion, and not passive motionless fundamental substances” (p. 244). Everything in the universe fitted into a fivefold arrangement in symbolic correlation associated with the five elements. Unlike the Daoists, the Naturalists “did not shun the life of courts and kings ... [because] they confidently felt themselves to be in possession of certain facts about the universe which rulers could neglect only at their peril” (pp. 234-235). The Greeks’ pre-Socratic school had also distinguished five elements—earth, fire, air, water, and the non-limited—exhibiting certain similarities and striking differences with the Chinese version (p. 246). The *yin* and *yang* moved parallel to each other, but not along the same path for they met to operate as the controller of each other. Needham says, “The implication was that the universe itself is a vast organism, with now one and now another component taking the lead—spontaneous and uncreated it is, with all the parts of it cooperating in mutual service which is perfect freedom, the larger and the smaller playing their parts according to their degree, ‘neither afore nor after other’” (pp. 288-289). The principle of the *yin-yang* complements, which demonstrates universal interconnections, provides the means

⁹ The Classic of Changes (*Yijing*) identifies the Supreme Ultimate (*Taiji*) as the source and union of the *yin* and the *yang*. The *Taiji* generates and regulates the cycle of changes between *yin-yang* and the five elements that constitute the world. The Supreme Ultimate (or Supreme Polarity) is simply the principle of highest good. The 12th-century School of Principle identified *Taiji* with *li*, the rational principle ordering creation.

to build a dynamic theory of communication outlets and free expression—a theory that can provide both explanation and probabilistic outcomes.

The Logicians, later identified as a school associated with Hui Shi (380-305? B.C.E.) and Gongsun Long (380-? B.C.E.), were comparable to the Greek Sophists. Needham (1956) sees a remarkable similarity between the Logicians' paradoxes and those in Greek history associated with Zeno of Elea. Both Mohists and Logicians, Needham says, "attempted to lay foundations upon which the world of natural sciences could have been built. Perhaps the most significant thing about them is that they show an unmistakable tendency towards dialectical rather than Aristotelian logic, expressing it in paradox and antimony, conscious of entailed contradiction and kinetic reality" (p. 199). Dialectical logic, which is common to both Eastern and Western philosophy, provides further muscle to build a dynamic theory of communication outlets and free expression.

Chinese philosophy and communication: Li (1999) asserts that the "harmony model is at the core of the Chinese culture" (p. 191) considering that most Chinese follow a multiple approach to life by following Daoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism at the same time. Thus, even though some core values of democracy may seem incompatible with Confucianism (see Footnote 8), both can coexist in harmony—an aspect most relevant to the conceptualization of social responsibility as a cultural outcome of the interaction of the two extremes of libertarianism and authoritarianism. (However, as stated earlier, Confucianism also embodied some of the essential elements of modern democratic thought.) Li compares Western and Chinese philosophy in terms of seven dimensions: being, truth, language, ethics, family, religion, and justice.

Li (1999) points out that Chinese thinking follows Zhuangzi's *contextual perspective* ontology whereas the Western world follows Aristotle's *substance* ontology that emphasizes individuality. The West, as evident in Heidegger's work, usually understands *truth* semantically whereas the Chinese understand it as a matter of being a good person, as a way of life. In the West, *language* performs a solely semantic and logical function whereas the Chinese see the social and pragmatic function of language as evident in the Confucian doctrine of "rectification of names" (p. 3). Important similarities exist between Confucian *ethics* and feminist ethics. On the issue of *family*, fundamental differences exist in relation to filial morality. In contrast to Western thinking, Confucianism states that people are "not atomistic, self-serving, rights-laden individuals coming to construct a society out of self-interest" (p. 138). As for *religion*, in contrast to Western orthodox monotheisms, the Chinese culture accepts multiple religious practices. Finally, as for *justice*, democracy as a "value system" can co-exist with Confucianism even though the two systems are not fully compatible. These seven dimensions demonstrate that a purely Western definition of "social responsibility" is inadequate to capture the meaning of that term in East Asia or in other non-Western cultures. A communication theory, therefore, must recognize different shades of social responsibility within different cultures.

Zheng (1987) has extracted six basic principles of Chinese philosophy most relevant to contemporary communication theory: the principle of part-whole interdetermination; the principle of dialectical completion of relative polarities—the *yin* and the *yang*; the principle of infinite interpretation; the principle of embodiment of reason in experience; the principle of epistemological-pragmatic unity; and the principle

Theory–17

of symbolic reference (p. 26). The theory of communication outlets and free expression developed in this essay relies heavily on the first three principles.

Hindu philosophy and theory

The origin of Hindu philosophical ideas is associated with the Vedas, a body of texts traced to some 2,000 years before Christ. Mohanty (2000) says that the Vedas provide “an exemplary spirit of inquiry into ‘the one being’ (*ekam sat*) that underlies the diversity of empirical phenomena, and into the origin of all things” (p. 1). The Upanisads, a group of texts dating from 1000 B.C.E. to the time of Buddha, gave Hindu thinking a more philosophical character with their attempt to reinterpret Vedic sacrifices and to defend one central philosophical thesis: the identity of *Brahman* (the source of all things) and *atman* (the self within each person). These ancient texts, as well as the epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, Kautilya’s *Artha-shastra*, Buddha’s *dharma*, Sukra’s *niti*, and various literary works, provide the elements constituting the Indian philosophy of state, society, and law.

Babbili (2001) states that the Hindu concepts of *dharma* (construed as duty, righteousness, customs, traditions, law, nature, justice, virtue, merit, and morality) and *ahimsa* (non-violence) form the basis of the entire superstructure of ethics in Hindu philosophy. *Dharma* takes three forms: virtues of the body—charity, helping the needy, social service; virtues of speech—truthfulness, benevolence, gentleness; and virtues of the mind—kindness, unworldliness and piety. *Ahimsa* requires absolute harmlessness and friendliness toward all beings. Mohanty (1998) adds that three basic concepts form the

cornerstone of Hindu philosophical thought: the self or soul (*atman*), works (*karma*), and salvation (*moksa*).

