A Sustainable Consciousness Promoting Dialogue With Alien Others: Bakhtin's Views on Laughter and Euripides' Tragi-comedy

Atsushi Tajima

Institute of Global Studies, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

Tokyo, Japan

Abstract

Today, people live in a culturally diverse world and often face criticisms of their ideas by outsiders who have alien perspectives. Russian literary researcher M. M. Bakhtin valued such criticisms, which may bring forth unprecedented perspectives that bridge gaps between different viewpoints. In this paper, I investigate Bakhtin's notions concerning 'laughter', which describe the mental functions involved in productive dialogue. Greek tragic dramatist Euripides is the main figure of my analysis as an influence on Bakhtin's notions of the value of laughter and dialogue, although Bakhtin did not employ systemic citations of Euripides' works. I focus on speaker consciousness, which is described as occurring when negotiating with others who have alien viewpoints in Greek tragedies. I then propose sustainable models of consciousness that may promote communication in current contexts of ideological diversity.

Keywords: dialogue, laughter, novel, Greek tragedy, alien others

Introduction

Today, people live in a culturally diverse world with various ideologies mediating value judgements and morals. People living in such multicultural situations often face criticisms of their ideas by outsiders who have conflicting or incompatible perspectives nurtured in different cultural backgrounds. I call such outsiders 'alien others' in this paper. Such criticism can result in violent collisions of ideas, but communication with alien others also offers the ability to create new ideologies (Tajima, 2017, pp. 429–430). Russian literary researcher M. M. Bakhtin proposed 'dialogue' as a form of communication with alien others that may lead to unprecedented perspectives, bridging gaps between existing ideologies.

One of his key concepts, 'laughter', describes the mental process facilitating such productive communication (Cresswell & P. Sullivan, 2020, pp. 135–136). Bakhtin's notions of dialogue and laughter refer to critical communication with alien others that allow participants to investigate fixed and opposing ideologies from each perspective, to create a new ideology for living together.[1] In current psychology, these discussions are applied to analyses of conflictive interactions, for example, pedagogic conflicts between teachers and students (Matusov & P. Sullivan, 2020, pp. 453–461; P. Sullivan et al., 2009, pp. 332–335; Tajima, 2018, pp. 101–108) and cultural value collisions between citizens and foreigners (Mahendran, 2017, pp. 147–149; Tajima, 2017, pp. 426–428).

Bakhtin's discussions on these themes are heavily indebted to the Plato's analyses of the Socratic dialogues, as well as ancient Roman and medieval literature regarding comedies and festivals, in which traditional social values and norms were criticised and mocked from outsiders' viewpoints. Some researchers have speculated that Bakhtin may also have been influenced by older Greek tragedies, although he did not describe systemic analyses of these works. In particular, Euripides introduced comedic elements to his tragic dramas corresponding to Athenian cultural contexts involving criticism of traditional ideologies by others. Thus, Bakhtin's laughter may be clearly conceptualised by comparing comedic and non-comedic elements in Euripides' dramas.

In this paper, I investigate Bakhtin's notions on laughter, which can be useful in facilitating productive dialogue in today's culturally diverse world. I focus on speaker consciousness, which emerges when negotiating with alien others in Euripides' dramas, and propose sustainable models of consciousness that may facilitate communication in current contexts of ideological diversity.

'Excess / surplus of seeing' and the presence of others in communication

Bakhtin's discussions of communication are based on the perception that each speaker has a unique point of view. Bakhtin (1979/1990, pp. 22–23) argued that different speakers' interpretations regarding the outer world do not fully agree because the physical spaces they occupy during communication do not overlap, although they may view identical objects. Bakhtin termed this absolute disagreement in views 'excess / surplus of seeing'.

> When I contemplate a whole human being who is situated outside and over against me, our concrete, actually experienced horizons do not coincide … Cognition surmounts this concrete outsideness of me myself and outsideness-for-me of all other human beings, as well as the excess of my seeing in relation to each one of them, which is founded in that position of outsideness. (Bakhtin, 1979/1990, pp. 22–23)

According to this perspective, anyone outside of a specific speaker becomes an 'other' who is located 'outside' the speaker. Thus, what a speaker expresses in a specific context does

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[1] According to Bakhtin's discussion, Tajima (2017, p. 420) defines 'ideology' as an individual's systemic worldview, nurtured in each speaker's cultural environment, which is expected to be shared among members of the same culture.

not correspond to the thoughts of others. This can also be expressed as the fundamental gap between the self-image conceived by a speaker (i.e. 'I-for-myself') and the image imposed by others (i.e. 'I-for-the-other') (Bakhtin, 1975/1981b, p. 38, 1986/1993, p. 54).

