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Entrustment and Distribution of Agency:
Toward Philosophical Reactivation of East Asian True Self

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Selfhood, Otherness and Cultivation
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Agenda

- This talk aims to revive, as a viable philosophical option, an East Asian traditional idea of *true self*; holistic, embodied and non-dualistic self, that has been advocated by, among others, some Chinese Buddhists, being based on phenomenological observations of entrustment and distribution of somatic agency.

Contents

1. East Asian True Self
2. Entrustment/Distribution of Agency
3. Self-as-We
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1 East Asian True Self

East Asian True Self

- *Self* is one of the key concepts of East Asian religious/philosophical traditions such as Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism.
- Some philosophers in those traditions advocated the idea of *true, authentic or primordial self (眞我、真人)* rather than no-self.

True Self in Indian Buddhism

- Buddhism is famous for its advocacy of no-self.
- But in the early Indian Buddhism, there was a school, *Vātsīputrīya*, that admitted the existence of self or person, *pudgala*, as the subject of reincarnation.
- In Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism, we can find such ideas of true, authentic and primordial self as *ālaya-vijñāna, Tatāgata-gārba* and *Buddha-nature*.
- It is claimed that the attainment of nirvāna is nothing but reappropriation of such true self rather than deletion of the illusion of self.

Non-dualistic True Self in Chinese Buddhism

- The Mahāyāna ideas of true self, esp. *Tatāgata-gārba* and *Buddha-nature,* had been brought into China, and become very influential among East Asian Buddhism.
- In Chinese Mādhyamika, the Mahāyāna true self is understood as *non-dual* in that it cannot be characterized in terms of any dichotomies, so should transcend the dichotomy between the existence and non-existence of self.
  – Self and non-self are non-dual. This is the meaning of non-self. That is to say, self means both self and non-self.

    Jizāng, *Treatise on Two Truth*（T1854_.45.0090c)
  – 我無我不二。是無我義。反即我無我二爲我義。

Embodied and Holistic True Self in Chinese Chen

- Besides the non-duality, Chinese Chen tradition adds two more characteristics of true self; i.e., *embodiedness* and *holisticity*.
- Their *loci classici* include ‘unification of mind and body (心身一如)’ in 坐禅儀 (1103) and ‘A body manifests itself in every phenomena (万象之中独露身)’in 景徳傳燈録 (1004).

坐禪儀

- 心身一如 ... 身相既定気息既調...自成一片此坐禪之要術也...定水澄静心珠自現...(T2023.48.1047.b14-c14)
- This passage can be *summarized* as follows.
  - By *uniting mind and body (*心身一如), phase of body is well fixed and breathing is stabilized. Then [mind/body] becomes *one-piece* (一片) by itself. This is the essence of sitting meditation. When water [mind/body] becomes fixed, clarified and calmed, the gem of mind (心珠) [a common metaphor of true self] emerges by itself.
- True self is *not* attained by freeing itself from body.
- Rather it emerges by itself only through adjustment of one's body and attainment of oneness of mind and body.
- It can be also characterized as one-piece, that deprives any dichotomy such as mind vs. body.
- In this sense, true self is *embodied*.

景徳傳燈録

- 万象之中独露身、唯人自肯乃方親、昔時謬向途中覓、今日看如火裏氷。 景徳傳燈録 巻十、長慶慧稜禅師
- The first sentence 万象之中独露身 has been interpreted in several ways.
  - Every phenomena are real and authentic（禅語字彙）
  - Body is the only precious thing among every phenomena. (新版禅学大辞典）
  - My body majestically manifests itself in every phenomena.(禅語辞典）
- The last reading takes true self as *holistic* in that every phenomena in the world is manifestations of my body or true self as body/mind.

East Asian True Self

- At least a version of East Asian true self that has been advocated in Chinese Madhyamaka and Chen traditions is
  - *holistic* in that it is manifested by every phenomena
  - *embodied* in that it is united with body
  - *non-dual* in that it transcends any dichotomies.

- In the following sections, let's reactivate such idea of self as a viable option of contemporary philosophy.

2 Entrustment/Distribution of Agency

Explanatory Gaps for Bodily Action

- Two possible explanatory gaps w.r.t. bodily action: Why-gap and How-gap
  - Why-gap or the third person gap
    - We can give neurophysiological/anatomical explanations to bodily movements; e.g., moving hands.
    - But if we cannot explain or explain away why a mental state causes a physical state (or solve or dissolve the mind-body problem) from the third person perspective, we should face why-gap w.r.t. bodily action.
    - (cf. Levine's Explanatory Gap: in his Materialism and qualia (1983)).
  - Let me be neutral to whether why-gap can be filled or not.

How-gap

- What matters here is another explanatory gap: how-gap or the first person gap.
- What is how-gap?
- Suppose that you are temporary paralyzed for some reasons and cannot move your hands however you tried to do so, then suddenly you are recovered for some reasons, and come to be able to move them easily and naturally again.
- Then what is the trick that you use for moving your hands, before and after the temporal paralysis, and that you don't or cannot use during the paralysis.
- You should be unable to answer this question and to explain how did you get the knack of moving them again.

How-gap (Conti.)

- More generally, you should be unable to explain how to move your hands.
- You cannot give a full explanation to your moving hands from the first person perspective, even though you may explain it from the third person perspective, say from anatomical or physiological perspective.
- In other words, if you are asked how to move your hands, you can only answer that you can move them in such a way as you do, or only show your hands' moving and shout 'look, this way!'.

Unguaranteed Reliance

- Such how-gap indicates that, whenever we move our hands, we should always rely on, in an *unguaranteed* or *unsecured* manner, the mechanism of our bodies and its well functioning.
- How-gap and unguaranteed reliance on mechanism is always coupled: they are two sides of a same coin.

How-gap in Tacit Bodily Action

- We can also observe the how-gap and unguaranteed reliance on some mechanism in the cases that are claimed to incorporate tacit and somatic knowledge, or *tacit bodily action* such as bicycle ride or playing the piano.
- In order to muster and carry out smoothly tacit bodily action, we need to acquire and exercise somatic skills that cannot be fully articulated.
- Since any explanation including how-explanation is a sort of articulation, we cannot explain the tacit somatic skills, and therefore how to carry out an tacit bodily action by applying them.
- If being asked to explain how to ride a bicycle, we can only show our bicycle ride and say ‘look, in this way!’.
- So here is another how gap.

Unguaranteed Reliance in Tacit Bodily Action

- For successfully carrying out tacit bodily action that we cannot explain how to do it, we should also relay on, in an unguaranteed manner, well functioning of mechanisms of, at least, our body and bicycle.

Entrustment of Agency

- How-gap and unguaranteed reliance in moving hands and bicycle ride indicate that we don't have *a full control* of those somatic actions.
- To carry out those actions successfully and smoothly, one should give up one's full control over them, and *entrust* one's agency, at least partly, to mechanism of our bodies (and bicycle) and its well functioning.
- One can even have a feeling of one's entrustment of agency, that is similar to that of release or relaxation of one's power.
- Also one can feel appropriate responses from one's body (and bicycle) to one's entrustment to it (or them).
- Whenever we can smoothly conduct our bodily action, we should feel such a mutual feeling; i.e., that of entrustment and response.

Distribution of Agency

- As mentioned, the entrustment of agency to entrustees can be experienced with the mutual feelings of release and response.
- So the entrustment is one of the first person experiences, and therefore belongs to phenomenology.
- This phenomenological experience can be translated in terms of metaphysics as *distribution of agency*.
- Since one's agency of moving hands is, at least partly, given to bodily mechanism, the agency is now distributed to two agents, self and body at least.
- Likewise, the agency of riding a bicycle is now distributed to, or shared by, self, body and the bicycle at least.

Multi-agent System

- As a result, here is an multi-agent system, in which several independent agents exist, affect with each other, and collectively or jointly carry out an somatic action.
- The multi-agent system as a whole is also one single agent that exercises its causal power to bring about the somatic action and some other effects on its environment.
  - For instance, a multi-agent system that includes such agents as an individual self, its body and a bicycle carries out a bicycle ride.
  - The body pedals the bicycle that pedals back it, and they might eventually and unfortunately hit and break a billboard on street.

Affordance

- Then how large or comprehensive is the multi-agent system?
- In other words, to what extent the agency of bodily action is distributed?
- The answer depends on what and how many agents contribute to the bodily action.
- Here we can apply J.J. Gibson's idea of affordance, according to which things in an environment are said to afford or support an animal's action.
- Our bodily action is also afforded in many things in our environment. Let us call those things as *afforders*.
  - A bicycle ride is afforded by social, historical and natural entities: social and historical conditions that invented and manufactured bicycle, social and historical conditions that constructed and maintained road, atmosphere, air pressure and gravity field on the surface of the earth, existence of the external world, flow of time and so on so forth.
  - Afforders of moving hands include natural, social, historical and economical conditions that makes possible my taking proper nutrition, for instance.
- I entrust and distribute my agency of bodily action to each of those afforders.
- All those afforders should be included in the multi-agent system.

Distinction Among Agents

- The afforders of my bodily action include various entities.
- Some entities intend to afford my action (e.g., my parents who fostered and fed me) while others not (e.g., the gravity field in the surface of the earth).
- So we should make distinction among those agents.
- J. Moor (2009) distinguished four types of ethical agents; ethical impact, implicit ethical, explicit ethical and full ethical agents.

Five Sorts of Agents

- In a similar but not exactly same way, we can differentiate four sorts of agents of bodily action.
  - **Impact agents** are those agents whose function consequently but not intentionally affords a bodily action; e.g., the gravity field.
  - **Implicit agents** are agents that are designed to afford a bodily action; e.g., road and bicycle.
  - **Explicit agents** are agents that can identify and process motivational and consequential information about a variety of situations and make sensitive determinations about what should be done; e.g., AI or robots.
  - **Full agents** are explicit agents, which has consciousness, intentionality and free will; e.g., some animals
  - **Moral agents** are full agents, which has consciousness of normativity; e.g., humans.

Literal Holisticity

- Let me ask again: how comprehensive is the multi-agent system?
- It should contain an ecological system in which I live.
- Is it a more or less local eco-system, the global eco-system, or even the cosmic system?
- Does it contain all the cosmos, having no outside?
- Or otherwise, does it has a boundary?
- It is unlikely that everything in the cosmos substantially or significantly affords my action. (It is unthinkable that a tiny and momentary event in a far away galaxy afford my action.)
- The multi-agent system is not literally holistic in that it contains everything in the world.

