

Wolf Rainer Wendt

# The order of the world in house and state

Governing Social Life in a  
West-Eastern Comparison



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# Introduction

# 1

Set we find the human existence everywhere in the world in domestic and state structures, however differently they may be named, composed and experienced. *House*, *state* and *world* form the spheres in which we actually reside. These structures have developed since the beginnings of human civilization – in culturally different forms. Comparing the guidelines of European-Occidental and East-Asian thinking and acting, fundamental concepts belong to them, which are significant for governing the world, for individual conduct of life and for the humane and ecologically justifiable shaping of existence in the present and in the future. In the interest of a discursive understanding of sustainable, life-serving orders in the face of global challenges, these concepts will be explored.

In the spheres of the home, the state and the human world, institutional order exists and order is produced in them. Within each realm, actors who bear responsibility in the home or state and for themselves make their decisions. With them, dispositions of their conduct of life arise for each person and for those acting collectively. Through them, new dispositions are made in the narrower circles of a household, while in the wider circles and infrastructures of a state-organized community, existence is shaped externally and its circumstances and conditions are regulated the levels across.

The structures in which events in the home and state actually take place change over time. However, their basic patterns have always been proven. In a fluid reality, in times of accelerated change, in the uncertainty and crisis associated with processes of globalization and digitalization, an institutional framework will provide stability, and it is worthwhile to reassure ourselves of this framework now and for the future. It is present in the relational context formed in home and state, in which common life is lived and the processes that it is embedded are controlled. The

institution of the domestic sphere, usually called the home, is hereafter generally referred to by the term *house*.

The way in which the institutions of *house* and *state* have grown historically in the *world* and currently present themselves, they are subject to a global system competition in their economic and political performance. In this competition, the extent to which one or the other way of shaping existence is sustainable can be discussed in an exchange about alternatives of development in a comparative discussion. This is an ecological question. How was and how is common life organized and managed? Does order counteract any disorder? On what grounds and with what success do ways of governing justify themselves in the narrow space of common existence, locally and globally? Do they do justice to the contexts of life in the world and their preservation?

These ecological and at the same time ethical questions are to be pursued in the present treatise on political philosophy in the past and present in a West-East comparison. The closer object is the existence-forming order of house and state in the world – not each for itself, but in relation to each other.

House, state and world represent ecological units for those acting in them, which are open to each other, but also prescribe their dispositions to each other. House and state are, in a sense, nested within each other in the world. In the world we live and reside in a mode of domesticity and its order; the state appears in the figurative sense in the order of a house to which we belong, and a house can be run like a small state in the arrangement of togetherness and regarded as the ordered world closest to us. *House, state, and the common world ground each other*. On the basis of this assumption, which will be explained in more detail in the following, it will be studied how life can be led in a way that is just to the world (just to our own fellow world and to the environment), what form the world takes as the dwelling place of human beings, how it can be preserved in a sustainable way for a humane existence, and how state action can be carried out in a way that is “just to the house” and “just to the world”.

Domesticity and statehood are shaped differently around the world, depending on the level of development, but are always necessary to keep coexistence in order, to civilize it, to support and secure it, and to give it permanence. This happens in many ways. In the structures named house and state and in their connection, private and public affairs penetrate each other, integration is achieved, supply comes about, economic, social and civil action has its framework, responsibility is taken, awareness of nature and the environment is appropriate and economic events can be controlled. In these respects, the structuring of life and procedures in the general change that is taking place worldwide is of particular importance: they must prove their worth in the face of demographic developments, digitalisation, urbanisation and ecological damage to nature. Guided by an interest in the success of societal order and control in the face of global problems, an intercultural comparison of



those structures in East and West and their functional performance from time immemorial and today may contribute to the discussion of their current state and their further development.

The acceleration of modern life, which brings change everywhere, makes us neglect the substance of social structures, which are brought here and do not disappear in change. They are maintained, but seem to be left behind in the advancing process of innovation and to become insignificant in relation to it, to be only the traditional to which we are no longer attached or which is no longer needed. In what substantially constitutes domesticity and statehood, the supporting elements of our coexistence and the standards of getting along in the world are at least present, as they are actually shaped and questioned in the political and social discussion.