Sarkar (1921) points out that the Hindu theory of the state emerged from an attempt to analytically define the state from the non-state or the state of nature. The Hindu thinkers associated the state of nature with the logic of the fish, i.e., the doctrine of *matsya-nyaya*. In the non-state, people were “devouring one another like the stronger fishes preying upon the feebler,” according to the *Mahabharata*; or “the strong would devour the weak like fishes,” according to the *Manu Samhita*; or “people [would] ever devour one another like fishes,” according to *Ramayana*; or “the child, the old, the sick, the ascetic, the priest, the woman and the widow would be preyed upon [based on] the logic of the fish,” according to the *Matsya-Purana* (cited in Sarkar, 1921, p. 80). Kautilya (fourth century B.C.E.), who wrote the *Artha-shastra* (which is often compared with Sunzi’s *The art of war* and Machiavelli’s *The prince*),¹⁰ asserted that the logic of the fish prevailed in the absence of the state. Kamandaka, who wrote the *Niti-shastra* in the fourth century after Christ, also said that the logic of the fish would operate in the absence of punishment (*danda*).

Sarkar (1921) states that two “inseparable accidents” of the Hindu theory of state are the doctrine of *mamatva* or *svatva* (i.e., property), and the doctrine of *dharma* (i.e., law, justice, and duty). Lying behind these two is the doctrine of *danda* (i.e., punishment, restraint, or sanction). The Hindu philosophy of sovereignty is based on these three concepts. The absence of *danda* is tantamount to *matsya-nyaya* or the state of nature. “A

¹⁰ Gowen (1929) and Modelski (1964) have compared the work of Kautilya and Machiavelli. Gowen describes *Artha-shastra* as “the crown of all earlier Indian experiments in the exposition of political theory” (p. 178) while Modelski describes it as “the finest, fullest, and most cogently reasoned Sanskrit treatise” on the science of polity (p. 549).

state is a state because it can coerce, restrain, compel” (p. 84). Thus, the theory is based on two premises: 1. No *danda*, no state; and 2. No state, no *dharma* or property. In Hindu philosophy, the rationale for *danda* is the original nature of man as described by Kamandaka, Manu, and others. Sarkar explains, “The state is designed to correct human vices or restrain them and open up the avenues to a fuller and higher life” (p. 87).

The ruler in office is the *danda-dhara* (i.e., bearer of the torch of sovereignty). However, the ruler as a person is subject to *danda* as any other. *Danda* is a two-handed sword: It is a terror to the people and is a corrective of social abuses; it is also a most potent instrument of danger to the ruler himself. As Manu observes, *danda* would smite the king who deviated from his duty, as well as his relatives and possessions. Sarkar (1921) says herein lies “the logical check on the possible absolutism of the *danda-dhara* in the Hindu theory of sovereignty” (p. 90). In Kautilya’s view, however, the king’s authority is a matter of divine right, and no misgivings need be permitted to intrude themselves such as may weaken the ruler’s will; and he must have no scruples, even when expediency compels him to be cruel (Gowen, 1929, p. 179).

Sarkar (1918) says that every branch of Sanskrit literature provides accounts of Hindu political life and theory. The sources include some of the *Puranas* (legends), all the *Smriti-shastras* (treatises on human tradition), *Manu-samhita* (hymns of Manu), the epics *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, *Pancha-tantra*, *Raghu-vamsha*, *Hitopadesha*, *Dharma-sutras* (aphorisms on Dharma), *Dharma-shastras* (treatises on Dharma), *Artha-shastras* (treatises on material gain), *Niti-shastras* (treatises on science of polity, particularly those of Kamandaka and Shukracharyya), *Dasha-kumaracharita*, *Dhanurveda* (a treatise on warfare), and King Bhoja’s *Yukti-kalpa-taru* (requirements of

the royal court). Sarkar asserts that the Hindu state was thoroughly secular, and never theocratic because of the absence of the concept of the divine right of kings.

Dissanayake (1987) has pointed out eight guiding principles in Indian philosophy related to communication: oneness of things—the interlinking of all beings, events, and phenomena in a composite whole; intuition; transtemporality; nonindividuality; liberation (*moksha*); illusion (*maya*); idealism; and renunciation and nonattachment (p. 154). All, except the last, of these show similarities to the Chinese philosophical principles of part-whole interdetermination, (the intuition, liberation, and idealism associated with) infinite interpretation, and (the transtemporality, nonindividuality, and illusion implicit in) the dialectical completion of relative polarities.

Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956) excluded the insights of Hindu philosophy on the nature of man, the nature of society and the state, the relation of man to the state, and the nature of knowledge and truth—the beliefs and assumptions they used “to determine the true relationship of the press to the social system” (p. 2). They excluded all non-Western philosophy despite the thesis they claimed to underlie their volume: that “the press always takes on the form and coloration of the social and political structures within which it operates” (p. 1). Although they emphasized “that an understanding of these aspects of society is basic to any systematic understanding of the press” (p. 2), they developed their four theories solely based on Euro-American experience. Thus, for instance, *dharma* and *ahimsa* did not enter their construct of social responsibility; the logic of the fish failed to ring a bell despite its resemblance to Hobbes’ state of nature; and the different nuance of “sovereignty” in Hindu, as well as Buddhist, philosophy escaped them in their construct of authoritarianism. In short, they used—to borrow an

expression from Hardt (2001)—“European history as the universal mediating term, the standard through which all other histories are understood” (p. 245).

Buddhist philosophy and theory

Siddharta Gautama (c. 563-483 B.C.E.) founded Buddhism in a revolt against Brahmanism and the monarchical state, which the Hindus glorified.¹¹ Buddhists split into sects long before written records came into being. However, Needham (1956) says, all sects and schools were united on certain fundamentals, including the pre-Buddhist theory of *karma*. However, the Buddhist version of *karma* differed from that of the Upanisads “in that the happiness or misery was regarded as being based only on moral or ethical grounds, and not on whether ritual or sacrificial acts had been performed” (p. 399). The Buddhist *dharma* or doctrine is based on the Four Noble Truths: that suffering exists; that the cause of suffering is thirst, craving, or desire; that a path exists to end suffering; that the Noble Eightfold Path is the path to end suffering. Described as the “middle way,” the path comprises the following components: right views, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. The essence of the *dharma* is the chain of causation.