Open-boundary

- Thus the multi-agent system should have its boundary.
- But the boundary is not fixed but open, like an open interval.
- We cannot draw its clear and closed boundary: Whenever we try to draw it, we should find other afforders that lie outside of it.
- The system is holistic in the sense that its boundary is opened.
- The holisticity of the system means openness of boundary or open boundary-ness.

open interval (a, b)

Self as Entruster

- Every agents in the multi-agent system have agency of a somatic action.
- There is no difference among them with respect to the agency.
- But there still remains a crucial difference between the individualistic self as mind and other agents; the self is the entruster of agency, while other agents such as body, a bicycle and other afforders, are entrustees of agency.
- The holistic picture of self shows that its distinctive feature is not being an agent of bodily movement but rather being the entruster of its agency to other agents.
- Only self is entitled to entrust its agency to other agents while the latter not.

Single vs. Concerted Actions

- There is a common distinction among somatic actions; single action such as a bicycle ride and concerted one such as chorus.
- The single action is usually understood as action where only one agent participates.
- If more than two agents participate to a single action, that action should be concerted.
- Those observations are tenable only when one restricts agency only to human individuals.

Multi-agency from the Beginning

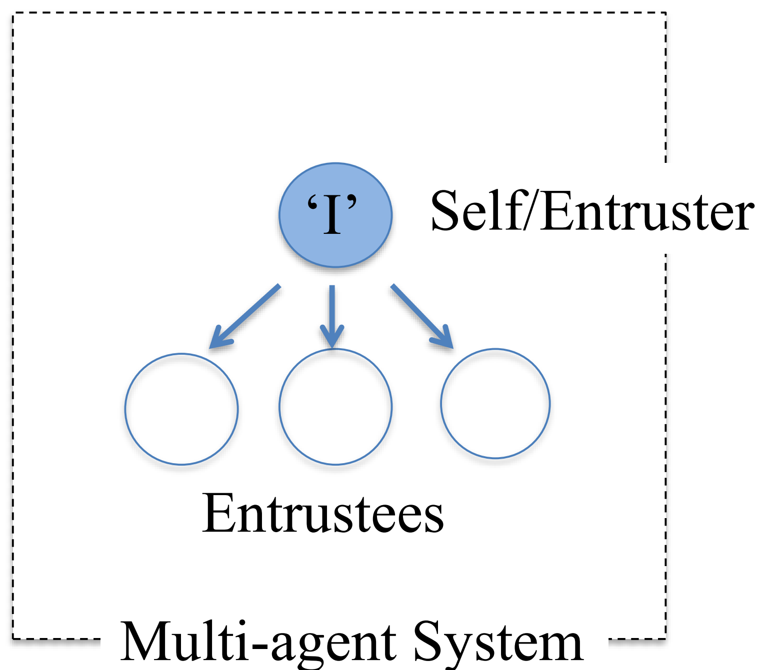
- When one includes, as we claimed that one should, body and non-human factors into agents of a human bodily action, one should admit that any single action cannot be carried out without the multiplicity of agents.
- Multiple agents should participate both single and concerted actions.
- It is *not* the case that the the multi-agents come in only when a single action becomes concerted by participation of another human agents.
- But rather the single action has been the multi-agents action from the outset.

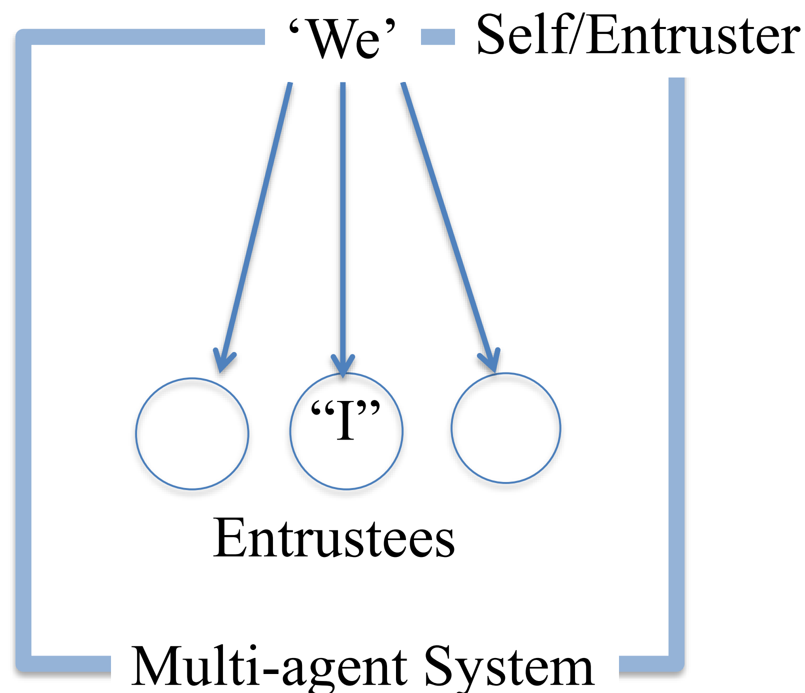
3 Self-as-We

Holistic Re-description

- So far we have describe the entrustment, distribution and the multi-agent system of somatic agency in the light of ordinary individualistic view on self, i.e., self-as-I or ‘I’.
- In this section, we will re-describe them in a holistic view on self, i.e., self-as-we, or ‘we’.
- First let’s see what is ‘we’ in contrast with ‘I’, illustrating them.

Two Pictures of Self 1

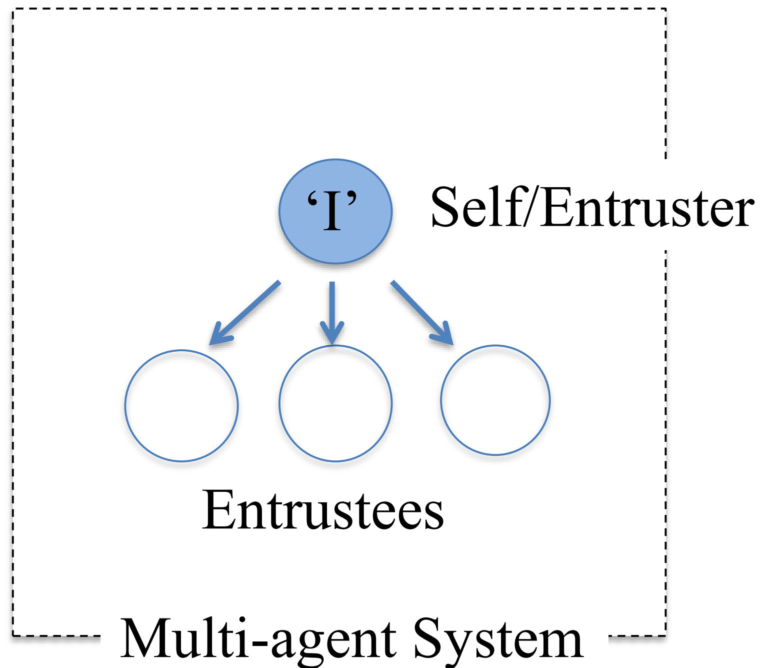




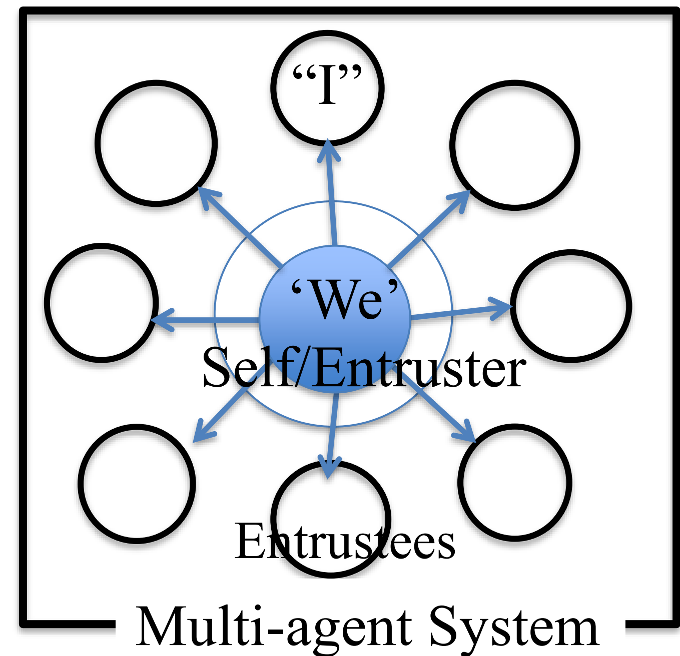
- Let's first illustrate 'I' and 'We'.
- 'We' can be illustrated in two ways; We-pictures 1 and 2.
- Thought, for some reasons, I prefer the picture 2 to 1, let's show both pictures in contrast to I-picture.

Two Pictures of Self 2

I-picture



We-picture 2



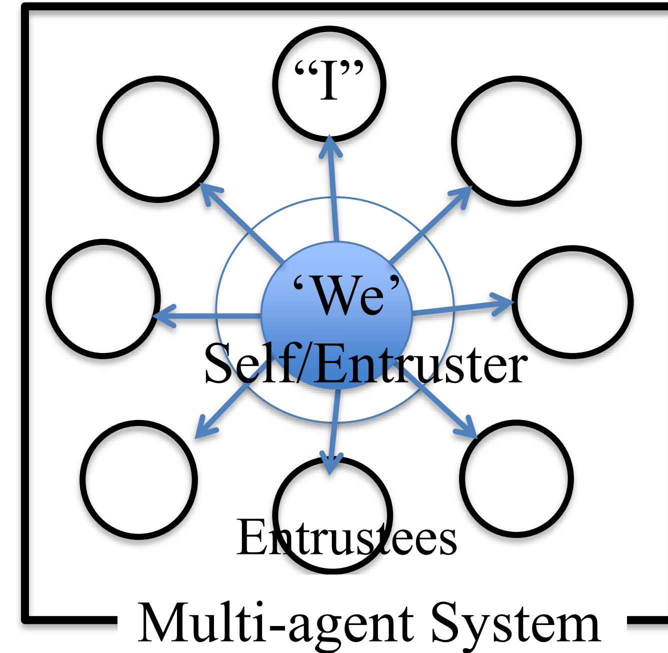
Two Pictures of Self 3

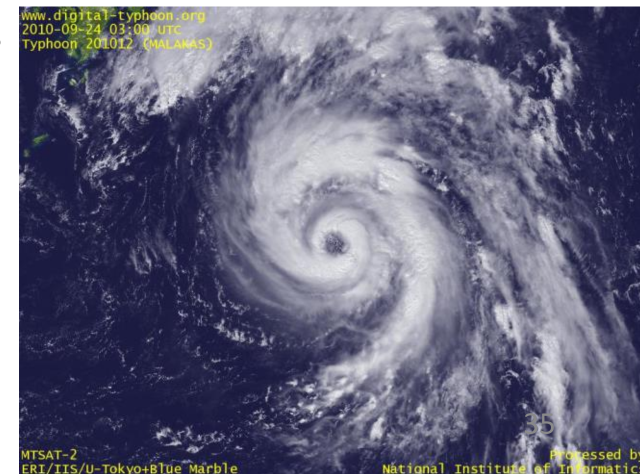
I – picture	We -picture
Self-as-I or ‘I’ is an individual person who is one of somatic agents of bodily action, who entrusts its agency *partially* to other agents.	Self-as-We or ‘We’ is the multi-agent system as a whole, who entrusts its agency *totally* to all agents in the system.
‘I’ retain its somatic agency and therefore am included within the multi-agent system.	‘We’ doesn’t retain its somatic agency and therefore is not a somatic agent any longer, lies outside the system.