In today's traffic, people are virtually and actually mobile everywhere. Human existence, individual and communal, seems unbound and less and less with solid ground under its feet, but it needs its place and space. The substance in which human being finds its ground and support is not found in its happening, but in a formed participation in the world as a space of reference and action. It is the ecological framework for locally and globally oriented action. This frame of reference provides – socially, economically and politically – the structures to which individual and collective existence can adhere, to which it can orient itself and to which it can also work itself off. These are social realities. But the reference to them does not already mark the field in which we existentially move. In social events, the field changes its conditions as they emerge socially, but they do not abolish the field.

Normatively and factually, we live in the world in which we dwell in and are at home, in quite clear and orderly circumstances, but in many respects also disorderly without or with the endeavour to get things right. Opposite to the personal view of them there are institutions which stand up for an order that is needed in house and world and the extended occurrences in it. The order may be as variously constituted as the terms of the household, of the state, and of the nearer and wider world bear no fixed meaning, but denote changing facts. They are *socially* considered, criticized, dealt with, processed, and in such ways sought to be dealt with. The social scene encompasses the facts and their problems in the world in which we live and generates forms in which and with which one comes to terms with the facts and their problems.

On closer inspection of what the social signifies, however, and in penetrating its meaning, it loses itself in uncertainty. However much and however variously action is taken in a way that is called social, the social, where it is or is supposed to be solid and not merely a feeling, always resorts to and builds on circumstances that do not themselves come about and are maintained in such a way. The social, as will

be discussed, has no substance of its own. The supporting structures and the ordering framework given with them, in which social action takes place, are of a different kind. They are shaped and used in an extended way, namely in and between what is generally and in variable interpretation designated by the terms domestic system and state system – their further definition reserved.

On the realized order of personal and common life and political coexistence depends how it can succeed sustainably for all involved. Order has the ethical sense of determining our behaviour. For this, the individual human being is dependent on the institutions in which he lives or to which he belongs and in which he participates. He moves in institutions which, with their structures, indicate the scope of his actions. At the same time, they provide orders – the order of the house, the state and the world as we have shaped and experience them. The relationship of these orders to one another – how they are managed and how they are governed – will be the subject of the remarks in this book.

That in our language house and world can be metaphors for each other – the house in which we live, as our world, and the world in which we are at home and have established ourselves, refers man to the lived space of his existence. It is necessary to shape and maintain that space for common sustenance. With it is given a communal task that transcends the actions of the individual. At the same time, this task in the community claims its individual members and sets conditions of individual existence with the regiment of the execution of this task.

Households are maintained and governed in narrow circles of life and in large contexts. In a global comparison, there are competing forms and modes in which communal existence is traditionally and continuously developed, and there is an interest in recognizing the viability and sustainability of the modalities found. An ecological investigation of how social life can be arranged in the closer togetherness, in the governance of a larger community, and in a global context allows for a conditional analysis and promises to unlock the factors and potencies of success. The construction of a continuous order is in demand in times of accelerated change and also in view of the independent operation of functionally differentiated systems, which follow their own logic in the economy, law, administration and social provision.

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## 1.1 Cultures of Designing Existence and Their Ecology

For the comparison to be made in this book between Occidental and East Asian patterns of thought and action, a *basic structure* should be assumed that is present from the past and continuously and interculturality in the field of social and political

existence. It can be understood in terms of conceptual history by recourse to early and constant normative orientations that were conceived in the advanced cultures of antiquity. Karl Jaspers has spoken of the *Axis Period* between 800 and 200 B.C.: “In this age the basic categories were brought forth in which we still think today” (Jaspers, 1949, p. 21; cf. Eisenstadt, 1986). From the Pre-Socratics to the Stoa, this period extends in Greece, marked in it since Solon (c. 640–560 BC), with Attic democracy and in the work of Aristotle (384–322 BC). In China, it is particularly the later phase of the Zhou dynasty and period of the “Warring States” from about 475 to 221 BC, in which normative integration across the quarrel was desirable and was achieved by the schools of thought of Confucius (551–479 BC) and subsequently Mozi (470–391 BC), Menzi (372–289 BC), Xunzi (c. 313–238 BC) and Han Feizi (c. 280–233 BC). The fact that the understanding of the constitutive terms and their real-life equivalents has changed again and again over time and with the references of thought and culture does not diminish their importance as a frame of reference. The historical context is and will continue to be the present context of what comes about mentally and in reality.