¹¹ Pre-Buddhist philosophers who rejected Brahmanism included Samjaya, and the *Ajivikas* led by Makkhali Gosala. Another rebel was Mahavira (599-527 B.C.E.), who founded Jainism. This essay excludes these rebel philosophies because Hindu and Buddhist philosophies have the most contemporary relevance. Mohanty (2000) lists a number of other major schools of Indian philosophy: Materialist (*Carvaka*), Analysis (*Samkhya*) and Yoga, Logic (*Nyaya*) and Atomism (*Vaisesika*), Exegesis (*Purva Mimamsa*), and *Vedanta*. (*Jainism* asserted that all truths are relative to a standpoint. *Carvaka* believed that pleasure was the only thing desirable. *Samkhya* asserted that the highest liberation was a state of aloneness brought about by discriminating knowledge. *Vaisesikas* and *Naiyayikas* believed that both truth and falsity were extrinsic to cognition. *Mimasakas* were ambivalent on existence of God, but rejected theistic arguments. *Vedanta* asserted that freedom from ignorance was possible through devotion.) Mohanty (1998) provides thumbnail sketches of these schools.

The Buddhist scriptures comprise three collections: the *suttas*, the *vinaya*, and the *abhidhamma*. The *vinaya* relates to the discipline of the monks, and the *suttas* relate to the doctrine. *Abhidhamma* relates to doctrinal matters mentioned in the *suttas* in greater depth (Dasgupta, 1922). Buddhism crystallized into the Hinayana (Lesser Vehicle) and Mahayana (Greater Vehicle) forms in the second century B.C.E. The former advocated individual progress to *arhat*-ship and attainment of *nirvana* while the latter advocated the salvation of everyone “by deliberate submission, if necessary, to a further series of rebirths, thus postponing the individual’s attainment of *nirvana*” (Needham, 1956, p. 403). In the Mahayana view, the world was full of *bodhisattvas*, and “only the effort to save others could lead to the salvation of the self” (p. 404)—a paradox that the Daoists in China readily appropriated.

Mahayana Buddhism spread in East Asia from the second to the fifth century. In China, as Needham (1956) says, Buddhism “collided with Confucian skepticism and [Daoist] selflessness” (p. 410) because “Buddhism was a profound rejection of the world, a world which, each in their different ways, both Confucianism and [Daoism] accepted” (p. 430). Dasgupta (1922) points out that Buddhism encountered several ontological problems because of its thesis that everything was impermanent, so neither cause nor effect could abide; so no part-whole relationship could exist; so no universals could exist; so no substance, apart from its attributes, could exist; and no power-possessor separate from the power could exist (p. 165). Needham finds fault with Buddhism for turning away from Nature thereby discouraging the development of science.¹² However, he

¹² Buddhism has come under criticism for turning away from society rather than from nature. On the contrary, the adherents of the Zen tradition of Mahayana Buddhism, which incorporates Daoism, are known to love nature and help people in society.

asserts that Buddhism was a great civilizing force in Central Asia, and he credits Buddhism for introducing “that element of universal compassion which neither [Daoism] nor Confucianism, rooted as they were in family-ridden Chinese society, could produce” (p. 431).

De Bary (1958) draws attention to the few definite instructions on social and political life that Buddhist literature provides. Buddhism, as evident in *Sutta Nipata*, disapproved the extremer manifestations of social inequality in the system of class and caste; it “definitely discouraged the pretensions of kings to divine or semidivine status” and tended to mitigate the autocracy of the king (p. 128). The first king, according to the *Digha Nikaya* (the Discourse of the Great Passing-away), held office by virtue of a contract with his subjects—one of the oldest versions of the contractual theory of the state. The king was merely a leader chosen by the people to restrain crime and protect property. Buddhism encouraged deciding major issues after free discussion based on the practices of the tribal republics of the Buddha’s day. (This calls into question the Eurocentric tendency to trace democracy to ancient Greece alone.) Moreover, as Goonatilake (2001) points out, personal experience and verification is central to Buddhist theory: “Buddhism is ... experiential and experimental, built on individual perception and experiences, not necessarily on another’s unverified word of his experience” (p. 16).

Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956), in developing their theories, failed to examine the rich insights of Buddhist philosophy pertaining to sovereignty, democratic ideals, individual inquiry, ethical behavior, etc., that would have enabled them to think of historical reality without the universal mediation of the history of Europe or, in the words of Chakrabarty (2001), by “provincializing Europe.”

East-West comparisons

Tu Weiming (1997) says that the Chinese thinkers, unlike their Western counterparts, were not all anthropocentric because a cosmological, as well as an anthropological, vision had inspired them (p. 3). Thus Chinese philosophy exhibited humanism—an emphasis on social relations, a strong commitment to the world, and the primacy of political order—from the very outset (p. 6). He says that the “humanistic splendor of Chinese civilization”—the Sinic worldview, cosmological thinking, benevolent despotism, and ethics—reached European intellectuals like Montesquieu, Voltaire, Quesnay, Diderot, and others through missionary reports. He adds, “Ironically, the Enlightenment mentality, especially in its nineteenth century Eurocentric incarnation, has become the most devastating disputation that the Chinese mind has ever encountered” (p. 22).

Woelfel (1987) asserts that the extent to which Eastern and Western thinking merged during the early origins is still little known. The principles of Chinese philosophy often bore a striking resemblance to the views of pre-Socratic Greek philosophers. The philosophy of Heraclitus (540? - 475? B.C.E.), whose dictum that one could not step in the same river twice epitomized the idea of endless change and restlessness, came very close to the Chinese model. Woelfel writes: “Miletus, the largest city in the Greek world and the home of Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes, was the largest commercial trading center of the Greek world and, as such, was in continuous contact with the East. Land travel to Mesopotamia was common, as was sea travel to Egypt, and there is good evidence that Thales himself traveled to Egypt at least once” (p. 300). Radhakrishnan (1952) points out that various Greek philosophers traveled to the East in quest of knowledge, e.g., Democritus (460? - 370 B.C.E.) spent a long period in Egypt and Persia;

Pythagoras traveled to Egypt; Solon (? - 559? B.C.E.) and Plato traveled extensively in the East (p. 24).

Mohanty (1998) says the problems that the Hindu philosophers raised but escaped the attention of their Western counterparts include such matters as the origin and appreciation of truth. The problems that escaped Hindu philosophers “include the question of whether knowledge arises from experience or from reason and distinctions such as that between analytic and synthetic judgments or between contingent and necessary truths” (p. 191). Thus, he argues, knowledge of both Hindu philosophy and Western philosophy is beneficial to fill the gaps.