Empty Center

We-picture 2

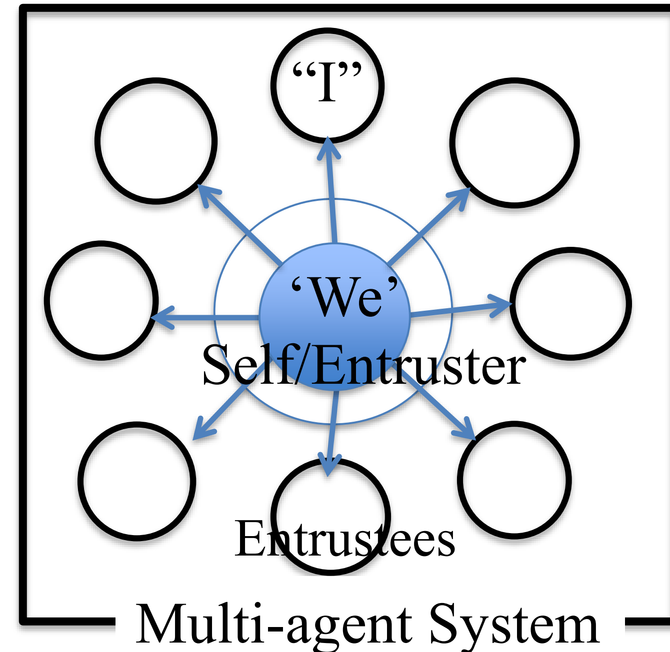
- So the multi-agent system has an empty hole at its center; i.e., *total entruster of somatic agency*.
- Agents can participate the system as far as they are entrusted somatic agency by the empty hole.
- The hole has power to put together all agencies into a system, or to construct it, like a typhoon’ eye as the center of low pressure.





Many Sorts of Agents Revisited

- There are many sorts of agents in the system.
- Among them a moral agent who is an individual person or "I" and who corresponds the individual self in the I-picture, or 'I'
- The system has many other sorts of agents, say implicit ones such as a bicycle.



System Realism

- In the we-picture, self is taken as the multi-agent system as a whole.
- So the system as a whole should be real in that it cannot be reduced or resolved into each individual agents in the system.
- Otherwise the system as a whole and therefore 'we' have to be a nominal entity.

- To be real, the system as a whole should have a holistic property that is unique to the system as a whole and cannot be reduced to each individual's property.
- And it has the holistic property; i.e., entrustership or meta-agency of entrusting its agency to others.
- Only the system as a whole is the entruster while individual agents are entrustees.

“I” is not Self

- It was shown that with respect to the somatic agency, what is essential for self is not *somatic agency* but rather entrustership of somatic agency.
- So the *entrustership* of somatic agency is a necessary conditions of self.
- Since “I” in the we-picture doesn’t have entrustership, it doesn’t meet this condition, so cannot be counted as self, while ‘we’ in the picture and ‘I’ in the I-picture meet it, and therefore is entitled as self.

I: From Self to an Agent

- 'I' in the I-picture is demoted to a mere agent in the We-picture.

'I' in the I-picture	"I" in the We-picture
The entruster	An entrustee
Entrustership	Not
Self	A mere agent
The de facto and de jure owner of its agencies.	Only the de facto owner of its agencies.
I do Cogito	I am entrusted to do Dispensatio mihi credita est cogitare

- A substantial meaning of the sift of the pictures is to change the formula of my action from 'I do X' to 'I am entrusted to do X'.

Subject of Somatic agency Cogitamus rather than Cogito

- Who does a bicycle ride?
- Not only me, nor the bicycle.
- Rather all the relevant agents participate the bicycle ride and they from a single multi-agent system.
- So the answer should be the multi-agent system as a whole.
- As far as we admit the entrustment and distribution of somatic agency to all the agents of a multi-agent system, the subject of any action should not be any individual agent but the system as a whole.
- In the we-picture, the system as whole is self-as-we.
- So in the picture, the answer is ‘we’.
- In the picture, ‘we’ is the only subject of any action.
- ‘We ride a bicycle.’ ‘We think (cogitamus).’ rather than ‘I think (cogito).

Ownership of a Body

- Then how about ownership of an individual body?
- Since all the properties of an individual agent are entrusted by ‘we’, ‘we’ has the de jure owner of the body, while “I” is the de facto owner of it.
- But other individual agents are not entrusted the ownership of the body.

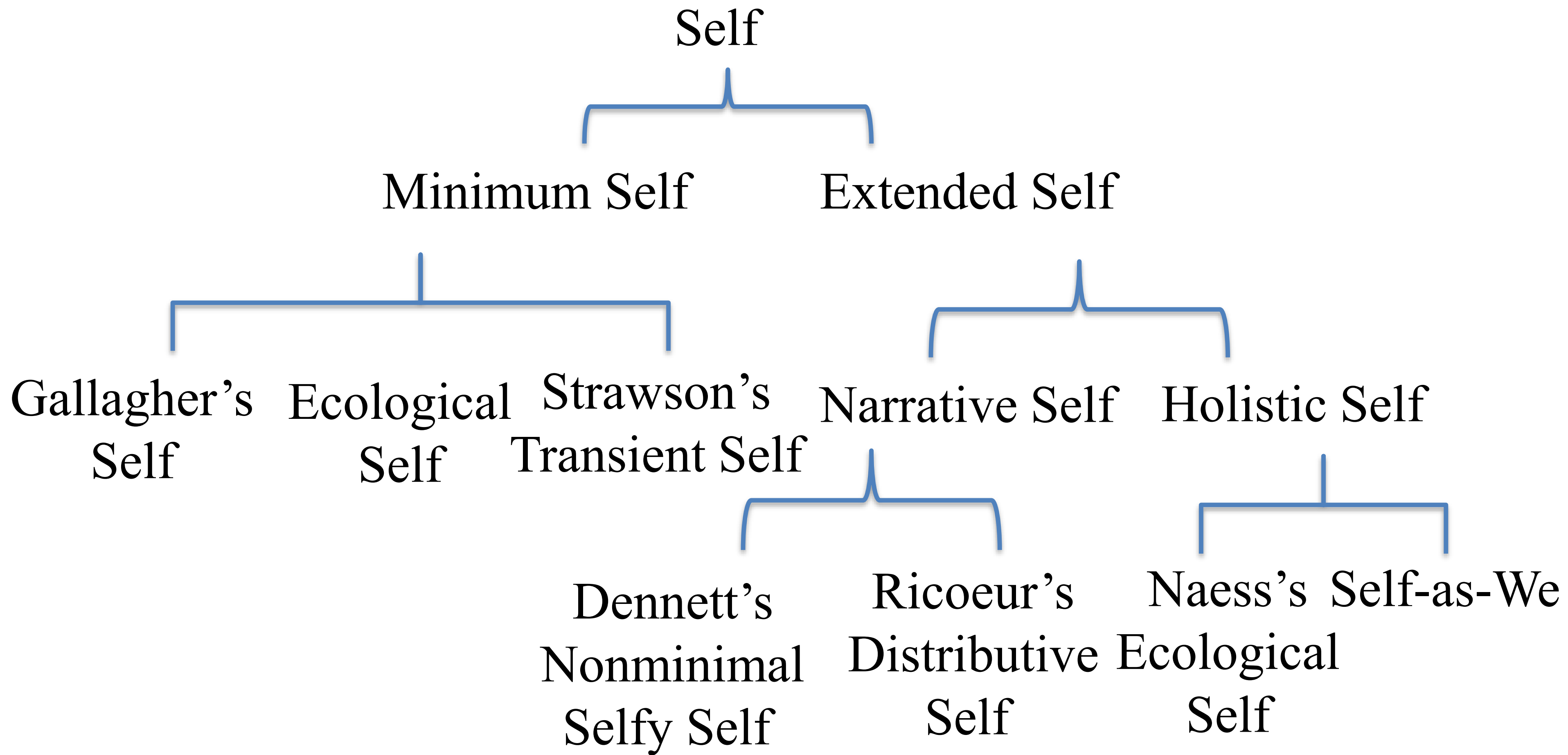
An Upshot

	Somatic Action's			The Ownership of a Body
	Subject	Agency	Entrustment	
'We'	√	de jure	Entruster	de jure
"I"		de facto	Entrustee	de facto
Other Individual Agents		De facto	Entrustee	

- This shows among others that the de fact ownership of a body and its de fact somatic agency are different in that the former is limited to "I" while the later is distributed to all the agents.

4 Self-as-We vs. Other Views on Self

An Overview



Self-as-We vs. Minimum Self

- Minimum self is “a conscious of oneself as an immediate subject of experience, unextended in time”. (Gallagher 2000, 15)
- It involves “senses of ownership and agency in the context of both motor action and cognition” (ibid. 15)
- Self-as-we is an extended rather than minimum self.
- Also w.r.t. self-as-we, it is phenomenologically claimed that the sense of agency of motor action should be accompanied by the one of entrustment of agency.
- So it calls for psychological studies to investigate this ‘hidden’ aspect or nuance of sense of agency.

Self-as-We as a Conceptual Self

- While entrustment of agency is claimed as a hidden *sense* of agency, self-as-we is an interpretation of the sense, that presupposes such concepts as *the multi-agent system* as well as *self*.
- So it is a *conceptual* rather than pre-conceptual self, in terms of Neisser (1988).