Epic, monologue and the growth of the sense of culture

Conversely, Bakhtin (1979/1990, pp. 49–51) held that 'I-for-myself' and 'I-for-the-other' can appear to agree in a practical sense. The most typical 'agreement' is a parent's conversation with their baby. The parent names their baby's babblings and body movements; thus, the parent creates the baby's 'I-for-myself' by defining the baby's 'I-for-the-other'. This type of parental discourse has a primary 'authority' for the baby.

> The child receives all initial determinations of himself and of his body from his mother's lips and from the lips of those who are close to them … The words of loving human beings are the first and the most authoritative words about him; they are the words that for the first time determine his personality from outside … (Bakhtin, 1979/1990, pp. 49–50)

Similar to a parent's conversation with their baby, the discourse in which speakers accept their authoritative leaders' voices with respect to agreement is termed 'authoritative discourse' (Bakhtin, 1975/1981a, p. 342) or 'monologue' (Bakhtin, 1961/1984c, p. 285). In such contexts, speakers are expected to accept socially valued ideologies without critical reflection, which allows them to be viewed as so-called 'peers' or 'familiar others' in a single cultural group. Bakhtin also related those authoritative discourses to the literary genres of 'epic' (Bakhtin, 1975/1981b, pp. 13–15), 'lyrics' (Bakhtin, 1975/1981c, pp. 167–172), and 'poems' (Bakhtin, 1975/1981a, pp. 296–297), which have been historically used to establish myths that describe authoritative social norms represented by gods' oracles and heroes' acts. Bakhtin (1979/1990, pp. 117–120) emphasised that rhythms in verse vitiate differences between speakers' unique perspectives and free will in terms of original interpretations, similar to children chanting nursery rhymes learned from their parents.

> Free will and self-activity are incompatible with rhythm. A life … that is lived and experienced in the categories of moral freedom and of self-activity cannot be rhythmicized … The creator is free and active, whereas that which is created is unfree and passive. (Bakhtin, 1979/1990, p. 119)

The primary function of epic in ancient times was that of orientation for newcomers who required verbal resources to participate in an existing culture. In other words, they were able to develop a sense of a culture by obeying the authoritative episodes; thus, 'I-for-myself' and 'I-for-the-other' in this discourse were expected to be in agreement. A typical example of Bakhtin's epic language involves the sympathising interactions among citizens in Homer's epic *'Iliad'*, who convey traditional virtues and morals in ancient Athens (Havelock, 1963, p. 45; Nagy, 2002, p. 73).

Novel and dialogue in Bakhtin's discussion

Importantly, Bakhtin argued that a speaker has freedom to reinterpret existing ideologies. If a speaker cannot agree with established ideologies, speaker inevitably raises their own 'consciousness' by criticising such ideologies, because there are few contextual supports from the affiliated cultural communities. The speakers then become 'alien others' who

exhibit original excess insight with respect to the existing culture, thus ceasing to be 'familiar others' who unconsciously agree with members' ideas in the same cultural group. Each socially expected 'I-for-the-other' of these others do not agree with 'I-for-myself' as the subject of unique thought. Bakhtin (1975/1981a) named such discourse, in which speakers respect and react to one another's unique consciousness, 'internally persuasive discourse' (p. 342) or simply 'dialogue' (p. 296).

Bakhtin (1975/1981a, pp. 284–285) also related this dialogue to his concept of the 'novel', which represents a literary genre that originally parodies traditional myth or social norms depicted mainly in epics. Character consciousness in this discussion of the novel is often expressed through 'internal (interior) dialogues' with imagined others who represent the internalisation of communication with real others (Bakhtin, 1975/1981a, p. 279). Bakhtin (1975/1981b, pp. 34–38) noted that such novels approach meaning by means of 'present' dialogues, rather than the unchangeable divine ethical 'past'. Understood in this way, novels can serve as models of communication by which cultural alien others reciprocally interpret their ideologies in current negotiations.

Laughter as ambivalent estrangement

'Laughter' is one of Bakhtin's most important concepts and is deeply connected to both dialogue and the novel. It involves 'estrangement' (Bakhtin, 1975/1981a, p.402) that causes speakers to think differently with respect to ideologies 'automatically' accepted in accustomed environments (Tajima, 2017, pp. 422–423).[2] Furthermore, Bakhtin's notion of laughter involves bilateral investigations of particular authoritative ideologies rather than unilateral attacks on them. The others in laughter criticise partners' ideologies, but also welcome partners' criticisms of their own thinking, if they find problems in those views. Such an attitude, present in laughter, is considered 'ambivalence' (Bakhtin, 1963/1984a, pp. 124–125). Billig (2008, pp. 131–133) interprets Bakhtin's laughter as freedom, which allows speakers to examine ideologies from each speaker's ambivalent perspective, independently of affiliated communities. Speakers should laugh when reacting to others' criticisms, which will avoid unilateral anger that may cause attacks on partners (Tajima, 2017, pp. 428).