The Hindu theory is more akin to the benevolent despotism of Confucianism though it does not agree with Mencius’ view of the “original goodness” of human nature. It agrees neither with the Daoists’ faith in primitive agrarian collectivism nor with the extreme authoritarianism of the Legalists. It has similarities with the thinking of some early modern European philosophers as well. The Hindu theory favored monarchy whereas Buddhist theory “opposed monarchy and defended a sort of republican government” (Mohanty, 2000, p. 96) because change and impermanence were central to Buddhist philosophy. Buddhism, in its two sectarian forms, promoted individualism, as well as collective responsibility. It promoted democratic ideals with its disapproval of caste and class distinctions and its propagation of universal love. Mohanty clarifies that the Hindu concept of monarchy also involved compassion; therefore, it is not comparable to the concept of sovereignty in Western political thought because in India the concept of *dharma* maintained its superiority over the sovereignty of the king.

The Hindu description of the non-state was quite similar to the description of the state of nature by European philosophers such as Hooker, Hobbes, Spinoza, and Mill in the early modern period. They conceived the state of nature as a state of the right of might, a war of all against all, an anarchy of birds and beasts, or a regime of vultures and harpies. Mo Di, the Chinese philosopher, also painted a similar picture of the non-state although the Mohists' view of the non-state was sometimes consistent with that of Daoists.

Developing universal theory

The horizontally integrative macrohistory approach enables us to see the global roots of the normative theories of communication outlets that Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956) originally developed. Although other scholars subsequently attempted to improve on the original four theories (see Asante, 1997; Lambeth, 1995), almost all such revisions also happened to come through the Eurocentric mould. Nordenstreng (1997) examines these revisions none of which has gained “the same momentum as the original *Four Theories*,” even though the latter “is already a museum piece” (p. 97).

The preceding discussion of world philosophies shows the potential for non-separatist universal theories inasmuch as human thinking developed horizontally, rather than vertically, across time and space. Radhakrishnan (1952) asserts that the “fragmentation of philosophy into different compartments has prevented the survey of philosophical problems from a truly universal point of view” (p. 26). He calls for studies that cover philosophical developments of all climes and ages.

Both Chinese and Hindu philosophy (and, depending on interpretation, Buddhist philosophy as well)¹³ share the principle of part-whole interdetermination. Mote (1989) points out that the “genuine Chinese cosmogony is that of organismic process, meaning that all parts of the entire cosmos belong to one organic whole and that they all interact as participants in one spontaneously self-generating life process” (p. 15). Oliver (1971) says that in Indian philosophy the world and all its creatures are “individual particles that possess essentially a primordial unity” so that “everything ... is actually akin to everything else” (p. 15). Thus, one can trace the roots of the dependency and world system theories of the late 20th century to Eastern philosophy as well. If the whole is more than the sum of its parts, then the analysis of the world as a single unit should precede the analysis of its atomistic units such as regions or nation states (Gunaratne, 2001a).

The principle of the dialectical completion of relative polarities (i.e., the *yin-yang* antinomy, which the Japanese adopted as the *in-yo*) offers a good starting point to derive a theory of communication outlets and free expression at the three levels of the world system: the world as a single unit, the nation state, and the individual (Gunaratne, 2002). The *yin* (conceived as earth, female, dark, positive, passive, and absconding) and *yang* (conceived as heaven, male, light, negative, active, and penetrating) are complementary universal forces. We can theorize that the far “left” and the far “right” of the socio-

¹³ King (1999) says that the predominant emphasis in Buddhist philosophy is on the reduction of “wholes” into their constituent factors (*dharmas*). Two basic Buddhist principles reflect this emphasis: 1. Wholes do not ultimately exist if they are capable of reduction into their constituent parts; 2. The whole is no more than the sum of its parts (p.118). Goonatilake (1998), on the other hand, says that the Buddhist theory of “dependent co-arising”—*paticca samuppada*—links Buddhism and systems theory, which sees the whole as greater than its constituents (pp. 228-9). Co-dependent origination occurs because of karma, the totality of both good and evil thoughts that carries the body through the cycle of rebirths. However, no permanent self exists. The Buddhist continuity across births occurs through a stream of becoming interconnected with the external environment in which it operates (pp. 236-7).

political spectrum worldwide are two such universal forces. In China, the Daoists represented the far “left,” and the Legalists represented the far “right.” The Daoists were extreme libertarians who believed in an undifferentiated natural condition of life devoid of socio-political shackles. They had faith in the nature of man in a state of nature where man could pursue the unsullied, simple, and genuine life of the universe. They did not have faith in the nature of society and the state, both of which placed fetters of false duties and obligations on man. For them social “knowledge” was false, and truth emerged only from knowledge of nature. The Legalists were extreme authoritarians or fascists who believed in subjugating the masses through codified socio-political shackles. They had little faith in the nature of man. They promoted codified law aimed primarily at punishment to bring order out of what Hobbes called the state of war with other men or what Hindu philosophy identified as *matsya-nyaya*. They believed that man was subservient to the interests of the feudal bureaucratic state, which was best served by keeping man away from knowledge and truth.

A resemblance exists between the Chinese *yin-yang* antinomy and the classical Greek thinkers’ concept of the dialectic as it evolved in Europe after the Middle Ages, particularly in the form of Hegelian thesis-antithesis dialectic. [Hegel’s dialectic, or method of reasoning, was based on the premise that every idea or concept (thesis) generated its opposite (antithesis), and the two working against each other produced a new concept (synthesis). He believed that world history followed this triad.]¹⁴ The *yin*

¹⁴ The dialectical method had its origins in Stoic philosophy, a product of Greek and Oriental thought, traced to Zeno (c. 333-261 B.C.E.). Stoicism viewed the world as a changing conflagration limited and ordered by the creative force of *logos* (world-reason). Jaspers (1981/1993), however, identifies Heraclitus as “the most ancient philosopher of dialectical thought,” and Plato as “the originator of dialectic as method” (p. 287). Murti (in Radhakrishnan, 1952, p. 204) points out that dialectic is also the soul of Madhyamika system of Buddhist thought systematized by Nagarjuna in the second century. Dilworth (1989) credits Hegel for tracing “the movement of philosophy from East to West, for reasons connected with the

and *yang* traveled along parallel but separate paths acting as a control mechanism on each other at their meeting point. Similarly, in Hegelian terms, the clash of the thesis and antithesis produced a synthesis in a continuing cycle of the dialectic. Both approaches lead us to conclude that the interaction of two complements (*yin-yang*) or opposites (thesis-antithesis) generates a less extremist conjunction, which we may compare with the Buddhist notion of the “middle path.”¹⁵ In China, Confucianism (*Ru Jia*)—a conservative stabilizing force associated with benevolent despotism—represented the “middle path” between Daoism (*Dao Jia*) and Legalism (*Fa Jia*). In the West, the social responsibility concept represented the “middle path” between the extremes of libertarianism and authoritarianism. Thus, these comparable philosophical concepts of the West and the East enable us to construct a humanocentric theory of communication outlets and free expression.