As it has been considered early and again and again, the outer basic structure of human life extends in the domestic-family form of togetherness, in the political space and in the experience of a world as it is subjectively encountered in one’s own circles of life and as it is objectively found in the global horizon. In which world do we live or in which world do we want to live? The individual human being may question his needs and he may be helped with the mass offer of goods of consumption. But this does not give the individual space to develop, nor the extended sense of belonging in which he can be engaged with himself and others. A person alone would be lost without the commonality of life that the home, state, and world provide. However they appear, they are the constructions whose origins, preservation, and future are to be reflected in the ecological interest of the human being.

The present study is devoted to the categorial concepts and historically evolved formats and institutions of the household, the statehood and, in between, the essence of the social. It addresses interpenetrating spheres of action with their dimensions of meaning – of householding, of political participation, and of universal value-settings. To put it succinctly: *House* stands for doing economy, *state* for governance and *world* for an ethos oriented towards an order of our existence. The dimensions of meaning are constitutive for a common way of life and its structuring; they overlap inasmuch as global (sustainable) householding is necessary, one has to keep house in the community and keep house in personal life. The connection exists insofar as the conduct of life is also to be understood politically, has already communicated globally, and insofar as the state system can be delimited and demarcated less and less externally and internally.

The subject matter under consideration is basically an *ecology* of the social shaping of existence. *Ecological* here means thinking in terms of the contexts of life in which existence, the *Dasein*, is disclosed and is integrated, in which it is maintained, has its history, derives its meaning and its ethos. The contexts exist spatially and temporally, and above all in the processes in which they are constantly produced, reproduced and modified.

Human beings are at home in the world, which is also the space of nature and of human life possibilities. In this and between the immediate personal circles of life and the globality of all, the regulation and control of the common shaping of existence takes place on several levels and in the interpenetration of many spheres. Its ethos is directed towards the preservation of the foundations of life, towards well-being and sustainability. The fulfilment of tasks thus set is the responsibility of individuals and corporate actors at the levels of their respective competence in the circles of life and action drawn around them. Which institutions of overarching management of the business of human coexistence and the accomplishment of tasks within it are given and function in an interculturably comparable manner? What is also discussed with this question is an ecology of the social itself, how it is embedded and networked, and how it is set up in the domains of the home, the state and the world. For it is in these that the social has its place. As a fact, but without a fixed aggregate state, it resides in the world, in the state and in the house. There, with all the uncertainty about the condition in which the social is present, it may be searched for.

The social can be said to have a domestic frame of reference, a communal and political frame of reference, and a frame of reference perceived in the certain or uncertain order (i.e. cosmos) of the whole occurrence. They are frames of reference of practical action in its respective environment. For theory, they are conceptual frames of reference. In them, research can be conducted into the connection between (social) lifestyle, (social) economy and (social) politics. “Social” is in brackets here because it only acquires its meaning in the topological context under investigation. Institutions that are usually subsumed in the concept of social institutions will be dealt with. The attribution of “social” implies a property with which the institutions are not inherently afflicted. They have acquired this character in societal discourse – and since then it has been attributed to them in scientific and political reflection.

The existence of people has its space and time. On the individual level, personal life, as it is extended in space and time, and individual action and inaction are shaped by *common institutions* and *patterns of life*. They are given in the narrower and wider coexistence, formally in the structures in which life is shaped supra-individually, and informally in widely existing conventions, customs and values.

With their rules and resources, the structures and cultural predispositions in their institutional form are always preformed by a person when he or she acts. “Institutions by definition are the more enduring features of social life”; they give solidity to existence across space and time (Giddens, 1984, p. 24). In behaving, a person aligns herself with enduring circumstances around her and finds in them reasons for her own actions. In individual participation in common life, its constitution dictates how it is shaped and can be shaped. The frames of reference and justification of social and political practice and implicitly economic action will be the subject of this paper in a comparative investigation.