Laughter, fools and carnivals welcoming outsiders' criticisms in the history of Europe

Bakhtin (1975/1981a, pp. 402–406) introduced the figures of 'rogues, clowns, and fools' as role models for culturally alien others who cause laughter (Tajima, 2017, p.428, 2020, pp.110-112). As speakers, they invite the laughter that necessarily accompanies their joyful emotions and trust in others, making speakers welcome these other alien perspectives in dialogue. Without such emotions, alien others' criticisms might elicit anger.

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[2] Estrangement / enstrangement / defamiliarization was originally proposed by Shklovsky (1917/1990, pp. 6-12). It relates to the 'automatization' proposed by the linguist Lev Jakubinskij. Automatization refers to mental states in which speakers exchange their intentions without a conscious sense of controlling language with partners whom they believe share knowledge with them. Estrangement makes speakers aware of the ambiguity of language beyond automatization (Morson & Emerson, 1990, pp. 360–361).

He used these concepts interchangeably and did not clearly distinguish among them; however, the fool's incomprehension when criticising the one-sidedness of authoritative ideologies is important for introducing alien cultural views (Morson & Emerson, 1990, pp. 359–362). According to Bakhtin (1975/1981b, pp. 24–25), fools are more than absurd heroes; the fool concept includes intelligent individuals who critique unconscious common sense from an ignorant perspective. Bakhtin termed the critical attitude of the fool 'wise ignorance', which can be related to an intellectual 'wise fool', who criticises fixed and automatically accepted ideologies (Kaiser, 1973, pp. 515–518). Socrates is often considered a representative wise fool.

Wise fools have a long history in the context of Europe. There were professional fools, who were identified as 'outsiders' to the social hierarchy (Willeford, 1969, pp. 13–29). Fools in the ancient Greco-Roman world used their intelligence to provide criticisms of their wealthy masters' ideologies through the vehicle of folly. These criticisms from fools living 'outside' society were regarded as talismans against the gods' envy of their masters' excessive reputations and the wealth that may cause gods' punishment (Duff, 1953, p. 80; Welsford, 1935, pp. 58–62, pp. 73–75).

In the medieval era, professional fools had freedom to criticise any powerful group or individual (Kaiser, 1973, pp. 515–517). Fools' freedom to criticise power still continued to function as a talisman at that time. Fools usually represented non-Christians (e.g. devils, fallen angels, pagans, foreigners, etc.) who criticised the Christian world from an outsider's perspective (Metzger, 1996, pp. 11–13, 2004, pp. 80–83). Comical parodies by fools as outsiders with respect to biblical and Catholic ideologies took place in the so-called 'feast of fools' in churches (Welsford, 1935, pp. 201–203). These parodies functioned to estrange Christian ideologies from the automatic recitation of usual teaching. Thus, these disguised multicultural situations seemed to be intentionally produced to detach 'I-for-myself' and 'I-for-the-other' of speakers that would arouse participants' consciousness and allow them to reflect on their unconsciously accepted ideologies in their daily lives.

These fools' festivals were subsequently moved to city centres and included in festivals known as 'carnivals'. Foolish kings were crowned only during festivals, while citizens with fools' masks mocked and parodied the ideologies of the upper classes. These festivals also allowed participants to experience non-Christian perspectives (Metzger, 2004, pp. 80–83; Moser, 1991, pp. 359–367). Furthermore, a number of thinkers, intellectuals and scholars served kings and aristocrats in that era by playing the role of the fool (Outram, 2019, pp. 23–30, pp. 46–57; Welsford, 1935, pp. 188–191). Notably, they wore carnivalesque fool costumes in their masters' palaces to take advantage of fools' freedom when they engaged in criticising noble or lofty ideologies.

Bakhtin's analysis may rely on this custom of wise fools who utilised their intelligent outsider role. He considered the carnival to represent the dialogic space, where speakers as alien others were free to investigate each other's ideologies with ambivalent laughter that enabled them to estrange authoritative ideologies (Bakhtin, 1965/1984b, pp. 9–12, 1963/1984a, pp. 122–128).

Bakhtin's laughter and Greek tragedy

Bakhtin's discussions of laughter and carnival are heavily reliant on his analysis of 'novels'. His concept of the novel mainly refers to historic genres as Socratic dialogue, Roman comedies, and medieval comical literature in which characters criticise powerful groups and

individuals. An important novel type that Bakhtin (1963/1984a, pp. 109–119) referenced is so-called 'Menippean Satire', in which the fool characters initiate arguments against powerful groups and individuals by utilising techniques of Socratic dialogue. Satires in subsequent eras written by authors such as Rabelais, Sacks, and Dostoevsky are included in this genre.