The concept of impermanence (*anicca*) in Buddhist philosophy—that everything is in a state of flux—enables us to grasp the constantly changing nature of the world system. The center-periphery structure keeps on changing just like every element in the unfathomable universe. Theories we develop to explain phenomena are also impermanent. It follows that the applicability of those theories to the whole and its component units also is impermanent. The meeting of the complementary forces of the

dialectical movement of his thought,” and for Hegel’s enlarged vision reflecting “reconstructive classicism” (p. 4). Ironically, as Jung (1999) points out, Hegel was a totalizing Eurocentric who displaced Oriental philosophy “in the marginalized periphery of truth” (p. 287).

¹⁵ Strictly speaking, the last of the Four Noble Truths, viz., adherence to the Noble Eightfold Path, represents the Hinayana Buddhist notion of the “middle path.” In a practical sense, it also implies avoidance of the extremes. However, as Hoffmann (1978) points out, Nagarjuna’s Madhyamika (middle doctrine) School, which furnished the philosophical background of Zen Buddhism, viewed the nature of everything as a mystery: It was neither *atman* (being) nor *anatman* (non-being or becoming) nor a synthesis of both but *sunya* (emptiness or void). According to Nagarjuna’s dialectic, experience was a succession of interrelated momentary states (p. 276). According to Hegel’s dialectic, the synthesis of *atman* and *anatman* is not only possible but also necessary (p. 288).

yin and *yang* will produce different effects on the whole and its component parts over time and space. The hermeneutics relating to such effects are congruent with the principle of infinite interpretation in Chinese philosophy and the guiding principles of illusion and intuition in Indian philosophy. Thus, categorizing nation states as authoritarian or libertarian fails to accommodate the reality of impermanence. In reality, all we can theorize is about authoritarian or libertarian tendencies at a given juncture of time and space.

Saher (1970) points out that in Western philosophy an idea is *not accepted* unless proved to be correct. What is *not proved* is to be treated as false. In Eastern philosophy an idea is *not rejected* unless proved to be false. What is *not proved* may be accepted as true until proved to be false (pp. 204-205). Thus, scholars should adopt a degree of flexibility in developing a humanocentric theory of communication outlets and freedom of expression. Applying a modicum of flexibility, we can merge Western and Eastern philosophical concepts and derive the propositions that at a given juncture:

- ? At the level of the world system (as a single unit), the system of communication outlets lies somewhere between the tendencies toward extreme libertarianism and extreme authoritarianism.
- ? At the level of each component unit (or nation state) of the world system, the system of communication outlets lies somewhere between the tendencies toward extreme libertarianism and extreme authoritarianism.
- ? At the level of the individual, the extent of freedom of expression within the world system or its component units also mostly lies somewhere between the tendencies toward extreme libertarianism and extreme authoritarianism.

? Culturally defined systems of social responsibility—reflecting Gautama’s “middle path,” the Confucian “doctrine of the mean,” Aristotle’s “pursuit of the mean,” or Hegel’s “synthesis”—predominate the center of the libertarianism-authoritarianism continuum at all three levels each taking the form of a (probable) normal distribution when the antinomy interacts in harmony.

In the above propositions, the term “system of communication outlets” is an expanded substitute for the traditional term “press system.” It encompasses all forms of public communication transmitted through methods appropriate to each stage of historical progress—methods technically identified today as hard copy, airwaves, cables, and cyberspace.¹⁶ The “spread of printing in the western world” is the starting point of the four theories (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956, p. 9). A theory of communication outlets and free expression cannot be confined to the post-Gutenberg period. Block printing was widespread in the East for centuries before Gutenberg (Gunaratne, 2001b). The world system is the center-periphery structure of nation-states or clusters thereof reflecting their economic, political, cultural, military, and communication power relationships. The communication outlets at the world system level refer to those outlets concerned with transmitting information to reach audiences across geographical boundaries. The communication outlets at the nation-state level refer to those outlets concerned with transmitting information for domestic consumption. Individual freedom of expression at the world system or nation state level refers to the extent to which a person can reap the benefits recognized in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of

¹⁶ Thus, it takes into account the pre-Gutenberg communication outlets such as *Acta Diurna*, which appeared in 59 BCE when Julius Caesar led the Roman republic; and *Di/Jing Bao* distributed in China from 618 to 1911.

Human Rights: “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.” Authoritarianism and libertarianism refer to the theoretical characteristics that Siebert attached to those concepts but suitably modified to include the contributions of non-Western philosophy and philosophers.

Thus the authoritarian theory must concede the different interpretations of “sovereignty” in Eastern philosophy, particularly in the light of Siebert’s assertion that the authoritarian theory “has been the basic doctrine for large areas of the globe ... consciously or unconsciously adopted in modern times by ... diverse national units” (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956, p. 9). The authoritarian theory, Siebert says, grew out of the philosophy of absolute power of monarch, his government, or both—a philosophy reflected in the divine right of kings, which is largely discredited in Oriental thought. On the other hand, although Siebert points out that a basic assumption of the authoritarian theory is that “the group took on an importance greater than that of the individual since only through the group could an individual accomplish his purposes” (p. 11), he fails to show its connection to Oriental thought.