In terms of intellectual history and the history of philosophy, respectively, the study is grounded in the Western-Eastern dialogical exchange about continua of the design of house and state in the world, which were prefigured in Greek and Chinese antiquity – on the one hand, primarily *Aristotelian* and, on the other hand, primarily *Confucian*. With Aristotelian (and Stoic) philosophy in Europe and Confucian philosophy (including legalistic and Daoist influences) in ancient China, anchor points are indicated from which a discussion of structures of order can be carried out in continuous juxtaposition of concepts. The guiding ideas in political and social life today are rooted and have their trunk in traditional ways of thinking and acting. They can be taken up in the comparative discussion. It is not assumed that “the West” is politically and culturally a homogeneous entity. East Asia is not either.

The modes of governance are examined both diachronically in the history of thought and synchronically in intercultural comparison. In the West, we are used to criticizing political regimes in the East and measuring them against the normative standards of the West, which are often glibly declared to be universal here. There is equally good reason to criticize the West from the perspective of East Asian judgment. The individual’s being bound to the whole of internal state and domestic relations in China or Japan is contrasted with a deeply rooted *individualism* that is hardly restrained in the Occident. If this individualism is criticized with reference to East Asian principles of community, the criticism must not be directed against the open society of the West with its appreciation of diversity and variety. Their recognition is quite compatible with a normative orientation of the participation of diverse actors in a common event.

For the author, the topic of societal steering has emerged from a segment of insight and dealing with human things, namely from the practice of direct social assistance and person-related care, scientifically via the *ecosocial theory approach* (Wendt, 2018a), from the bottom up, so to speak. In the present treatise, we now proceed conversely from above (ancient Greek from the cosmos, ancient Chinese quasi “from heaven into the house”) under aspects of the ordering and shaping of

human coexistence. The disposition and location of the social arises in both cases intermediately – in free and organized action beyond private being-for-itself and on this side of superordinate statehood.

Ecotheoretically, *the social has its frame of reference outside social points of view*. It is reconstructed in an ecological texture of relations. According to the approach, social action takes place in an environment that is shaped institutionally, in households, by economic action, in the political scene and in further contexts of the contemporary world. The possibilities for realisation, orientation, protection, security and care on which people depend are offered to them in the domestic-family context or in the social proximity and are granted subsidiarily in the infrastructure of the welfare state. Social welfare is managed in a relationship between the state and its citizens, with the involvement of service-providing organisations. The disposition and control of the social economy (Wendt, 2015) is of interest with regard to the effort and the results.

I have presented ecosocial theory in several books (Wendt, 1982, 1990, 2010, 2018a). The theoretical approach goes behind usual assumptions of what “social” is and what “ecological” means, back to relational existence and in it to initial determinations of domestic coexistence and experience of the world in a given space and time. In its cultural manifestation, the human ecology of ordered coexistence now differs in Western and Eastern traditions – with consequences for the treatment of present and future problems here and there.

As far as the East Asian way of life is concerned, I am at the same time taking up again a topic which I dealt with 25 years ago in the book “Ritual and Right Living” (Wendt, 1994). There, in the Confucian-influenced frame of thought, a ritually underpinned way of being is discussed. It concerns personal action and its cultivation. In the present book, on the other hand, the focus is on political dispositions that are used in the West and East to orient societal processes towards present and future developments. Which traditional modes of organization have proven themselves and which adjustments are recommended in a comparison of the institutional conditions in East Asia and the West?

This has been the subject of much discussion in recent decades – in view of the modernisation and rapid economic rise of East Asia, and of signs of disintegration and self-doubt in the West. East Asia here means China, Japan, and Korea, including Vietnam in its Confucian tradition, and Southeast Asia, not far from China, especially Singapore. With the West are meant, quite differentiated, the Anglo-American and continental European democracies. They are based on their ideological, confessional, ideological and civil *values* – and in global competition they are confronted with the supposedly clearly defined canon of values of the East. There are also many different schools of thought, although analogies can be found

in the West for their differentiation, since human nature is the same in which and to which reflection takes place.

It is not the purpose of the discussions in this book to gain clarity about one's own culture (in house and state) with an expedient "detour via China" (Jullien, 2002). The resources of social and political life in general are explored not in a change of places of thinking, but in the common space of a global task. No explicit object of this study is the current practice of government in China or Japan, Korea or Singapore – any more than it is intended to be the contemporary political situation in Europe or the USA. Reference is only made to what is happening there and then if what is consistently present in an ordering function in West and East, albeit variable, often not stable or also in a critical state, and what can be assumed to be a basic structure, occurs or continues in it.