Moreover, Bakhtin (1975/1981d, pp. 53–56) considered Roman comedies to serve as parodies of epics and tragedies by letting divine gods and authoritative heroes negotiate with foolish citizens and slaves. Bakhtin implied that comedy parodies untouchable one-sided ideologies depicted in epics or tragedies. This intervention allows audiences to interpret dogmatic ideologies through their own perspectives.

> For any and every straightforward genre, any and every direct discourse—epic, tragic, lyric, philosophical—may and indeed must itself become the object of representation, the object of a parodic travestying 'mimicry'. It is as if mimicry rips the word away from its object, disunifies the two, shows that a given straightforward generic word—epic or tragic—is one-sided, bounded, incapable of exhausting the object … (Bakhtin, 1975/1981d, p. 55)

However, Bakhtin (2012, pp. 563–566) made contradictory comments concerning tragedy, whereby tragedy and laughter approach identical moments of change from old and new worldviews, respectively. Furthermore, Bakhtin commented on Greek tragedy as one of the origins of his novel concept. Specifically, Bakhtin associated his notion of the novel with the classical Athens' dramatist Euripides. Bakhtin (2012) indicated that "Dialogue with contemporary themes in tragedy, especially Aeschylus. Euripides and novelization" (p. 624).

Zacharia (2003, p. 170) insisted that Bakhtin's comments regarding one-sided authoritative ideologies in tragedy in general was incorrect because Greek tragedy humanised epic heroes by describing their concerns in selecting a single choice from multiple polarised alternatives in troublesome situations in which even ordinary citizens might experience similar conflicts. Notably, Zacharia found deep connections between the features of tragedies and Bakhtin's ideas on novel. Importantly, the Greek tragedian Euripides introduced comic elements into his dramas, which influenced subsequent comedies (Gregory, 1999, pp. 73–74; Kiso, 1996, p.2; Tange, 2008, pp.135–136; Zacharia, 2003, pp. 169–170). Euripides comically relegated the gods and epic heroes to the status of ordinary people by describing moments of reflection in contradictory dialogues with culturally alien others' critics, which elicited laughter from the audience. Euripides' tendency to depict indecisiveness and dialogues with foolish outsiders influenced his contemporaries (i.e. comedy writers such as Aristophanes) (Platter, 2007, pp. 152–154). This tendency was followed by Roman comical literalists such as Petronius (Papadopoulou, 2016, pp. 342–346; Platter, 2007, pp. 19–21), who was described as one of representative novelists by Bakhtin. Furthermore, Segal (1982, pp. 12–14) related Euripides' dramas to Bakhtin's carnival, which led to ambiguities in monolithic ideological meanings. Thus, several works by Euripides are considered 'tragi–comedy' (Zacharia 2003, p. 169), which could constitute the origins of Bakhtin's novels.

I analyse Greek tragedies, especially those written by Euripides, from the perspectives that are described in this paper. More concrete traits of Bakhtin's laughter are clearly identified by comparing the novelistic (comic) and epic (non-comic) elements present in Euripides' dramas.

Arousing the comic wavering consciousness in Greek tragedy

Tragedy is the forms of ancient Greek dramas; it developed primarily in Athens from the 6th to 5th century B.C.E. Tragedy remodelled old legends and epics by focusing on moments of an individual hero's mental conflict (i.e. 'pathos') (Else, 1965, pp. 65–66; Snell, 1948/1953, pp. 106–107). Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides have been described as classical Athens' three great tragic dramatists; whose dramas influenced the literature of later generations.

Aeschylus is the first dramatist who depicted conflicting demands on individuals' consciousness, independently of the orders of gods, in the history of European literature (Snell, 1948/1953, pp. 101–103). Aeschylus's *'Suppliant maidens'* described the king of Argos' conflict with respect to the supplications of refugees escaping from an Egyptian tyrant. If the king accepted these refugees (the chorus), Egypt might attack the city. If the king rejected the refugees, they would commit suicide in the city's temple, eliciting anger from the gods toward the city.

> Chorus: To adorn these images with tablets of strange sort.
> King: Thy words are riddling; come, explain in simple speech.
> Chorus: To hang ourselves forthwith from the statues of yon gods.
> King: I mark a threat that is a lash unto my heart … Aye; and on many sides are difficulties hard to wrestle with; like a flood … For should I not effect a quittance of the debt to you, the pollution thou namest is beyond all range of speech; yet if I take my stand before the wall and try the issue of battle with the sons of Aegyptus, your kinsmen, how will the cost not mount to a cruel price – men's blood to stain the ground for women's stake? (Aeschylus, ca. 466 B.C.E./1922, pp. 51–53)

Traditional heroes, especially those depicted in Homeric epics, scarcely demonstrated their own subjective concerns in such conflicted situations, because gods entered the heroes' minds and provided concrete orders (Jaynes, 1990, pp. 71–83; Snell, 1948/1953, p. 102). Heroes accepted these gods' orders with few serious individual difficulties. Jaynes named the structure of their spirits 'bicameral minds', which indicated the split between an obedient dependent and an ordering master in each speaker's mind.