Self-as-We vs. Strawson's Transient Self

- Similarities:
- Conceptuality: the both selves are conceptual, presupposing that the concept of self has been already possessed by them.
- Phenomenological methodology: the both start from conceptual and phenomenological reflection on our first-person experience of self, and are claimed to be able to be generalized, at least to a considerable degree.
- Differences:
- While self-as-we is an extended self, Strawson's self is minimal in that it is "a momentary self "without long-term continuity, and thus without a history" "a bare focus of consciousness, void of personality" (Strawson 1999, 492).

Self-as-We as an Extended Self

- As being an agent of somatic action, self-as-we is not a momentary or minimum self, being extending over time, during the execution of the action, that includes its making plan and forward and pre-action monitoring of its movement.
- If the action is understood as a part or tool of a more comprehensive action, self-as-we is to be identified as the agent of the latter, and be extended in a more comprehensive manner, temporally and spatially.
- For instance, if a bicycle ride is conduced as a way of commuting to one's office, it can be taken to be a part or tool of a more comprehensive action; i.e., execution of a daily occupation, and self-as-we who rides the bicycle exists for, at least, several hours.

Further Extensions

- Furthermore, if the occupational execution of a day is understood as a part or tool of that of life time, the self-as-we is also to be understood as extending for many decades.
- If the life time execution of occupation is understood as a part or tool of a more comprehensive action; living an entire life, the self-as-we lasts during my entire life time.
- If the living a life is understood as a part or tool of, say entire activities of humans, the self-as-we should cover the entire history of human being.

Self-as-We vs. Narrative Self

- Narrative self is a self-mage ‘that is constituted with a past and a future in the various stories that we and others tell about ourselves. (Gallagher 2000, 15).
- It is a fiction made by brain that is given to us, and therefore unavoidable for us.
  – “[F]or the most part we don’t spin them [the stories]; they spin us” (Dennett, 1991, 418).

Self-as-We as a Real Choice

- Self-as-we is an interpretation of our sense of entrustment of agency, that is an alternative to individualistic one.
- It is a matter of choice for us which to choose.
- It is also *real* in Kantian sense: it is the abstract entity which we have an emotional commitment to accept, and are affected by our commitment, like Kantian moral principle, basic human rights.
- So it is neither fictious nor compulsory.

Self-as-We vs. Ricoeur’s Distributive Self

- Ricoeur proposed a ‘decentered, distributed and multiplex’ version of narrative self, that can be extrapolated as ‘the sum total of its narratives, and [what] includes within itself all of the equivocations, contradictions, struggles and hidden messages that find expression in personal life” (Gallagher 2000, 20).
- While Ricoeur’s self is distributive w.r.t. narrative or narratively distributive, self-as-we is so w.r.t. somatic agency or agentively distributive.

Three Ecological Selves

- Minimum Ecological Self in Bermúdes-Neisser's sense (Neisser 1988, Bermúdes 1998): ecological system as non-self
- Naess's Ecological Self: too Homogeneous
- Self-as-We: Heterogeneous
- Non-dual　Either A nor ¬A

  Both A and B　（Heterogeneous)

Minimum Ecological Self

- Non-(or pre-) conceptual or linguistic awareness of self, that is acquired, even in fetal period, through our perceptions of objects and their movements in our environment and our proprioceptive perception of movements of our body.
- So it is “a minimum self that is embodied, enactive and ecologically tuned” (Gallagher 2000, 17).
- Here objects in our environment or ecological system is experienced as *non-self* or *others* to which the ecological self is contrasted.
- In other words, ecological system plays the role of a photographic negative of self, so to say.

Naess' Ecological Self

- Naess, a pioneer of deep ecology, proposed *ecological self* that is identified with, beyond human individual, non-human lives, no-lives and natural environments in an ecosystem (Naess 1987).
- But Naess' ecological self is so ill-defined as to invite such criticism from eco-feminism that it is nothing but a hypertrophy of a particular culture-laden, say patriarchal, individual self, and therefore may induce a serious over-standardization of others.

Self-as-we as a Heterogeneous Self

- In contrast, self-as-we is quite heterogeneous because, for reasons that I cannot explain for the lack of time, it has all the properties of agents within it.
- It is, say, human and no-human, life and no-life and so on so forth.
- This means that it cannot be property characterized by any concept of dichotomous pair, say human, non-human, life and no-life, and therefore nondual.
- The nonduality of self-as-we can be conceptually expressed as contradiction; both A and not A, rather than neither A nor not A.
- So it is contradictory like Ricoeur's self.

THANK YOU!

Perspective, Dwelling, and Phenomenology in Early Chinese Philosophy

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What would phenomenology look like in without Cartesianism?

Edmund Husserl:

"Accordingly, one might almost call transcendental phenomenology a neo-Cartesianism, even though it is obliged—and precisely by its radical development of Cartesian motifs—to reject nearly all the well-known doctrinal content of the Cartesian philosophy" (*Cartesian Meditations*)

early Chinese philosophers did not have this background

- no dualism between:
  - appearance and reality (Ziporyn)
  - “things ‘as they seem to us' and things ‘as they are in themselves’” (Geaney)
- no “representational theory of mind,” according to which I have “direct access only to some intermediate entity that is in some sense ‘internal’ to thought—such as ideas, impressions, phainomena, appearances, sense data, experiences, or a conceptual scheme—whose function is to represent or indicate how the ‘external,’ thought-independent world is” (Fraser)
- the lack of a model that is attacked by phenomenology suggests:
  - why phenomenology might apply well to Chinese thought
  - why Chinese philosophers themselves would never conceive of phenomenology as such

this talk:

- focus on how Chinese philosophers themselves conceived of something analogous to phenomena
  - If they did not have the distinction between appearance and reality, what took its place?
- trace reflections on the fact that different people sometimes have different experiences of what we take to be the same event
  - that is what I mean by “perspective”
  - the term in the *Huainanzi* would be *chǔ* 處, dwelling
- development of a coherent discourse of perspective
  - the “Inner Chapters” of the *Zhuangzi*
  - *Xunzi* (particularly in the “Jiěbì” 解蔽 chapter)
  - *Huainanzi*

Mengzi on seeing as a matter of concern

所以謂人皆有不忍人之心者：今人乍見孺子將入於井，皆有怵惕惻隱之心；非所以內交於孺子之父母也，非所以要譽於鄉黨朋友也，非惡其聲而然也

For this reason, I say all people have a heart of not bearing the suffering of others: Now if people suddenly see a small child about to go into a well, anyone will have a heart of alarm and compassion, not to get in with the child's father and mother, not to seek a praise among their neighbors and friends, and not for detesting the reputation of it. (2A6)

cultivating how things appear

所謂誠其意者，毋自欺也，如惡惡臭，如好好色 。

What is called making one’s intention authentic and avoiding self-deception is like being disgusted (wù 惡) by a disgusting (è 惡) smell or like lusting (hào 好) for those with good (hǎo 好) looks. (*Daxue*)

Zhuangzi: how make things appear less troubling or worrisome

自其異者視之，肝膽楚越也；自其同者視之，萬物皆一也。夫若然者，且不知耳目之所宜，而遊心乎德之和；物視其所一而不見其所喪，視喪其足猶遺土也。

Looking from the differences, your liver and gall bladder are like the states of Chu and Yue. Looking from their sameness, the ten thousand things are all one. Someone like this even does not recognize (zhī 知) what is appropriate for his ears or eyes. He has his heart wander playfully in the harmony of virtuosity. As for things, he looks at what makes them one and does not see what is lost. He looks at the loss of his foot as dirt left behind. (5:190-91)

- *zhī* 知: recognize, perceive, be aware of, know; knowing-how; knowing-that

Zhuangzi and a discourse on perspective

- Mengzi describes something like “seeing as” or aspect perception
- the *Zhuangzi* opens up a broader conception of perspective
- raises many of the key points for later philosophies of perspective:
  - establishes the heart as the primary locus for perspective
  - distinguishes between how the world appears and explicit judgments that presuppose those appearances
  - sets part of self-cultivation as shaping how the world appears
- All of these elements appear in different forms and with different purposes in the *Xunzi* and the *Huainanzi*

topics

1. What is recognized as perspective?
2. Perspective and philosophical diversity
3. The causes of perspective
4. The heart (*xīn* 心) as basis
5. Cultivation for what purpose?
6. What is perspective?
7. (The ontology of perspective: not mind/body dualism)

perspective in Xunzi, “Jiebi”

- One looking down from a mountain will see oxen as sheep, because the distance blocks (bì 蔽) their great size.
- In the dark one might see a rock as a crouching tiger or a tree as a person, because the darkness blocks clear vision.
- A drunk person will misjudge distances because alcohol disrupts (*luàn* 亂) the spirit (shén 神).
- Pressure on the eye will cause double vision and covering the ears distorts sounds, because these actions disrupt the sense organs.
- The blind look up but cannot see the stars, because the function of their vital essence (jīng 精) is confused (huò 惑).
- a person who is foolish and prone to fear takes his shadow for a ghost and his hair for a spirit; he dies in terror while trying to escape them.

Huainanzi: desire and perspective

- A person at sea becomes so terrified during a storm that he jumps from the ship. This person “was confused by fearing death and conversely forgot life” (惑於恐死而反忘生也) (13: 978).
- A person tries to steal gold while in the middle of a market filled with people. When asked why he did something so foolish, he says that he did not see the people. He only saw (jiàn 見) the gold. The text explains: “When the will desires something, it forgets what it is doing” (志所欲，則忘其為矣) (13: 978).