The libertarian theory must concede that market-dependent privately owned communication outlets alone do not represent the fullest freedom of expression. Siebert says the chief purpose of the libertarian communication outlets is to inform, entertain, and sell while helping to discover truth and acting as a check on government. According to Siebert’s formulation of the libertarian theory, the “sales or advertising function” (p. 51) is what assures financial independence of communication outlets—a condition that

reflects a Eurocentric capitalist bias. Cannot publicly funded communication outlets (e.g., non-commercial broadcasting operated by independent bodies) fit equally well into libertarianism?

Before exploring the range of “middle path” (or social responsibility) systems, one should acknowledge the contribution of both East and West to the development of the main theoretical concepts of authoritarianism and libertarianism. Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956) have identified only the Western contributors to these two theories. As principal contributors to the authoritarian theory, we can add the *Fa Jia* (Legalist) advocates Shang Yang, Shen Bu-hai, and Shen Dao; Sunzi, who wrote “The art of war”; and Kautilya, the so-called “Indian Machiavelli” (although it is far more accurate to identify Machiavelli as the “Italian Kautilya”). The paradox is that even though the West appears to see the East as the more authoritarian, Eastern philosophy overall reflects a high degree of humanism and universal love. As principal contributors to the libertarian theory, we can also add the *Dao Jia* and its leaders Laozi and Zhuangzi; and Gautama, the founder of Buddhism. The Daoists were extreme libertarians who wanted no social shackles. Gautama, a moderate libertarian, preferred republican government to monarchy thereby sowing the seeds of democracy (Figure 1).

Our theory leads us to speculate that the harmonious interaction of the *yin-yang* complements or the operation of the principle of the dialectic would produce a communication-outlet system closely resembling varying shades of culturally defined social responsibility as the (probable) norm of the world system and its component units. (The non-harmonious interaction of the *yin-yang* complements could result in a dynamic

“disequilibrium”¹⁷—a positively or negatively skewed distribution leaning toward libertarianism or authoritarianism.) So conceptualized, we can trace the roots of the social responsibility theory to Confucius, as well as to Hindu philosophy. Confucianism upheld that man was born for uprightness, and that people’s goodwill was essential to good government in the context of an intellectual democracy headed by a benevolent ruler. Mote (1989) says that Confucianism was characterized by “its strong ethical sense, its *social responsibility*, and its constructive, rational approach to immediate problems” (p. 31). Mohists represented a shade of social responsibility somewhat to the left of Confucianism. The Naturalists, who saw “perfect freedom” in the harmony of the social organism, also reflected another shade of social responsibility. Hindu philosophy appears to agree with the social responsibility concept somewhat to the right of Confucianism. Hinduism’s association with the caste system contrasts with Confucianism’s advocacy of education for all and demolition of social barriers. However, Hinduism’s doctrine of *dharma* and *danda* discouraged authoritarianism in favor of a benevolent monarchy reflecting democratic ideals. Hindu theory of sovereignty was not the same as the Western theory of sovereignty.

To summarize succinctly what we have derived:

- ? The humanocentric theory of communication-outlets and free expression derived from merging the principle of the *yin-yang* complements of Eastern philosophy with the principle of the dialectic of Western philosophy is a deceptively simple model comprising four broad elements.

¹⁷ I use the term “disequilibrium” in the functional sense associated with traditional sociology rather than in the sense associated with the Second Law of Thermodynamics (see Prigogine & Stengers, 1984). In the thermodynamic sense, elements in equilibria become inactive because of energy loss or entropy.

- ? In empirical terms, these four elements comprise two theoretically independent variables (libertarianism and authoritarianism), an intervening variable (cultural values), and a dependent variable (social responsibility).
- ? Social responsibility, the dependent variable, comes up in various shades because of cultural values, the intervening variable.
- ? Libertarianism and authoritarianism occupy the two tails of the (probable) normal distribution of systems of communication outlets and free expression. Social responsibility (the “middle path”) takes the middle position with its various shades moving toward the two tails (Figure 2). As noted already, disharmonious interaction of the yin-yang complements could result in a dynamic “disequilibrium”—a skewed distribution.
- ? This model is applicable to all three levels of the world system: the world system itself, the nation-state, and the individual.

It should be clear that the principle of the *yin-yang* complements has more explanatory power than the Hegelian dialectic because it allows for dynamic “disequilibria” or fluctuations. As Zheng (1987) explains, everything in reality is not only regarded as generated from the interactions between *yin* and *yang* forces but everything is composed of these two forces. In this sense, Zheng says, everything is a synthetic unity of *yin* and *yang* in various stages of their functioning, and this dialectical change of things forces us to understand them realistically.

Change relativizes the standards of evaluation, because it generates new interests, new relationships, and new values. ... [B]ut one must bear in mind the distinction between relativization in an absolute sense and relativization in a relative sense.

In an absolute sense, relativization is the essential principle for the change and transformation of a thing and a situation. [R]elativization in a relative sense consists in seeing and placing things in a different light and at different angles without necessarily requiring a change in time. (Zheng, 1987, pp. 34-35)

One cannot prove the *yin-yang* interaction itself with the Western empirical method of data collection. The empirical method cannot also prove the existence of God. Chinese philosophy established the *yin-yang* phenomenon with the Supreme Ultimate (*Taiji*), the principle of highest good, as its source and regulator. In this sense, the metaphysical operation of this phenomenon is very similar to that of the Buddhist concept of *karma* in the samsaric cycle.

Statistical theory justifies the presumption of a (probable) normal distribution of an unknown universe. Because the parameters of the universe of communication outlets are not known, we have to make estimates by sampling the universe. The means of random samples, if drawn repeatedly, will form a normal distribution. Until empirical research proves otherwise, we are justified in presuming that the harmonious interaction of the *yin-yang* complements generates a (probable) normal distribution of communication outlets.

Discussion and Conclusions

Western scholars (e.g., Hachten, 2001) who associate libertarianism and social responsibility as Western constructs do so by using vertically separatist Euro-American history to extrapolate to the entire world. Other scholars who attempt to create new theories of communication-outlets (e.g., developmental, public/civic, revolutionary,

democratic socialist, and so on)¹⁸ are merely describing various shades of social responsibility determined by cultural factors at a particular juncture of time and space. These shades of social responsibility are mostly temporary phenomena (as evident in the evanescent communist formulation) in comparison to the characteristics of the two theoretical systems constituting the tails of the normal distribution of systems of communication outlets and free expression. Gunaratne (1998) has shown the close connections of developmental and public journalism with the social responsibility theory.