However, Aeschylus' king in the above excerpt experienced mental conflicts due to polarised criticisms from equivalent others, without any gods' orders (Snell, 1948/1953, pp. 99–103). His notions wavered in his speech, representing his consciousness as constructed by internalised others' voices criticising the conflicting perspectives.

This scene would be one of the oldest origins of Bakhtin's notion of the novel, in which characters achieve autonomy of consciousness by means of contradictory internal dialogues. As Snell (1948/1953, pp. 102-105) indicated, this indecisive king appears as a clown in a comical context, compared with epic heroes whose stubborn decisions were confirmed by gods. The king might provoke audience laughter by betraying the socially expected 'I-for-the-other' as a godlike hero by developing his wavering 'I-for-myself' as an ordinary man living in 'present' communication. Thus, describing such wavering in characters' minds would be a key aspect of laughter, which provides multi-sided dialogues to the authoritative one-sided myth or ideologies.

Euripides and his novelisation over epic gods and heroes

Euripides further developed the methods used by Aeschylus. Euripides flourished in the period when the traditional morals, customs and norms in Athens were rapidly criticised by culturally alien others during the Peloponnesian War (Zacharia, 2003, pp. 183–184). Alien criticisms typically originated from sophists who arrived from foreign cities. Notably, Euripides described the gods' actions much less frequently, compared with the works of Aeschylus (Hutchinson, 2016, pp. 39–41; Snell, 1948/1953, p. 109, 1964, pp. 68–69). Furthermore, Euripides used fewer instances of a chorus who narrated using the rhythms, and introduced more instances of direct communication between characters without divine controls.

Euripides' characters often criticised indecisive gods and social norms, and their conflicting orders or guidance. In *'Orestes'*, the Mycenaean prince Orestes avenged the murder of his father by his mother, following the oracle from Apollo (also known as Phoebus and Loxias). Although a god ordered the murder, Orestes experienced subsequent pangs of guilt. Orestes and his uncle Menelaus described their distress regarding the authority of Apollo in the following excerpt.

> Menelaus: What aileth thee? What sickness ruineth thee?
> Orestes: Conscience!—to know I have wrought a fearful deed.
> …
> Orestes: Yet can I cast my burden of affliction… On Phoebus, who bade spill my mother's blood.
> Menelaus: Sore lack was his of justice and of right!
> Orestes: The God's thralls are we—what soe'er gods be.
> Menelaus: And doth not Loxias shield thee in thine ills?
> Orestes: He tarrieth long—such is the God's wont still. (Euripides, 408 B.C.E./1912b, pp. 157–161)

Their claims concerning Apollo appear comical, because they criticised the god in a manner more appropriate for a 'bad boy' or a poor student. The gods' authority, which had been expected to announce authoritative norms in traditional societies, emerged as folly in the minds of ordinary people. In such situations, people could not rely on divine authority or social norms. They inevitably wavered in their decisions by means of their own consciousness, as demonstrated by the king's comedic speech in Aeschylus' drama (Snell, 1948/1953, pp. 123–124).

At this point, the authoritative discourse (epic) in Bakhtin's discussions appears to collapse, while the internally persuasive discourse (novel) begins to emerge. Negation of the authority of the gods invalidated the automatically accepted authority represented by epics. Characters began to exhibit reflective autonomy that guided their own actions. The Greek noun 'conscience' ('synesis' or 'sunesis' in Greek), spoken by Orestes, was first established by Euripides in the above excerpt (Snell, 1964, pp. 48–60). This term represents self-consciousness as an intellectual mental space, whereby Orestes repeatedly wavered and negotiated his deed and his morals in his own mind, which Euripides described in the character's speech (Atkins, 2014, p. 4; Konstan, 2016, pp. 231–240; Snell, 1964, pp. 48–60). Snell noted that Euripides approached such 'psychological discernment' in *'Orestes'* and in other dramas (e.g. *'Hyppolytos'* and *'Medea'*).

Comic methods and novelisation in Euripides' dramas

By arousing character consciousness, Euripides developed the comic technique in which a character mistakes his/her partner for another person. The dramas in which Euripides used comic methods included *'Helen'*, *'Iphigenia in Tauris'*, and *'Ion'* (Kiso, 1996, p. 2, p.9). One of the famous laughter-provoking techniques was later named 'quid pro quo' in Latin, and widely used in European comedies.