- *wàng* 忘: forgetting in both the sense of not attending to or noticing and in the sense of not remembering

Huainanzi: perspective and interpretation

- Thus, the demeanor of the guest had one form, someone took him as a noble and another took him as a petty person, because the place from which they [*shì* 視] look differs. (故賓之容，一體也，或以為君子，或以為小人，所自視之異也)

- The actuality of the actions is one; the place from which they observe [guān 觀] differs. (事之情一也，所從觀者異也)

Xunzi on blocking, blinkering, obsessing (bì 蔽）

凡人之患，蔽於一曲，而闇於大理。

In general, the trouble for human beings is that we *bì* toward one corner [qū 曲] but remain in the dark about the greater coherence [dàlǐ 大理]. (21: 386)

- *bì* 蔽 to hide or conceal something by blocking or covering it
- *qū*: a bend or what is bent or crooked; as an adjective, it means narrow, skewed, or cramped

Xunzi on philosophical diversity

墨子蔽於用而不知文，宋子蔽於欲而不知得，慎子蔽於法而不知賢，申子蔽於埶而不知知，惠子蔽於辭而不知實，莊子蔽於天而不知人。故由用謂之道，盡利矣；由俗謂之道，盡嗛矣；由法謂之道，盡數矣；由埶謂之道，盡便矣；由辭謂之道，盡論矣；由天謂之道，盡因矣。

Mòzǐ was blinkered by use and did not know (*zhī*) cultured refinement. Sòngzǐ was blinkered by desire and did not know achievement. Shènzǐ was blinkered by law and did not know worthies. Shēnzǐ was blinkered by positional power and did not know wisdom. Huìzǐ was blinkered by wording and did not know actualities. Zhuāngzǐ was blinkered by heaven and did not know the human. Thus, speaking of dao in terms of use makes it entirely about benefit. Speaking of dao in terms of desires makes it entirely about contentment. Speaking of dao in terms of law makes it entirely about calculation. Speaking of dao in terms of positional power makes it entirely about expediency. Speaking of dao in terms of wording makes it entirely about discourse. Speaking of dao in terms of heaven makes it entirely about going along with things. (21: 392-393)

Huainanzi on philosophy diversity

- Kongzi > Mozi > Yang Zhu > Mengzi

趨舍人異，各有曉心。故是非有處，得其處則無非；失其處則無是。

What people pursue and abandon differs; each has the perceptions [xiǎo 曉] of the heart. Thus, affirming and denying have a dwelling. If one attains that dwelling, then there is nothing to deny. If one loses that dwelling, then there is nothing to affirm. (13: 940)

- chǔ 處 to dwell or reside; a dwelling

Xunzi on what can become *bì*

all bì are relational, but we can distinguish three types by emphasis

- differences between things
  - "In general, the myriad things are differentiated and so one always blocks [*bì*] others. This is the common trouble in the methods of the heart." (21: 388) [凡萬物異則莫不相為蔽，此心術之公患也}
  - the beginning or the end, the past or the present
- conditions in which the knower is placed
  - distance, darkness, pressure on the eye
- factors grounded in the person
  - desires and emotions

the limits of perspective are strengthened by self-affirmation

- Xunzi: people genuinely want to be right, but they become attached to their own view
  - They personally prefer (sī 私) what they have accumulated, only fearing to hear of its faults. They lean on what is personal to them (sī) and use that to observe other methods, only fearing to hear of their fineness. (私其所積，唯恐聞其惡也。倚其所私以觀異術，唯恐聞其美也。) (21:286-387)
- Huainanzi: people are not seeking what is right but what fits them
  - Thus, seeking what is right is not seeking a coherent way [*dàolǐ* 道理] but seeking what fits with oneself; abandoning what is wrong is not resisting what is perverse and twisted but abandoning what counters one's heart. (故求是者，非求道理也，求合於己者也；去非者，非批邪施也，去忤於心者也)

xīn 心 (heart/mind) as locus for perspective

夫隨其成心而師之，誰獨且無師乎？奚必知代而心自取者有之？愚者與有焉！未成乎心而有是非，是今日適越而昔至也。

If we follow a completed heart and make it our authority, who alone is without an authority? How would it be only those who know the alternations and whose hearts affirm themselves that have them? The foolish would also have them! Not yet completed in the heart but having judgments of right and wrong – this is like leaving for Yuè today and arriving there yesterday. (*Zhuangzi* 2: 56)

Xunzi on the importance of the heart

心不使焉，則白黑在前而目不見；雷鼓在側而耳不聞，況於使者乎！

If the heart is not engaged in it, then white and black can be in front but the eyes do not see them, thunderous drums can be in front but the ears do not hear them. How much more if the heart is engaged! (Wang 21: 387)

人何以知道？曰：心。心何以知？曰：虛壹而靜。

By what do people know the way? The heart. By what does the heart know? Emptiness, oneness, and stillness. (Wang 21: 395-96)

emptiness (xu 虛)

人生而有知，知而有志，志也者，臧也；然而有所謂虛；不以所已藏害所將受，謂之虛。

People are born and have knowing, with knowing then they have intentions. Having intentions is storing, but even so there is what is called emptiness. Not letting what is already stored harm what is about to be received is called emptiness.

oneness or unity (yī 壹)

心生而有知，知而有異，異也者，同時兼知之；同時兼知之，兩也；然而有所謂一，不以夫一害此一謂之壹。

The heart is born and there is knowing, with knowing there is differentiating, and differentiating is knowing inclusively at the same time. Knowing at the same time inclusively is multiplicity, but even so there is what is called oneness. Not letting that one harm this one is called oneness.

stillness or quietness (jìng 靜)

心臥則夢，偷則自行，使之則謀；故心未嘗不動也，然而有所謂靜；不以夢劇亂知謂之靜。

The heart when asleep dreams, when relaxed wanders on its own, and when engaged makes plans. Thus, the heart is never not moving, but even so there is what is called stillness. Not letting dreams and concerns disrupt knowing is called stillness.

commonalities between the *Zhuangzi*, *Xunzi*, *Huainanzi*

- effectively knowing and acting in the world is possible only when the heart is still
  - because the heart shapes how the world appears
- disagreements must be addressed on a level prior to judgements and arguments
  - a phenomenological level
- goal is something like objectivity
- method is self-cultivation by reducing the distortions that come from emotions, desires, and attachments

differences in goals

- Zhuangzi: allow things to appear in ways that do not upset us
  - *xiāoyāoyóu* 逍遙遊, free and easy wandering
  - skillfulness
- Xunzi: responding to appearances as they are leads proper commitments, judgments, and emotions
  - "Of the myriad things, none take form without being seen, none are seen and not sorted, none are sorted and lose their place." (21: 397) [萬物莫形而不見，莫見而不論，莫論而失位]
- Huainanzi: need a diversity of philosophies and perspectives to suit different circumstances
  - "It is like the axe, hatchet, mallet, and chisel each having that which it does." (13: 940-941)

what is perspective?

- perspective is not understood through the contrast of appearance and reality

- the problem is not illusion or falsity but partiality

Xunzi on getting just one corner

此數具者，皆道之一隅也。夫道者，體常而盡變，一隅不足以舉之。曲知之人，觀於道之一隅，而未之能識也，故以為足而飾之，內以自亂，外以惑人，上以蔽下，下以蔽上，此蔽塞之禍也。

These various methods each are one corner (*yú* 隅) of the way. Now the way embodies constancy and yet comprehends all changes: one corner is not enough to raise it up. People with cramped (*qū* 曲) knowledge observe one corner of the way but are never able to recognize (*shí* 識) this, so they take it as sufficient and they beautify it, inside using it to disrupt themselves, outside using it to perplex others, when above blinkering [*bì*] those below and when below blinkering those above. This is the misfortune of being blinkered and blocked. (21: 393)

making sense of the causes of perspective

for Xunzi, *bì* can be things as different as desires and emotions, alcohol, distance, and court favorites

Huainanzi seamlessly mixes differences in location or social status with differences in emotions and prejudices

- seem to confuse perspective with the causes of perspective, or to conflate objective factors and subjective factors

- If we focus on partiality, then the question is, why do certain things appear to me and not to you?
    - includes locations, social roles, moods, assumptions, interests, and so
    - dwelling (being-in-the-world?)

Conclusion: phenomenology and early Chinese philosophy

- position meant to overcome a dualism in one tradition resembles positions that arise in traditions that lack that dualism
- but, the “Death of God” is not the same as never believing in God at all
  - attend to differences that arise from different genealogies

Body, Mind and Consciousness: Comparative Reflections

Zhihua Yao

In the last few decades, the study of mind and consciousness has become a very lively field of contemporary philosophy. It has even developed into an interdisciplinary science of mind or consciousness. Buddhism is one of the few religious and spiritual traditions that have actively engaged in this field. Francisco Varela, who coined the term "neurophenomenology," also initiated the ongoing dialogue between Buddhism and the science of mind and consciousness. The results of these dialogues have become the most creative and theoretically significant aspect of contemporary Buddhist studies.

In the present paper, I will reflect on the Buddhist approach to body, mind and consciousness against the backdrop of contemporary theories of mind and consciousness. I will proceed in three sections. First, I will interpret the Buddhist doctrine of no-self as the denial of independent spiritual entity. Then I will examine the material basis of mind and consciousness from a Buddhist point of view. Finally, I will discuss the possible Buddhist contributions to the contemporary exploration of the mystery of consciousness.

I. The Denial of Independent Spiritual Entity

The contemporary philosophy of mind can be divided into two main camps based on their fundamental views on mind and consciousness. One camp takes a stance of dualism, usually called property dualism, and holds that mind and consciousness cannot be reduced to physical or physiological phenomena. The other camp takes a stance of physicalism and believes that mind and consciousness can be completely interpreted as and reduced to physical or physiological phenomena once the science of consciousness is really established. Many AI researchers, who usually adopt the latter view, also believe that the artificial simulation of human intelligence will eventually be possible once the relevant technology is mature enough.

I think that Buddhism had developed a materialistic or physicalistic model of mind, because the foundational Buddhist teaching of no-self can be interpreted as a version of physicalism. But it can only be understood properly in the context of Indian philosophy and religion. The orthodox Indian philosophical schools generally divide a living entity into three basic aspects, namely, spirit or soul (*puruṣa* or *ātman*), mind (*manas*) and physical body (*rūpa*). This picture is actually similar to the threefold division of human life into body, mind and soul among the medieval Christian philosophers. The aspect of spirit or soul is called *puruṣa* by the Sāṃkhyas, or *ātman*

by many other schools. It is also the *ātman* that is denied by the Buddhist teaching of no-self (*an-ātman*). The Sanskrit word *ātman* cannot be understood narrowly in the English sense of "self." Its sense of "self" is derived from its root meaning of "breath" or "life principle," which is shared by the German word of the same root "*atmen*." The self in the sense of breath or life principle should be understood more properly as soul or spirit, just as in the Christian tradition Adam is believed to gain his soul or very self through the breath of God.

What is denied in the Buddhist teaching of no-self is exactly this spiritual entity of soul, one of the essential aspects of human life in theistic traditions. This Buddhist innovation in ancient India can be compared to Descartes's contributions to modern Western philosophy. As is commonly known, he is usually criticized for having started mind-body dualism in modern West. But the reason that he advocated dualism was because he denied, in the same way as the Buddhists did, the third aspect of soul. Compared with the orthodox Hindu or Christian threefold theory of body-mind-soul, the Buddhist and Descartes's theories of body and mind come closer to the contemporary physicalist view of mind and body. In contrast to the popular understanding among contemporary philosophers that Descartes was advocating substance dualism and hence an independent spiritual entity, he actually denied the existence of such a spirit-like entity. Being one of the early modern physiologists

himself, Descartes saw the human being as a unity of body and mind, and did not believe that mind could survive death as a soul would do (Clarke 2003, 235-58).