The study is dedicated to a consistent institutional foundation of social and political action – and is therefore *historically* based. Action is understood as an activity that takes place according to decision and responsibly. Human action is connected with meaning. The explanations take their starting point from the question of the disposition of the political and the anchoring of the social as the state of affairs in which people are related to one another and to common concerns, strive for their well-being and care for one another and with one another. They do this initially in the private space of their household and family. However, the social does not appear in this closed area; it needs the public space of exchange between people. In the community it enters into a relationship with the political. However, social action remains quite distinct from political business – and related back to the concerns of personal and – in and out of the home – common life.

The external constitution of human existence in fundamental structures, in which human beings reside and are determined in their actions and omissions, is considered for the connection and foundation of the social. These are the domestic sphere, the political sphere and the sphere of order in the (human and physical) world. We find these structures discussed and understood in Greek and Chinese philosophy respectively since ancient times. In ancient Greece, a basic institution was given in real terms in the *oikos*, the communal "house and yard", and ideally in the *cosmos* as the universal order. How the social is embedded in this and how the political is formed as a state is worthy of closer consideration. To what sphere does the social belong, or must it be assigned a sphere of its own? Is the state merely an agency of the individual citizens for the fulfilment of certain tasks – or does it stand opposite the individual agents with its own legitimacy?

The thread of the discussion runs in the European orientation framework from the acting individual and with him *from the house to the cosmos* (or from interest-guided action to the institutionalization of order). In East Asia, on the other hand,

a derivation from the *cosmos to the house* and its members (from a pre-stabilized order to the right action of the individual) is obvious. Whereas here the whole appears to be superior to the individual, there the individual leads, guided by interests, into a common event carried out by individuals. In the Occident, its order appears to be *external* to the person, whereas in East Asia one can speak of an *inner* order, which is inherent to the world and in it to the state and the house, and which is therefore demanded of the acting human being.

The concept of house and householding is understood, in a first approximation, as an enclosed space and process of living together. Household, more closely housekeeping, includes everything that has to be taken care of and that we have to manage in this concern. The nearer and wider community, to which we belong and in which we participate, wants to be mastered in its events and to be well governed. For this, all actors are referred to the ecology of their mutual participation. The epistemological interest in the potentials in the horizons of the domestic, the state and the larger order, captured in the terms of “cosmos” and “heaven” respectively, and in the potency of their mutual relation to each other, consists in their significance for guiding and shaping common life under changing conditions. Our existence is anchored in those horizons, moves within them, and gains orientation in and from them for the guidance of life.

In China, the conceptual anchors are categorically *jia* as the family household and *guojia* as the polity, while *tian*, heaven, actually “what is above the head (and in general)”, or *tianxia*, “all under heaven”, also embodies the universal order. East Asian as in the West, the way of living together between house and sky is governed in a *political* entity and *socially* shaped in community. But the dichotomy of we and I, of subject space and object space, of inside and outside, of public and private, which is self-evident to occidental logic, does not apply in this way in East Asian thought and action.

All the topoi mentioned have a spatial reference. Their material nature determines their spatial extension. But the meaning of house, polis and cosmos, or of *jia*, *guo* and *tian*, is by no means exhausted in the dimension of space. They are equally categories of the order of life, and they have an ethical and cultural significance in the course of time for the conduct of communal and personal life. In them, human beings are granted possibilities of behavior and realization. They can be realized in the internal relationships of the home, the internal relationships of the state, and the internal relationships of the world, whereby in each case external circumstances promote or hinder and restrict the realization – circumstances on which man as a member of the home, the state, and the world can in turn act and which he can change.



## 1.2 Divergent Semantics

Language carries meaning. Semantics embed thought and action in their logic. When two mental and cultural orders with their structures of meaning are juxtaposed in the tracing of Occidental and East Asian ways of thinking and their history, and when parallel arguments are made in an ideal Occidental frame of reference and in an ideal East Asian frame of reference, the semantic problem arises of transporting meaning bound to words and in sentences from one language into a completely different language and ideas bound to it. Ever since one began to translate terms from the Western frame into Japanese and Chinese understanding and, conversely, to find words in English or German for Chinese terms, it became apparent how difficult it is to make an appropriate transfer.