Hachten (2001) discusses the theory and values of freedom of the press [communication outlets] solely in terms of the Euro-American experience. The centerpiece of his discussion is the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and the constitutional law derived therefrom. His definition of freedom of the press is “the right of the press [communication outlets] to report, to comment on, and to criticize its own government without retaliation or threat from that authority” (p. 31). (This definition, however, emphasizes the nation-state level while ignoring the world system level, where governments themselves, together with transnational media conglomerates, dominate the operation of communication outlets. Is the Voice of America, for instance, free to criticize the U.S. government?) Furthermore, he says that in U.S. law “free speech and free press are identical rights” (p. 31) and that “freedom of the press is an individual right, we are all protected by it” (p. 33). (Freedom of the press was conceived as an individual right in the late 18th century when anyone could start a printing press to extend his or her freedom of speech. In the contemporary world, not everyone has equal access

¹⁸ Asante (1997) provides a summary of the improvements to the “four theories” that various scholars have suggested (pp. 16-21).

to the mainstream press. Hence the importance of the individual level in the world system paradigm.)

Hachten (2001) celebrates the triumph of Western journalism after the fall of communism. He claims, “Non-Western nations have adopted not only the gadgets and equipment of the U.S. press and broadcasting but also its practices, norms, ethical standards, and ideology” (p. 18). On the other hand, Sussman (2000) paints a grim picture of global press freedom. He refers to Freedom House’s January 2000 press freedom survey, according to which “nearly two-thirds of countries (63 percent) restrict print and electronic journalism. Some 80 percent of the world’s people live in nations with less than a free press” (p. 1). The January 2001 survey shows only a 1 percent reduction of each of these two figures. The Freedom House surveys, despite the inadequate criteria used to measure freedom of communication outlets and free expression (Gunaratne, 2002),¹⁹ help support the notion of (a probable) normal distribution of communication-outlets systems adumbrated in this essay. Countries reflecting libertarian tendencies, constituting 11 percent of the total (21 out of 187) with the minimum scores of 1-15, are in the left tail of the distributional curve²⁰. Countries reflecting authoritarian tendencies, constituting 13 percent of the total (24 out of 187) with the maximum scores of 76-100,

¹⁹ Freedom House uses four criteria for measuring press freedom in each country: laws and regulations that influence media content; political pressures and controls on media content; economic influences over media content; and repressive actions (killing journalists, physical violence, censorship, self-censorship, arrests, etc.).

²⁰ These countries are Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Jamaica, Luxembourg, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, St. Lucia, Sweden, Switzerland, and United States.

are in the right tail.²¹ The other countries more or less follow the pattern of the normal distribution foreshadowed in our theory. These countries reflect three main shades of social responsibility if we equate Freedom House's "partly free" countries (SR2), constituting 28 percent (53 out of 187) of the total, with the world's most prevalent shade of social responsibility (Figure 3).

Figure 4 shows the fit of the normal curve to a histogram of the average press-freedom scores assigned to each country by Freedom House during the eight-year period 1994-2001. Figure 5 presents the results of the Anderson-Darling Normality Test relating to the same data. The test is statistically significant with $p < .01$. The mean score (46.7) and the median score (47.8) lie close to each other denoting the "middle-path" or partly free press. The distribution is both positively and negatively skewed, a deviation from the presumed normality apparently resulting from Freedom House's tendency (a) to de-emphasize the effect of institutional conventions and economic considerations on information dissemination in the libertarian-tending countries, and (b) to ignore the degree of accessibility of exogenous communication-outlets in the authoritarian-tending countries (Gunaratne, 2002).

Merrill, Glade and Blevens (2001) have advanced the thesis that the press [communication-outlets] in the world, as well as in the United States, is losing its freedom and its institutional importance. They add, "However, a corollary thesis is that with the loss of this freedom, the 21st century will see more social order and harmony and a more cooperative and a citizen-based press" (p. xvii). They see the 18th century Enlightenment liberalism giving way to the Eastern philosophy of harmony and

²¹ These countries are Afghanistan, Angola, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bhutan, Burundi, China, Congo (Kinshasa), Cote d'Ivoire, Cuba, Equatorial Guinea, Iraq, Korea (North), Libya, Myanmar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Swaziland, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam.

cooperation. They are referring to the rise of communitarianism and its sub-genre public or civic journalism. Thus they take the opposite view to that of Hachten and other “optimistic libertarian individualists” (p. xvii) when they foreshadow the reassertion of the spirit of communitarianism “that had hung around the periphery at least since the days of Plato and Confucius” (p. xxi).

The authors mentioned in the preceding paragraphs —Hachten, as well as Merrill, Gade and Blevens—have to varying degrees confused the systems of communication outlets with various genres of journalism—developmental, public/civic, and so on. Our humanocentric theory helps us see broad variations of “middle-path” systems of communication outlets and free expression (SR1, SR2, SR3, etc.) situated between the extremes of libertarianism and authoritarianism. They are the outcomes of cultural values in a world undergoing constant change. Winfield, Mizuno and Beaudoin (2000) clarify that “the characteristics of a country’s media depend on the culture in which they operate” (p. 323). It is not scholarship but ethnocentrism to identify the positive and the freer as Western and the obverse as non-Western. Our analysis of Eastern philosophy finds no basis for such denigration.

Our theory is three-dimensional. It enables us to analyze the freedom of communication outlets and expression at all three levels of the world system using the same definition of freedom (Gunaratne, 2002, has argued the need for such a three-dimensional theory). If freedom from government interference is an essential element of freedom of communication outlets at the nation-state level, then that element is essential for determining freedom at the world system level as well. Then, considering the extent to which government-funded organizations are engaged in international broadcasting

alone, coupled with the extent to which transnational corporations dominate the global communication outlets, one can attempt to fathom (and wonder about) the extent of freedom of communication outlets at the world system level. On the other hand, the very fact that such global communication outlets can reach people in nations where restrictions exist on domestic communication outlets makes those people freer at the individual level.