In a Buddhist view, this third aspect of soul should not be taken into account because independent spiritual entity does not exist, and mind or consciousness should not be treated as such an entity either. In an Indian context, mind (*manas*) is distinguished from the eternal spiritual entity and taken to be a function of the fluctuating and hence illusory material body. Mind is therefore classified under the material realm instead of the spiritual one that we generally take for granted. Mind can only act as the function or capacity (*śakti*) of the material body and cannot exist independently as spirit or soul. Because Buddhism denies the existence of the independent eternal spiritual entity, what remains is only the material realm that includes mind and mental phenomena within it. In this sense, we can say that the Buddhists hold a materialistic or physicalistic view of mind.

This sense of physicalism should be more properly described as the Strawsonian sense of "real physicalism," which acknowledges the reality of physical phenomena as well as that of mental phenomena (Strawson 2008, 53-74). This real physicalism goes beyond the dichotomy as laid out in the beginning of the section. On this view, the main disagreement between the two camps is not whether one would accept the reality of mental phenomena. The majority of contemporary philosophers would not

deny this. Rather they disagree on whether mental phenomena can be reduced to what is physical as we understand today. By insisting on reductionism, one camp goes to the extreme of physic*s*alism (another Strawsonian term), and tries to interpret all mental phenomena with the physical and physiological knowledge we have today without acknowledging the fact that we are still ignorant of the "physical principle" underlying the mental phenomena. On the other hand, by insisting on non-reductionism, the other camp falls into the extreme of the so-called "dualism," and tends to present mind and consciousness as a soul-like independent spiritual entity. This way it falls back into the traditional theistic beliefs and leaves little room for rational discussion. But as we have shown, even Descartes, the alleged founding father of dualism, would not go this far. Once we understand that the actual disagreement between the two parties is not the ontological commitment of physicalism versus dualism, but rather a methodological orientation of reductionism versus non-reductionism, which, in turn, depends on whether one is willing to acknowledge our ignorance of what is "physical," we will realize that various different philosophical views with regard to the mind-body relation share far more common ground than what they would like to admit.

II. Body and Mind

Having clarified that Buddhism endorses a physicalist or real physicalist view of mind, we shall move on to discuss how mind interacts with the material body. The traditional Buddhist literature is generally obscure about this issue. Ancient Indians, like their contemporaries in Ancient Egypt, Greece and China, did not discover the brain, nor could they take it to be the material basis of mind. But from very early on Indian and Buddhist philosophers had been talking about five sense-consciousnesses (*indriyavijñāna*), namely, visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, and tactile consciousnesses. The relationship between these five sense-consciousnesses and their respective sense organs, namely, eye, ear, nose, tongue and body, had been discussed by the Buddhists. The mainstream opinion held that they are inseparable and sense organs are the material basis of sense-consciousnesses. But with regard to their roles and functions in cognition, there had been fierce debates among various Buddhist philosophical schools. Some (e.g., Sarvāstivāda) held that sense organs play a leading and definite role in cognition, while others (e.g., Sautrāntika) believed that sense-consciousnesses play such a role. Still some others held that the combination of the two makes the cognition possible.

In the view of contemporary cognitive science, there should not be any dispute on the Buddhist classification of five sense organs, but how should we understand the

five sense-consciousnesses? Taking a look at any picture that maps out the brain functions, one will find that vision, hearing, smell, taste and touch are the five basic functions of the relevant brain regions (and regions responsible for movement, speech, memory and etc. are usually also marked out), and they correspond respectively to visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, and tactile consciousnesses in Buddhist philosophy. The disputes on the role and function of sense organ and sense-consciousness in cognition among early Buddhist philosophical schools can therefore be seen as a very early attempt to explore the function of relevant brain regions in cognition.

If five sense-consciousnesses have their respective sense organs as basis, then what is the material basis of the sixth mental consciousness? This is a natural but difficult question even for today. Mental consciousness (*manovijñāna*) in the Buddhist sense is in charge of almost all the mental functions except for the above five sensations, which include but are not limited to thinking, inference, conception, and memory. All these functions are attributed to certain regions of the brain in the brain science, but a Pali Abhidhamma commentary attributes the material basis of mental consciousness to "heart-basis" (*hadaya-vatthu*).[1] This opinion coincides with the

[1] Buddhaghosa 2010, 447: "The heart-basis has the characteristic of being the (material) support for the mind-element and for the mind-consciousness-element."

view found in all the major ancient civilizations that locates the locus of mental activities in heart, the center of the human body.

In the mainstream Sanskrit Abhidharma literature, there were very serious discussions on the basis of mental consciousness, but their conclusion is somewhat surprising. First of all, they developed the concept of mind (*manas*) along the direction of "inner sense" or "mental organ." What is this mental organ? Vasubandhu said that it is the consciousness that has just passed away immediately.[2] In other words, the reason that our mental consciousness can arise instantaneously at any given moment is because it is based on the consciousness of the previous moment. This conclusion was probably drawn from the Buddhist meditative practice, but its theoretical background was the concept of mental continuum (*saṃtāna*), which assumes the continuity of mental consciousness in or even beyond each individual living body. As a matter of fact, almost all the Buddhist philosophical schools were dissatisfied with the momentariness of mind and mental activities and attempted to seek the subtler mechanism of continuity behind the scene. They developed a great variety of concepts along this line, for instance, the Theravāda concept of life continuum (*bhavāṅga*), the Mahāsāṃghika concept of root consciousness

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[2] AK 1.17ab: "Of the six consciousnesses, the one that has just passed immediately, is the mental organ (*manas*)." (*ṣaṇṇām anantarātītaṃ vijñānaṃ yad dhi tan manaḥ* |)

(*mūlavijñāna*), the Mahīśāsaka concept of the aggregate that penetrates life and death (*āsaṃsārika-skandha*), the Vātsīputrīya concept of person (*pudgala*), and the Yogācāra concept of store consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*).

The Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka, as represented most prominently in modern time by the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, did not explicitly admit any of such concepts. But when he confronted the physicalist assumption of many cognitive scientists with an attempt to make sense of the Buddhist concept of reincarnation, he relied heavily on this principle of continuity. According to him, just as physical phenomena arise on the relevant physical basis, the mental phenomena must also arise from a certain mental continuum; "there is a continuum of awareness that does not itself arise from the brain. This basic capacity exists right from the initial formation of the conceptus, prior to the formation of the brain itself" (Dalai Lama XIV 1999, 41). The background assumption of this principle of continuity is the concept of mental continuum developed by the Sarvāstivādins and Sautrāntikas.

To the eyes of many contemporary philosophers, this is a view of typical Cartesian dualism, which is seen as problematic from the very beginning of contemporary philosophy of mind. On my view, it is oversimplified to deal with such complicated and subtle issues as the consciousness after death with such a principle of continuity, or even worse, by resorting to the popular metaphor of lamp and flame in

Buddhist literature. This way one would not only fall into the so-called Cartesian dualism, but also embrace an immortal soul of traditional theistic religion, which was rejected by Buddhism in its very beginning. How would the Buddhist philosophy of mind avoid such a dangerous situation? Let us return to the concept of mental organ.

The "mental organ" (*manas*) that was defined as the previous consciousness developed into the seventh consciousness *manas* later in Yogācāra philosophy. It is understood in two aspects: 1) previous consciousness; 2) defiled consciousness, i.e., the ego-consciousness that features self-delusion, self-view, self-pride, and self-love (Asaṅga 2001, 22). The Yogācāras seemed to emphasize more of its second aspect. But these two aspects are actually closely related. In other words, a sense of self or personal identity is rooted in the continuity of previous, present and future consciousnesses. This continuity can be called a "temporal binding" in contemporary terminology. According to the Yogācāra theory, such a binding is caused by the seventh consciousness *manas* that mistakenly attaches to the eighth store consciousness. If it correctly realizes the characteristic of the store consciousness, then it would not make such an attempt of binding.

What is the characteristic of the store consciousness? Briefly speaking, it is a storehouse, memory and information storage. With the popularization of personal computer, memory is not necessarily confined to the brain. Information can be stored

in the protein of certain areas of the brain as well as in silicon chips of a computer. If we understand the store consciousness in terms of memory or information storage, then we can go beyond the concept of mind as conceived in the traditional framework of mind-body dualism. Not only the organic body of humans can have the store consciousness, such devices as a computer can also have its store consciousness. The consciousness here is not a mental phenomenon in the traditional sense as contrasted to matter; instead it is a storage of information.

By referring to the Freudian and Jungian psychology, the store consciousness in this sense can be understood as an unconscious consciousness. While Freud still confined unconscious in the personal level, Jung has gone beyond this limitation with his concept of collective unconscious, which is usually described metaphorically as a limitless ocean, the same way as the store consciousness is described in Yogācāra Buddhism. But the mainstream philosophers of mind do not treat this psychological tradition seriously. Consciousness in their sense is always distinguished from unconscious. Nor do they seriously deal with the consciousness in the mental states of sleep or faint. In contrast, both Yogācāra Buddhism and Freud-Jung tradition developed their relevant theories by seriously studying the mental continuity in all these mental states.

Some philosophers realize that mind or consciousness can never be properly

understood under the traditional conceptual framework of mind-body dualism. But many of them still have to use these concepts, which cause some fundamental difficulties in their theories of mind and consciousness. The quantum theory that was introduced to the field of consciousness studies attempts to break down this dualistic conceptual framework and hence has the potential to eventually solve the mystery of consciousness. According to this theory, the way that the human brain works has to be studied through the microscopic quantum activities. In particular, the tiny microtubules found in every brain cell are thought to be responsible for quantum coherence and brain-wide quantum connections, which explains the unity of consciousness and the possibility of free will (Blackmore 2005, 44). In his dialogue with cognitive scientists, the Dalai Lama often mentions the concept of subtle body in Buddhist tantric tradition (e.g., Dalai Lama XIV 1992, 162-63). This concept is derived from the pan-Indian idea of *prāṇa* (vital force), which resembles the traditional Chinese concept of *qi* (vital force). Both concepts can be understood as the microscopic quantum state. The subtler *prāṇa* or *qi* is what we call mind and consciousness, while the coarser *prāṇa* or *qi* is what we call body and matter.