The logography of Chinese emblem or ideogram writing (Granet, 1989, p. 17 ff.) conveys multi-layered and multi-sided concrete ideas, bound to contexts in which words are used. The fields of meaning of the linguistic units do not coincide with relevant concepts in the West or cannot be completely brought into line with them. Grammatically, a (Chinese) statement about an event may involve what exists (is the subject and object of an event), or the statement assigns (in Indo-European languages) to a subject or an object what happens (Graham, 1990, p. 323 ff.). This problem has been pointed out often enough. “The idea that languages are commensurate and equivalents exist naturally between them is, of course, a common illusion” (Liu, 1995, p. 3). Even among European languages, the meaning of words that are usually equated differs, as can be seen, for example, in communications from the Brussels offices, translated for members of the European Union. One considers synonymous what conveys different meanings in each language. The listeners and readers of such texts do not acquire a stable sense; rather, in the words of Jacques Lacan, “the signified slides incessantly under the signifier” (Lacan, 1975, p. 27).

In any case, the meaning of a word, as it is encoded and used in a language, does not remain the same over time; etymology tells us about this. What was meant in ancient Greece by the fundamental categories referred to in this book requires interpretation in contexts of contemporary understanding. In Chinese, the lexical units of writing carry with them their history of meaning for more than three thousand years, and the understanding of characters and combinations of characters must take into account their variability and ambiguity yesterday and today. The use of terms was and is to this day not least the subject of a language policy that knows how to use ambiguity expediently.

In addition to semantic shifts over time within a culture, there is the problem of transferring meaning from one culture to another. The basic concepts of politics and society from the West were transculturally transposed in East Asia in the second half of the nineteenth century, first into Japanese and then into Chinese (see Chap. 7 below). This process identified new meaning with old terms, hybridized with them, or transformed their traditional understanding by incorporating them into new contexts. Their meaning shifted on the underlay of traditional expressions. They carry new knowledge in their own way and thus give it its own character, which can be used for ideological armament and in political tactics. (Cf. on the transmission process around 1900 in China the contributions in Lackner et al., 2001; Lackner & Vittinghoff, 2004; Chi, 2018.)

In East Asia, the conceptual discourses and linguistic innovations have only superficially changed fundamental understandings of social relations, of governance, of state and society. Nor has it required more than adaptation to international civil and market practices. On the contrary, it has been shown that existing foundations of vertically and horizontally ordered interaction between actors have stood the test of time in the developments of recent decades. A “Chinese-style socialism”, *Zhongguo tese shehuizhuyi*, is not only semantically but also in its real existence a home-grown phenomenon. Thus, democracy in Singapore is different from democracy in Switzerland. In this respect, the title of the book can be read in cultural anthropological terms: In comparative terms, it looks from the foundation of the political of European genesis to the formation of the state in China and contrasts the individual households as understood in the West with a collectivity “under heaven” of East Asian genesis.

The guiding principle is an ecological and ethical interest. Community is attached to a milieu with its condition. Every human being has his home, in which he lives externally and internally. Remaining in it or proceeding from it, he judges, decides and acts. The home may be narrow and offer only a limited platform for existence, or the area of residence may extend far and wide and in the end be global in nature. In this field of life people define themselves and anchor their identity in it.

How do we understand ourselves in the contexts of our life around us and in the dispositions of our existence? How is it organized and standardized? What are the main orientations of our actions and what do they depend on? When I say “we”, the question is social. In the occidental tradition of thought, there are three interrelated ancient Greek concepts that can be used to discuss this topic: *Oikos*, *Polis* and *Cosmos*. In the East Asian cultural sphere, there have also been three guiding concepts from time immemorial that promise clarification in relation to one another: *Jia*, *Guo* and *Tianxia*. They are basic concepts with manifold connotations. In their

interpretation and in a comparative analysis, it will be shown what can be grasped with them in terms of order and regulation of social events.

There is an astonishing congruence of *topoi* in East and West. But deception and misunderstanding are close at hand. The terms, as already noted, are incompatible in their linguistic connotations. One might think, and often does think, that it is the same object that is understood in English, French or German on the one hand and in Chinese on the other. Already in Europe, however, the worlds that are described as “civil” in political and social language remain diverse in terms of conceptual history (Koselleck, 2010, p. 402 ff.). The context of thought in which something is ostensibly or cryptically assigned a certain term in one or the other language does not appear on it without appropriate interpretation. The narratives in which terms are used remain different (cf. Hall & Ames, 1995, p. XIII ff.).