In *'Ion'*, the king of Athens, Xuthus, travelled to the temple of Apollo in Delphi to pray for a son. Apollo's oracle announced that the son would be the person whom Xuthus encountered immediately after leaving the temple. Thus, Xuthus recognised Ion, a servant of the temple, as his son. However, Ion rejected Xuthus' explanation because he did not know of the oracle's announcement. The rejection of the king by a young servant constituted a carnivalesque reversal of the hierarchical authority. This encroachment on social order would elicit audience laughter. The king was reduced to the role of a fool who brought an alien perspective to the young servant.

> Xuthus: Joy to thee, son!—fitting prelude this is of my speech to thee.
> Ion: Joy is mine: but thou, control thee; then were twain in happy case.
> Xuthus: Let me kiss thine hand, and let me fold thy form in mine embrace!
> Ion: Stranger, hast thy wits?—or is thy mind distraught by stroke of heaven?
> Xuthus: Right my wit is, if I long to kiss my best-beloved regiven.
> Ion: Hold-hands off!—the temple-garlands of Apollo rend not thou!
> Xuthus: Clasp thee will I!—no man-stealer; but I find my darling now.
> Ion: Wilt not hence, or ever thou receive my shaft thy ribs within? (Euripides, ca.410 B.C.E./1912a, pp. 51–53)

This scene could be one of the origins of Bakhtin's carnivalesque dialogues, in which fools joyfully criticise powerful groups, individuals, or divine ideologies. Euripides introduced intentional mistakes that estranged characters' self-images ('I-for-myself') from outsiders' unexpected definitions of them ('I-for-the-other'). The gap between contradictory self-images that represent the important traits of Bakhtin's notion of the novel could lead to characters' wavering criticisms involving outsider definitions or expectations. For example, this action by Xuthus elicited the young servant Ion's criticisms of Athens' xenophobia and royal authority (Markantonatos, 2016, pp. 225–227). Thus, Ion's outsider perspectives mediate this criticism, including internal negotiations among several voices, which might estrange automatically accepted ideologies among Athenians.

> Ion: The glorious earth-born state, Athens, men say, hath naught of alien strain. I shall thrust in, stained with a twofold taint—An outland father, and my bastard self… Good men, whose wisdom well could helm the state, who yet hang back, who never speak in public, to them shall I be laughing-stock and fool, who, in a town censorious, go not lofty… And sovranty, so oft, so falsely praised, winsome its face is, but behind the veil is torment. Who is happy, fortunate who, that fearing violence, glancing aye askance, weareth out life? Nay, rather would I live happy—obscure, than be exalted prince… 'Ah,' thou wilt say 'gold overbears all this, and wealth is sweet.' Would I clutch lucre—groan under its load, with curses in mine ears? Nay, wealth for me in measure, sorrowless. (Euripides, ca.410 B.C.E./1912a, pp. 51–53)

However, after his reflective speech, Ion immediately accepts Xuthus' offer without any further explanation, and comes to behave as a typical prince, despite his criticisms of Athenian power. Thus, his ideological criticism of powerful groups and individuals was not a consistent stance, but part of a wavering internal dialogue negotiating his present situation. Similar to Ion, many Euripides' characters (including gods) did not state consistent ideologies. Their sentiments are ambivalent during the interactions that occur in each drama. Furthermore, slaves and beggars were the social outsiders who gave wise and foolish advice to kings and aristocrats in Euripides' dramas (Scodel, 2016, pp. 65–67; Tange, 1994, pp. 86–89). Zacharia (2003, pp. 175–176) indicated that such ambivalence was essential for understanding the carnivalesque characteristics of Euripides' dramas. Euripides recognised the inability to know the true social ideologies that govern general norms and morals represented in epics but respected the uniqueness of individual perspectives (voices) that can demonstrate their own ideologies. Thus, characters' ideologies were respected in dramatic dialogues, regardless of any status in the social hierarchy.

Therefore, Bakhtin's discussions on dialogue have deep relationships with Euripides' dramas (Zacharia, 2003, pp. 180–183) because Bakhtin insisted that individuals can only identify their own ideologies in the dialogic convergence between culturally alien perspectives that have a unique excess. Moreover, Euripides did not show unilateral ideologies as explaining the overall meanings of his dramas. Therefore, audiences focus on the ambivalent dialogues between culturally alien characters' voices. They then engage in thoughtful discussion to identify their own views of Euripides' dramas. Zacharia suggested slight similarities between Euripides and Dostoevsky with respect to character techniques. Bakhtin extensively analysed Dostoevsky's novels when forming his discussions of laughter and carnival. Thus, Euripides could be considered the forerunner of Bakhtin's 'novelists' who addressed the ambivalent estrangements of the alien outsider role and the unique excess insight that created unprecedented analyses of the multicultural world.