Finally, how exactly does the proposed theory of communication outlets and free expression differ from the four theories of the press? The former is dynamic, explanatory, and “predictive” (see Footnote 1); the latter is static, descriptive, and normative. The proposed theory shows the continuous interaction of the two complements or antonyms—authoritarianism and libertarianism—to produce varying shades of social responsibility determined by cultural values across time and space. It views social responsibility in non-ideological terms—not as an extension of libertarianism but as an outcome of cultural factors shared by communities comprising the world system. Applying the principle of infinite interpretation, it looks at Peterson’s “social responsibility theory” and Schramm’s “Soviet communist theory” merely as descriptions of two of the several possible shades of social responsibility. It has a humanocentric emphasis whereas the four theories have a Eurocentric emphasis. The proposed formulation also tends to meet Kaplan’s (1964) criteria for theory: it interprets and unifies established “laws” (viz., the principle of the yin-yang complements, and the principle of the dialectic), it modifies the existing theories to fit data unanticipated in their formulation (viz., the distribution of press freedom scores), and it guides in discovering new and more powerful generalizations. Our formulation, however, needs further refinement to allow for nonlinear outcomes associated with bifurcation points in interdependent open systems.

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**Figure 1. Theories of communication outlets
(with supporting philosophies and philosophers)**

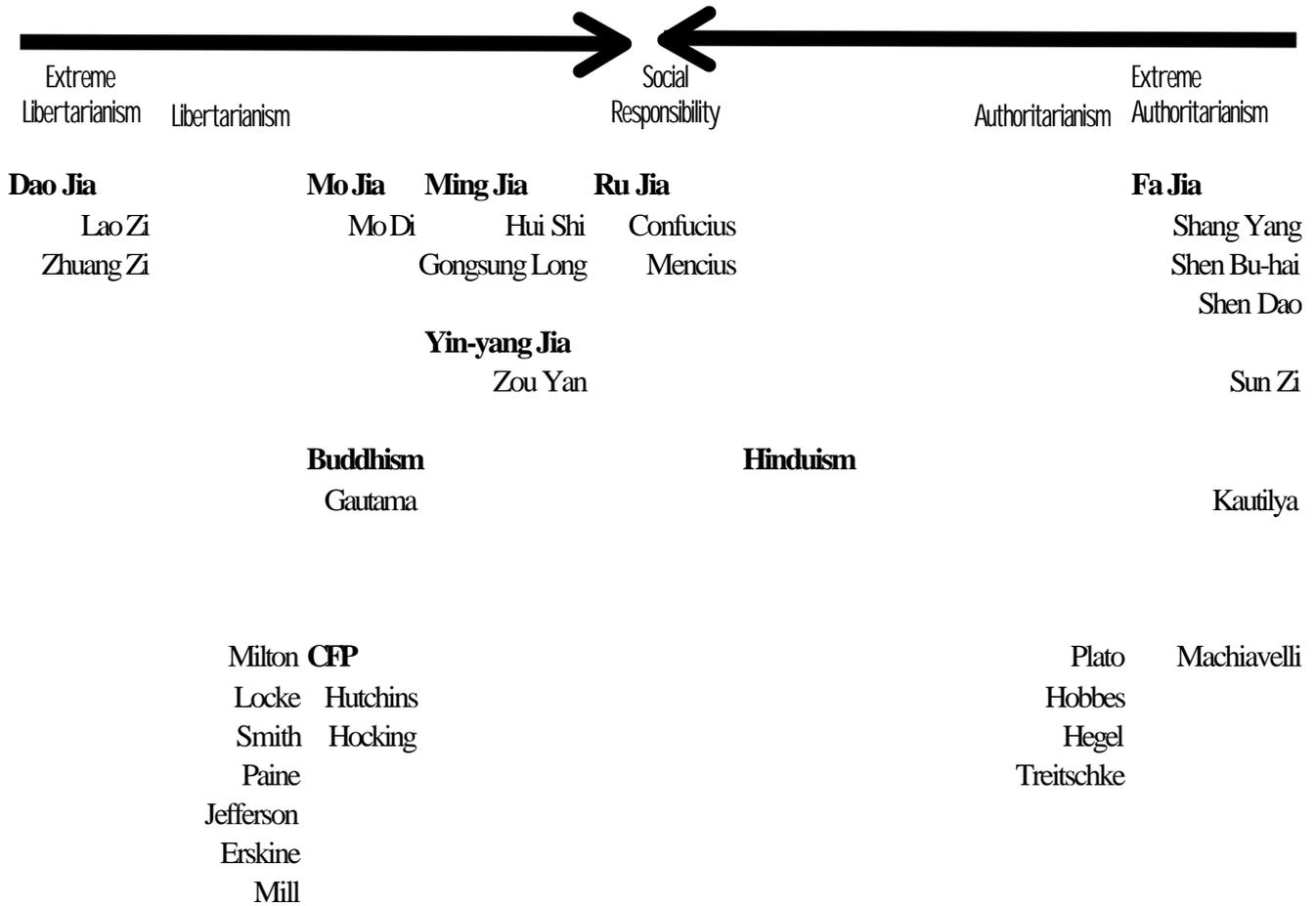


Figure 2. Probable theoretical distribution of systems of communication-outlets

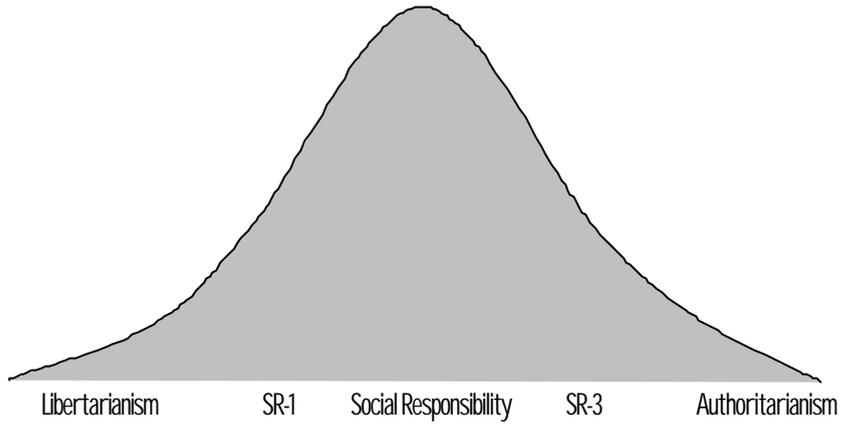


Figure 3. Distribution of countries based on freedom of communication-outlets (N=187)