One can pick a term from a story or narrative context and equate it with a term from another story or narrative – and then have to recognize that the matching object, for example “society”, does not actually exist. The figure thus grasped, as “society” is imagined, is tied to its concept and the narrative to which it belongs. It is people speaking and thinking in a discourse community who call the object their own or have come to use it. At least they should know what they mean by a designation. Already in a speech community, agreement (in social terms) is difficult to achieve among speakers. The parallel recourse to ancient Greek or ancient Chinese interpretations of house, state, and world is also chosen to allow each to be valid in its own history. The cultural-spiritual account of one side cannot be set off against that of the other. But the real formats at stake in the global discourse are comparable. If we compare them in a cosmopolitan spirit, the intercultural dialogue about them stimulates new solutions to problems.

In Chinese culture, the general is superior to the particular. Preference is given to connecting things to each other, rather than separating and contrasting them. Contradictions are preceded by their cancellation. A text evokes the contexts in which it is embedded. The structure of Chinese written language supports a sweeping, circling synthetic perception of “all under heaven” (*tianxia*), while analytical logic in the West differentiates, atomistically and linearly juxtaposes and sorts everything (Nisbett, 2003, p. XIII ff.). In both ways, the understanding of the world is placed on a basis on which it is also possible to interpret what happens in it “inately” and organized in a state and can be handled overall.

### 1.3 How We Are Housed and Governed

Acting self-determined and free does not make it unnecessary to depend on a frame of reference for the determination of this very action. This is primarily not a cognitive, intellectually chosen frame, but a real frame that we have before us and around us in the conditions and circumstances of the world in which we live. How it is constituted, or at least seems to be constituted, makes us “dwell in the world” in a certain way and act in accordance with it. Social movements and innovations, reforms and even revolutions only partially and temporarily detach people from the outdated basic patterns of how we live. On the contrary, those patterns are perceived with more weight in times of accelerated change and the accompanying search for orientation.

The recourse to *oikos*, *polis* and *kosmos* or to *jia*, *guo* and *tianxia* in the face of the global changes of our time leads us to ask whether these institutions have stood the test of time. Political philosophy cannot avoid taking a comparative look at the dispositions of order in East and West and the ways of contemporary governance. Events are steered by all actors who are involved in them to a large or small degree. The purposeful guidance of their interaction succeeds more or less well in practice in one or the other system of governance. Western liberal democracy is not, as Francis Fukuyama found in 1989, “the final form of human government” (Fukuyama, 1989, p. 4). The author did not mean the end of history, but the goal of development. But on their way there, competing models are as variable as democracy can be.

Theories of society may conceive of the institutions with which and in which control can be exercised as constructions that have their meaning at their time and under changing circumstances, while the social process progresses and becomes institutionally reshaped. Subsequently, household, family, public and private, state and government are assigned their roles in this process. There are reciprocal expectations of what the household and the state provide for each other. Householding persons expect the state and its institutions to provide for their needs, opportunities for realization, infrastructural arrangements, protection and security, while the state relies on households of persons to take care of themselves and of each other, to be productive (and reproductive) and to act in a committed way in common matters.

*Underlying the study is the hypothesis that a mutual strengthening of house and state is fundamental for social welfare.* For example, personal commitment and family self-help sustain public welfare provision – and it may in turn be designed to foster such self-delivery by person households. Self-leadership nourishes and

sustains community leadership – and vice versa. On the other hand, processes that are detached from the home and the state and that are economically interrelated with an independent market are thought to weaken both the house and the state, or to damage the environment. For example, the spread of private transport at the expense of public transport infrastructure has brought with it a host of dislocations ranging from commuter family living to climate change around the world.

With such statements a *description* and an *evaluation* is made. Scientifically, a separation of the two may be expected. Now, however, the description that takes place here extends over a large period of time and its subject matter is also always evaluations. They can hardly be detached from the topoi to which certain meanings were and are ascribed at their time and up to the present day. Thus, the evaluation that has been made in the choice of the topic recurs to evaluations that have already been made, and the descriptions of them are described here for the sake of the evaluation that is to be insisted upon.