Euripides, Socratic dialogues, and the freedom of academic investigations

Euripides was a contemporary of Socrates, and a few records suggest that they might have been in mutual communication (Irwin, 1983, pp. 183–184; Lefkowitz, 2016, pp. 26–33; Moline, 1975, pp. 51–52; Zacharia, 2003, p. 168). More concrete traits of Bakhtin's novel can be discerned by considering Euripides' influence on Socratic dialogues (Tajima, 2020, pp. 117–119). The Socratic technique 'midwifery', which enabled extraction of ideologies from unaware discussion partners, was similar to character interactions in tragedies, which tested the characters' consciousness during difficulties (Snell, 1948/1953, pp. 179–180, pp. 182–183). Socrates tested his partners' abstract thought processes by providing surprisingly conflicting situations for them, which elicited their wavering internal dialogues.

For example, the excerpt here from *'Gorgias'* is a dialogue between Socrates and Calicles on the definition of 'superiority'. Socrates elicited wavering in Calicles by applying Calicles' comments to unexpected contexts in the following excerpt (Tajima, 2020, p.113). Calicles was surprised by the contradiction of his own thinking that emerged from discussion with Socrates, similar to tragic characters. Thus, Socrates serves as the foolish outsider who criticised Calicles' expressed ideologies ('I-for-the-other') to arouse his own internal dialogues ('I-for-myself'), similar to the laughter-provoking dialogue between Xuthus and Ion in Euripides' *'Ion'*.

Socrates: Then tell me, do you call the wiser better?
Calicles: Yes, I do.
Socrates: But do you not think the better should have a larger share?
Calicles: Yes, but not of food and drink.
Socrates: I see; of clothes, perhaps
…
Calicles: Why, I have been making mine for some time past. First of all, by 'the superior' I mean, not shoemakers or cooks, but those who are wise as regards public affairs and the proper way of conducting them … (Plato, ca. 427 B.C.E./1925, pp. 407–409)

The interactions in *'Gorgias'* are similar to Bakhtin's carnivalesque dialogue, in which wise fools criticise authority and relegate their one-sided ideologies to lively and vulgar contexts, thus producing unexpected and multi-voiced interpretations (Nightingale, 1992, p. 141; Zappen, 2004, pp. 49–50).

Furthermore, Socrates did not aim to teach that the authoritative 'truth' belonged to any particular ideology. Socrates did not ultimately elucidate general definitions (so-called 'ideas' or 'forms') of critical concepts, such as 'virtue', applicable to any circumstances (Cornford, 1932, pp. 45–53; Snell, 1948/1953, pp. 186–188). Socrates was aware of his own ignorance. Therefore, he was able to negotiate with others' excess insight, which might facilitate the convergence of dialogues. Cornford emphasised that Socrates attempted to maintain friendship and trust with his discussion partners to ensure freedom during academic investigations. Thus, Socrates was the wise fool who ambivalently estranged his and his partners' ideologies, like characters of Euripides' dramas, and broke their unquestioning trust in them. Accordingly, his dialogue developed novelistic traits that enhance the multi-voicedness of each character by utilising his outsideness.

Sustainable consciousness promoting dialogues with alien others today

Important differences between epic and novelistic elements in the depiction of mental conflicts, as a way to reach culturally alien perspectives, emerge from analysis of the relationships between Bakhtin's discussion and Greek tragedies. Epic elements show individuals' obedient reliance on divine ideologies, whose authority belongs to the past, and their minimal ability to achieve dialogue with present and divergent others, whereas novelistic elements describe critical investigations of outsiders' ideologies unfolding into a present dialogue and each speaker's wavering consciousness, with minimal obedience to specific authority.

Here, I investigate the present sustainable model of consciousness, which permits dialogue between culturally alien others, who critically estrange our ideologies.

In today's culturally diverse world, we often encounter ideological conflicts between individuals who hold alien perspectives. Although we recognise such conflicts, we still must choose one ideology from the alternatives with which to live our lives. For example, we select a single party in an election, support one authoritative leader in a company, or assume a specific attitude toward foreign citizens. Following the selection of a single action, in circumstances resembling the mental conflicts of a Greek tragedy, the possibility of encountering diverse insights from others might be lost.

However, alien ideologies can continue to be supported with openness on the part of concerned individuals who can entertain different ways of thinking. Individuals can serve as Euripides' heroes, even after the selection of specific actions. Such a wavering form of internal dialogue in the selection of opposing ideologies represents a sustainable model of individual consciousness that can help to sustain our culturally diverse world.