The subtle body in the sense of quantum state and the store consciousness in the sense of information storage can go beyond the dualistic conceptual framework of mind and body and meanwhile help us make sense of the Buddhist idea of the mental

continuum in or beyond each living body. The mental continuum that goes beyond each individual life is not an independent spiritual entity, nor is it a mental phenomenon as contrasted to physical phenomena. Rather it is a subtle quantum state beyond the distinction of mind and matter. In a sense, it is both mind and matter. Being a subtle body, and a quantum state, it is material. With its information storage and potential for subjectivity and free will, it is mental. This again suggests the Strawsonian sense of real physicalism that acknowledges the reality of both physical and mental phenomena.

III. Consciousness

So far we have been discussing mind or consciousness from a third-person perspective. The central issue in the field of consciousness studies is, however, to explain or explain away the first-person perspective. The experience of what it is like from the first-person perspective is the key feature of phenomenal consciousness. In this perspective, it involves the first-person consciousness of ourselves, animals, or even the dead. All these are interesting issues in this rapidly growing field of consciousness studies.

According to Kriegel (2007), there are five main approaches in the philosophical

studies of consciousness. Two of them are non-reductive, and they are McGinn's mysterianism and Chalmers's property dualism. The rest three are reductive, and they include the representationalism of Tye and Dretske, the higher-order monitor theories, and Kriegel's own self-representationalism. Among them, the representationalism is also known as the first-order theory, which is usually criticized for not being able to account for the for-me-ness of conscious experience. The higher-order monitor theories can be further divided into two main subgroups, and they are the higher-order thought theory of Rosenthal and Carruthers and the higher-order perception theory of Amstrong and Lycan. They are usually criticized for taking the higher-order mental state itself (being a perception or thought) as non-conscious, which eventually leads to infinite regress.

In the Buddhist side, according to my study (Yao 2005), many schools had involved in the debates on whether and how the mind can know itself. Among them, the Mahāsāṃghikas and the Yogācāra-Mādhyamikas held a view similar to that of the first-order representational theory. The Sarvāstivādins emphasized on the temporal dimension of conscious experience and established their theory of *reflective* consciousness by arguing against the Mahāsāṃghika theory of *reflexive* consciousness. This Sarvāstivāda position is opposite to that of the Heidelberg school in contemporary Germany who denies the possibility of reflection, but similar to the

recent theory of second sense, which attempts to revitalize the higher-order perception theory by introducing the temporal dimension into it (Droege 2003).

The dominant Buddhist position with regard to phenomenal consciousness was developed by the Sautrāntikas and Yogācāras. In the works of Dignāga, we can see a transition from the Sautrāntika model to the Yogācāra model. The Sautrāntika model tends to fuse self-representation (*svābhāsa*) with self-consciousness (*svasaṃvedana*), which is especially evident in the Sautrāntika doctrines as transmitted by Tibetan dGe lugs pa scholars (Klein 1986, 113). Kriegel's (2009) self-representationalism holds a similar view in fusing self-representation with inner awareness, probably owing to their shared commitment to realism. Dignāga himself was committed to idealism and clearly distinguished the triple cognitive structure of object-representation (*viṣayābhāsa*), self-representation (*svābhāsa*) and self-consciousness (*svasaṃvedana*). I used to take Dignāga's theory as similar to the higher-order thought theory (Yao 2005, 159), but now I tend to put it in between the higher-order thought theory and self-representationalism because it takes advantage of both theories while avoiding their difficulties.

All these different approaches share a common goal, which is to explore the cognitive structure of conscious experience and to understand the nature of phenomenal consciousness. As we mentioned earlier, phenomenal consciousness is

the experience of what it is like from the first-person perspective. For instance, when we perceive the red color or taste the sweet honey, we experience the ineffable qualia of redness or sweetness. According to representationalism, the very nature of phenomenal consciousness or qualia consists in the representation of object, e.g., the red color or the sweet honey. According to the higher-order monitor theories, however, only when the object-representation becomes the content of a higher-order thought or perception there arise the relevant qualia and phenomenal consciousness. In the view of self-representationalism, accompanying the object-representation there is a secondary self-representation, i.e., the representation of the *experience* of redness or sweetness; the self-representation of conscious experience itself holds the key to phenomenal consciousness and qualia.

In Dignāga's view, both object-representation and the self-representation of conscious experience are indispensable parts of a conscious experience, but what makes an experience conscious of itself is the resultant self-consciousness (*svasaṃvedana*). This resultant self-consciousness is different from the reflexive consciousness as propounded by the Mahāsāṃghikas and Yogācāra-Mādhyamikas, which is constitutive of the mind and marks the sentient nature of the mind itself. Hence it is not suitable to interpret Dignāga's concept of self-consciousness in terms of the phenomenological concept of pre-reflective consciousness, either for the

purpose of defending or refuting him, because the latter is not a resultant consciousness, but rather a precondition of consciousness (see Yao forthcoming for more discussions).

If phenomenal consciousness arises from self-representation or self-consciousness, then the key to the mystery of consciousness lies in self-reference, or a strange loop as Hofstadter (2007) calls it. According to Hofstadter, this strange loop of self-reference prevails at different levels in the natural world. The human world is somewhat different in the sense that we build a magnificent virtual world upon this loop through our languages. Metzinger (2005) formulates a few key steps that describe how this virtual reality is built.

If it is a virtual reality that we build upon the loop of self-reference, then the phenomenal consciousness with the qualia of sweet and sour, happy and sad that form the unique feature of human experience would also be virtual, and hence illusory. Would Buddhism agree with such a view? As a matter of fact, Buddhism is ready to accept any sense of virtual reality. On the view of Yogācāra idealism that takes self-consciousness as its core concept, the world, self, and object-representation are all illusory virtual reality, but the only true reality is this self-consciousness. In other words, when mind and consciousness constantly construct the illusory virtual world, the loop of self-reference would be the only reality there.

IV. Conclusion

The Buddhist view of body-mind relationship has been taken to be substance dualism (Griffiths 1986) or nonsubstantial interactionism (Havery 1993). In my comparative reflections on the issue, I have interpreted the Buddhist theory of no-self as the denial of an independent spiritual entity, which can provide a physicalistic model of mind. But it is not the narrow sense of reductive physicalism, instead it is a Strawsonian sense of real physcicalism that embraces the idea of mental continuum, which is the key to making sense of the Buddhist doctrine of reincarnation. To avoid the danger of falling into dualism or even the idea of an immortal soul, I interpret this mental continuum in terms of memory or information storage. Meanwhile I introduce the Tantric idea of subtle body, which, together with the store consciousness in the sense of information storage, can be interpreted as a microscopic quantum state that goes beyond the distinction between mind and matter.

With regard to the issue of phenomenal consciousness, the Buddhist tradition contributed a great variety of views, but I focus on the theory of Dignāga. By referring to the recent theories of self-representationalism and virtual reality, I have shown that the key to understanding phenomenal consciousness is to reveal its

mechanism of self-representation or self-reference. The first-person perspective of conscious experience consists in the virtual reality built upon the prevailing phenomenon of self-reference.

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Kierkegaard, Confucius, and the Intersubjective Dance

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I suppose I should begin with an apology—*Kierkegaard and Confucius*? How is that a viable comparison? On what grounds can Kierkegaard's existential homage to that single individual, forged through a person's devotion to their own life-vocation, be compared to Confucian filial piety that observes, and venerates, familial hierarchy and patriarchal respect? As Hwa Yol Jung trenchantly puts it, "For Kierkegaard, the attainment of man's inward subjectivity, religiously and ethically, is the *quantum satis* of every individual as his lifetime task, whereas for Confucius, in contrast, it is the fulfillment of *ren*, or reciprocity, as the lifetime task of every man." It gets worse: "It is obvious that Kierkegaard is a Christian existentialist while Confucius is a nontheist humanist, or as Karl Barth calls him, a 'pagan.'"

But Professor Jung then admits that there is something these two have in common: "…the primary concern for both Kierkegaard and Confucius is ethics…they are concerned with the existential question of *how* to live rather than what to know."[1]

Indeed. And so I won't apologize, since most initial characterizations of both thinkers are simplistic ones that cannot bear much scrutiny. Despite the vast distance in cultural time and space between Kierkegaard and Confucius, there are phenomenological affinities between their respective projects, and I want to explore one of these dimensions today.

A question that exercises both thinkers is a time-honored one: what is ethical behavior? Is it mere compliance with a set of rules, or a kind of embodied mastery that can, if necessary, be articulated in terms of rules? The insight that masterful action results from the grooming of certain habits, both rational and practical, is hardly new: Aristotle's *phronimos*,

[1] Hwa Yol Jung, "Confucianism and Existentialism: Intersubjectivity as the Way of Man" (*Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 30, no. 2 (12/69), 186-202.

the man of practical wisdom, is just such a person: he does the right thing, in the right way, at the right time, for the right reasons, but he does not have to find reasons for his action in the way that a less habituated, or skilled, ethical agent must.

I will begin with Kierkegaard's analysis of ethical praxis, and lay the groundwork for what I think will be a fruitful comparison with Confucianism. In order to do this, I must give you an overview of Kierkegaard's ontology. I will also—as best I can—give a phenomenological version of the Christian elements in Kierkegaard's account: what matters for us on this occasion is the structure of human being, and human experience. I intend to sidestep the issue of whether or not Confucius—and Kierkegaard—are religious thinkers. Kierkegaard certainly is, but his Christian striving is not of interest to me here; the phenomenological dimension of his ontological tale is.

Before I lay out this analysis, I want to give you the famous Confucian banner under which I intend to travel:

"At fifteen I set my heart on learning; at thirty I took my stand; at forty I came to be free from doubts; at fifty I understood the decree of Heaven; at sixty my ear was attuned; at seventy I followed my heart's desire without overstepping the boundaries." (*Analects* 2.4)

This developmental story begins with a clear resolution (I will, for the moment, avoid the more freighted language of choice)[2]: Confucius set his heart on learning, and thus began a journey towards—what? The idea that a person could become such that his desires are entirely consonant with the Way, with what one *should* do, is tantalizing. Kierkegaard also provides us with a developmental account of human being, and the place of arrival he describes is *also* one of fluid mastery. Furthermore, for both thinkers this highest life evolves

[2] Cf. Herbert Fingarette's remark: "…choice as crux, as a crucial reality of value determinant of what are in other respects equally real or equally valid alternatives, is simply absent in respect to the *li* in its entirety." "Response to Professor Rosemont," *Philosophy East and West* 28, no. 4 (1978): 511.

from the stages that precede it: Confucius' actions at seventy are different from, yet developmentally connected to, his behavior at thirty. So too for Kierkegaard: the 'life of faith' is a culmination of the values pursued and actions taken on life's way, but only faithful comportment realizes the promise of each stage of existence.