In the *structure* of the treatise, following the introduction, an initial overview is to be gained in the second chapter through the three institutional spaces of house, state and world. From the ancient Greek definition of *oikos*, *polis* and *cosmos*, we move on to the complementary Chinese terms *jia*, *guo* and *tian* or *tianxia*. Chapter 3 is devoted to man's action in these spheres. It orients itself in them inside and outside and intermediate. In the domestic and state spheres, ways are prepared for people in which their actions appear to be appropriate and ecologically "in order". The subject of Chap. 4 is the context in which, in East Asia, the state and the domestic interpenetrate each other, and thus a hierarchical control of the actors' behaviour can take place in their spaces of competence. The contrast between collective integration into the narrower and wider polity in the East and individualized being-for-itself in the West becomes clear. Occidental statism has its ground in the individual autonomy of actors in trade and change. This is explored in Chap. 5, and then the modernization that the East Asian "state family" has undergone since the mid-nineteenth century, challenged by the West, is examined from the perspective of the development of statehood in Europe.

Chapter 6 is concerned with the relations in which subjects in the body politic relate to and move with one another. In East Asia, family, group, and community relations traditionally determine what a person is and how he or she behaves. In the West, the autonomy and self-determination of each individual is assumed. But people "join" – and form (in the period of the European Enlightenment) "society" in a dialectical relationship with the state. What is understood by this term according to the origins of society and how "the social" could unfold in the differentiation of social functions will be examined in more detail in Chap. 7. Institutionally, a social sphere of action has developed which was fully formed in the welfare state

of the twentieth century. Its formation is dealt with in Chap. 8 with regard to its provisioning services in correspondence with the concerns of people in their households.

The concluding chapter takes up the question of order at the cosmopolitan level in a turn from inner to outer (international) order, derived in Chinese political philosophy from the idea of a concord, *he* (a term not exactly helpfully translated as “harmony”) in “all under heaven”. An ecologically oriented macro-politics and an equally oriented micro-politics aim at a new concordance with nature, which human life has in common with the biosphere. World domestic politics binds the actors to the discussion and fulfilment of common tasks, which arise globally as well as in the local area of a domestic coexistence. *Global governance* is thought to win an order and to steer processes that lead out of the crisis of man’s relations to nature and the world.

The world in unity with nature is the great house of an economy, that is on a small scale in response of each individual household. The state keeps house in the overall social processes. Their sustainable design is the ecological task, which is carried out internally for the people and in their responsibility, while externally it is directed towards the global state of the world and nature. This is thought of and worked on in various ways in Western democracies and in the East Asian sphere. Responsibility is incumbent on all actors. The topoi of house and state in the world locate this responsibility. It is hoped that the cultivation of institutions, as they exist and change in different ways in the West and in the East, can contribute to the preparation of a new humanism in accordance with the world of all life.



# The Space of Action and the Order of the House, the State and the World

# 2

The entity of the house, the entity of a state and the unity of the world are the complex bodies in which the togetherness of people is ordered and established. In short, they have their order in the house. The house has an order in the state. The state is referred to order in the world it administers. Wordly and natural order, however, concerns every actor in the house and in the state, who also has to communicate it to the individuals.

House refers to the confined space in which people live, reside, work and take care of their daily well-being, whether together or alone. In short: the circle of life in which people have established themselves and in which they are “at home”. It has an environment, which in its entire extent is the world as it is experienced “from home”. World denotes the vast, all-encompassing space that is common to human beings and to nature and in which life, dwelling, work, and the progress of things are everywhere carried on. The state is an intermediary entity; with it we can provisionally designate the form in which we find a communal household empowered, established and circumscribed in the world.

The configuration and order in this context are shaped by human action and are objective in their factual occurrence; they are, however, perceived differently. In the conceptual scheme of house, state, and world, they each form an extended structure, self-contained with all that it encompasses. It holds together a multifaceted and confusing set of events that nevertheless needs to be mastered and controlled in common existence and in personal life.

As a categorical entity, *house* refers to the external structure of every type of living and care community, partnership and family form that exists in the dwelling of people. With the category *state*, all modern forms of state in the variance