Contemporary Bakhtinian researchers are collecting data regarding the possibility of a diverse society, highlighting the importance of individuals' ideological ambivalence to unorthodox perspectives in relation to primary cultural problems (Cresswell & P. Sullivan, 2020, pp. 136–139; Mahendran, 2017, pp. 150–154, 2018, pp. 1351–1353; G. B. Sullivan, 2019, pp. 17–21; P. Sullivan et al., 2015, pp. 58–64; Tajima, 2017, pp. 426–430). Following an excerpt from an interview with a supporter of the United Kingdom Independence Party, which advocated Eurosceptic policies (G. B. Sullivan, 2019, pp. 13–20), G. B. Sullivan observed the informants' substantial wavering in justifying their extreme opinion against foreign individuals and laughter when responding to opposing views on British policies described by the interviewer. There are clear similarities between this interviewee's explanation of party ideologies and the conflicting speeches of characters in Greek tragedies or Socratic dialogue, both of whom wavered in the process of estranging or laughter-provoking conflicts with alien others.

> Yeah, well having a points system like Australia, you know, I mean we must have people here who are going to contribute and make our country richer in every way … it's not you know sort of just banning all foreigners [laughs] you know, I'm not xenophobic, but erm ah now did your questionnaire talk about xenophobia …(G. B. Sullivan, 2019, p.17)

Bakhtinian researchers assert that such interviews depicting subjects' ambivalence during speech are important, because they allow sincere investigation of alien ideologies, which are produced from unexpected perspectives. Interviewees' 'I-for-the-other' approaches toward social problems positively expressed in the reactions of interviewers allow interviewees to waver with respect to their own 'I-for-myself' approaches.

Notably, if speakers have no doubt about their worldviews, ideological differences may cause violent collisions with alien others, because there are few wavering dialogic spaces for negotiating alien ideologies in each consciousness. People who firmly believe in specific ideologies described by confident authorities may become angry with their opponents. Decisive attitudes toward specific authorities (e.g. epic heroes) may risk closure of channels that offer additional insight, which is unsuitable for today's culturally diverse world. Thus, the wavering of an individual's consciousness between alien ideologies, in comparison with consciousness that does not waver in a context of opposing views, would contribute to sustaining our culturally diverse world, because it enables us to create new ideologies that bridge incompatible perspectives, consequently preventing violent collapse.

Conclusion: Carnival laughter can provoke joyful trust in alien others

An important consideration in Bakhtin's discussions is the need to maintain present openness to convergence with alien others, rather than specific ideologies that were chosen in the past. Cresswell and P. Sullivan (2020, pp. 137–138) indicated that supporters who try to introduce such dialogue between citizens and alien others should adopt the perspectives

of 'rogue, clown and fool' (Bakhtin, 1975/1981a, pp. 402–406) as outsiders provoking laughter.

As I have analysed, laughter accompanies joyful trust toward others. Outsiders' criticisms, which cause subjects to question their ideologies, may disturb and irritate citizens, whereas fools, as defined by Bakhtin, can create merriment among others that celebrates these intellectual instabilities and thus creates new ideologies for living together. Teachers, therapists, facilitators, or researchers who must estrange their clients' dialogue should adopt the perspective of the fools of long-ago carnivals to allow participants to discuss complicated matters.

The sustainable consciousness proposed in this paper requires intellectual resilience to cope with the anxiety related to conscious instabilities; such consciousness, with the trust inspired by laughter, would help to maintain our world as a dialogical and multi-voiced space without severe intergroup violence. White and Gradovski (2018, pp. 206–209) indicated that Bakhtin might recognise such emotional trust toward others as 'love', promoting continuous mutual investigations of each other's ideology.[3]

Bakhtin's ideas on laughter and dialogue remain an effective framework for building sustainable relationships with culturally alien others. Moreover, we might develop more concrete ways by which speakers' consciousness could co-exist with cultural diversity through further investigations of Greek tragedy, Socratic dialogue, and the work of the later dramatists.

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[3] Seikkula and Olson (2003, p. 408), applying Bakhtin's ideas to therapeutic fields, also indicated that psychotherapists with respectful attention toward clients' alien speech, termed 'tolerance of uncertainty', sustain deep and safe dialogues with them. Such emotional resilience should correspond with the concrete figure of love that Bakhtin identified as promoting dialogic investigations beyond speakers' conscious instabilities and anxieties.

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About the author

Atsushi Tajima is an Associate Professor at the Institute of Global Studies at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies where he has been since 2012. He received his Ph.D. in psychology from the University of Tsukuba in 2006. He has published papers and books mainly on theoretical investigations of the dialogic theories of M. M. Bakhtin, with a particular focus on improving intercultural communication in school education. He has received an Outstanding Paper Award (2007) and Kido Award (2009) from the Japanese Association of Educational Psychology for his contributed papers. He has served as a member of Research Committee in the Japanese Association of Educational Psychology since 2020.

Contact: Institute of Global Studies, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Email: tajima.atsushi@tufs.ac.jp

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4878-1462