How does one achieve this condition of ultimate mastery? Even a rudimentary understanding of Confucianism will recognize that the path prescribed is straightforward: a person must achieve mastery of *li*, the complex of rituals that guide behavior in familial and civic life. This path is clear in its demands in a way that Kierkegaard's account is not and cannot be, for reasons that will become obvious in what follows.

As Prof. Jung points out, Kierkegaard is keenly interested in a person developing her subjectivity (although the conclusion he draws from this is, in my estimation, utterly incorrect). According to Kierkegaard, a person must awaken to the fundamental puzzle that she is; no amount of habituation, or indeed proficiency in ritual practice, can provide actual existential mastery to someone who has not confronted the dilemma of being human.

And what is that 'dilemma'? Let us consider Kierkegaard's ontological picture:

"The human being is a synthesis of infinity and finitude, of temporality and eternity, of freedom and necessity, in short a synthesis…<u>Looked at in this way a human being is still not a self</u>" (*Sickness Unto Death*, 13).

To achieve selfhood, a person must come to terms with these dimensions of the human constitution: "If, however, the relation relates itself to itself, this relation is the positive third, and this is the self."

A person, in order to become a self, must define the factors that make up a human being by way of what Kierkegaard calls an 'infinite passion;' I will refer to it less poetically as a defining commitment. Once this commitment is established, each set of factors is defined by X, by whatever the object of commitment is. These three sets of factors—infinite and

finite, freedom and necessity, and eternal and temporal—each address one dimension of human concern.

The 'infinite and finite' establish significance: X now has unconditional, 'infinite' importance, but this infinite worth is made manifest in specific, 'finite' choices. This infinitely significant self-relation by way of X demands specific kinds of recognition from the newly established self: by responding to the terms of her or his particular commitment, to its 'necessity,' a person acquires an identity. Nonetheless, a person is ultimately free to decide how that commitment will be borne out in the world (hence 'possibility'). Finally, the committed person must see the past, present and future in terms of this undertaking; the 'temporal and the eternal' factors indicate that a person's commitment establishes continuity in life, even as that individual acknowledges the inevitability of change, and the necessity of maintaining X in the midst of change.

How does a commitment like this establish a self? By providing a focus for a person's material and intellectual/spiritual needs and desires: a person's world instantly has contours in light of what is infinitely important.

Of course—as you have surely already anticipated—not all attempts at selfhood are successful. Kierkegaard's authorship can in part be understood as the depiction of several ways of having a defining commitment, and an analysis of why each of these attempts fail. He refers to these ways of life as 'spheres' or 'stages'; he insists that each 'stage' is in fact a radically different and discrete way of seeing, and being in, the world: to be in one is utterly, absolutely, not to be in the other.

Why so radically different? Because each 'stage' takes up the problems and questions of existence relative to its own goal, and its own lexicon. These stages/spheres are called, respectively, the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious. Each sphere is defined by its infinite passion, or defining commitment.

First, the aesthetic sphere—by 'aesthetic' Kierkegaard means something very close to the Greek: a sphere of existence concerned with feeling rather than thinking—so the aesthetic sphere is defined by pleasure, the pursuit of pleasure.

The ethical sphere is also somewhat misleadingly named. The 'ethical' indicates something much broader than simply moral concerns: such a life is focused on articulating, making discriminations, providing arguments, weighing up, and, as such, is committed to choice, to choosing; we will return to this crucial stage of life in a moment.

The religious way of life is actually composed of two stages, A and B. Religiousness A has typically been called a kind of 'Westernized Buddhism': it attempts to annihilate the self. In Religiousness A a person is defined by a commitment to indifference: a Rel A person is infinitely indifferent to the content and consequences of her choices, although at every moment she is pursuing those choices.

Religiousness B, the life of faith, becomes the answer to the puzzle of being human: a person makes an absolute commitment to something in the world, a project that, in the presence of God, a person stakes everything on: and thus we find, paradoxically, the infinite in the finite.

And, by the way, this final commitment is quite different from the other three 'stages' or 'spheres', because here a person is not devoting herself to a capacity (such as pleasure, or choice) but to a concrete project (Please note that 'projects' are always already understood as *Mitsein*, as 'being-with-others'; more of this momentarily).

Finally, we now know what 'faith' is: faith is simply how an established self functions in the world: "Faith is: that the self in being itself and in willing to be itself rests transparently in God." 'Faith' is not a belief, but a 'comportment': this is the way in which an 'individual' lives (for Kierkegaard, only fully realized selves can be individuals). Here, of course, we certainly anticipate Heidegger's notion of 'Being in the world."

By the way, I am now going to set aside an important problem with my summation: as you know, many of Kierkegaard's works were written under another name, each name bespeaking a different set of values, and a different way of life. The overview I've given is actually provided by a chorus of pseudonymous authors and other voices. This feature of Kierkegaard's writings is one obvious way in which the comparison of his views with the tenets of Confucianism is made difficult. In what follows we will be hearing from the different characters in Kierkegaard's authorship, and the ways of life that they embody.

But here we should return to ethical practice, since that is what Hwa Yol Jung claims that Confucius and Kierkegaard have in common. The ethical is indeed a vital stage on life's way, and indeed one that a person, once awakened to the demands of the life of reason-giving, deliberating, and choosing, never leaves. As Frater Taciturnus, one of Kierkegaard's characters who provides an account of all of life's stages, puts it: "…the ethical is a passageway—which one nevertheless does not pass through once and for all…" (SLW, 477) Is Kierkegaard's account of the ethical sphere of existence one that can be fruitfully aligned with Confucian *li*?

In his recent work *Kierkegaard and the Paradox of Religious Diversity*, George Connell—a Kierkegaard scholar who takes Confucian thought quite seriously—argues that we can, and should, draw this comparison.[3] Connell points out four features of Kierkegaard's ethical thinking that seem parallel to the Confucian scheme. First, <u>choice</u>: the ethical person is committed to being a chooser, to seeing herself as a moral agent; she understands the activity of choosing what is best to do as part of a larger framework of familial and civic concern. An ethical agent's choice, moreover, is meant to frame and guide what others do.

[3] For the complete elaboration of this view, see George Connell's *Kierkegaard and the Paradox of Religious Diversity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing), Chapter 5.

Second, pervasiveness: of course, the radical break with chasing pleasure transforms every aspect of a person: indeed, now the world itself shows up not as a place for individual satisfaction, but as a terrain to be mapped by reflection and articulation. Even the most humble, quotidian elements of life are now ordered by the demands of right behavior: Judge William, the pseudonymous author who speaks for the ethical way of life, uses the example of his marriage (he is quite long-winded about the virtues of his marriage) as transformed from immediate passion to the structure of joyful duty, each spouse obliged to care for the other in ways established by the wedding vows taken, as well as attend to—and be attuned to—the welfare of the other from moment to moment.

Third, open-endedness: the work of becoming an ethical self never ends. How could it? If we are called to recognize the moral demands set in place by reason, as well as by local practice, we can see that such a calling remains ongoing. Connell reminds his readers of the words of Johannes Climacus (the pseudonymous author of the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*): this work is "the highest task assigned to every human being, a task that can indeed be sufficient even for the longest life, since it has the singular quality that it is not over until life is over" (CUP 1:158). Ominously, Frater Taciturnus also describes the ethical undertaking this way: "…the ethical [is] the sphere of requirement (and this requirement is so infinite that the individual always goes bankrupt)." (SLW, 477)

Fourth, and finally, Connell identifies beatitude as a central feature of the ethical life. Recall the 'joy' with which Judge William attends to the care of his wife: authentic happiness is found within dutiful performance.

Connell points out that neither Kierkegaard nor Confucius can be seen as a consequentialist or a deontologist: yes, consequences do matter, and one's familial and civic

duty is paramount, but not rigidly so. The focus in the Confucian scheme—as it is in Kierkegaard's thinking—is moral self-cultivation and character formation.[4]

I agree with Connell that three of these Kierkegaardian ethical elements align quite comfortably with Confucius. Pervasiveness is surely at work in the Confucian project; every aspect of life (indeed a pervasive style) is groomed in light of ritual practice. Confucian self-cultivation is, of course, the open-ended task of an entire life (consider once again *Analects* 2.4, or 9.11, as the Confucian disciple sighs about the difficulty of the Way: "The more I look up at it, the higher it appears."). What Connell identifies as beatitude, a Christianized notion that we may render as 'supreme blessedness,' seems parallel to the happiness that a person achieves in the Confucian model through goodness, *ren*. Choice, however, seems a more difficult fit; after all, Confucius does not make use of the language of, say, 'choosing oneself,' or indeed finding oneself at a crossroads. This, we are reminded, is Herbert Fingarette's view: as he puts it, "Confucius in his teachings in the *Analects* does not elaborate on the language of choice or responsibility as these are intimately intertwined with the idea of the ontologically ultimate power of the individual to select from genuine alternatives to create his own spiritual destiny…"[5] Connell's reply to this objection is of considerable interest; what matters for us here today is his conclusion (one with which we began): our cherished *Analects* 2.4 points out the central choice made by Confucius at the age of fifteen: he set his heart on learning. That existential resolution to follow the *li* is life-altering, and puts him on the road, that of the Way.

Is Connell's ethical comparison persuasive? Indeed it is, although I will now argue that it does not go far enough. It is absolutely the case for Kierkegaard—and perhaps the case for Confucius—that there is a dimension of lived experience that is higher, and more

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[4] Connell, *Kierkegaard and the Paradox of Religious Diversity*, p. 163.
[5] Herbert Fingarette, *Confucius: the Secular as Sacred* (Long Grove: Waveland Press, 1972), p. 18.

complete, than the masterful, discerning activity that is the ethical life.—Having put it this way, my remark seems strange: what *could* be higher than 'masterful, discerning ethical activity'? And yet Kierkegaard insists that there is, namely, the life of faith. Recall the scheme of Kierkegaardian selfhood with which we began: Religiousness B is the infinite commitment to one's work in the world, work that is uniquely that person's own. This vocation thus gives the world the contours that it has, and such a person is able to navigate his surroundings with ease and existential delight: faithful comportment sees what is the case, what needs to be done, and happily wants to so do. As for Confucius? I am reminded of the final sentence of *Analects* 2.4: "…at seventy I followed my heart's desire without overstepping the boundaries." This too seems to be a kind of extraordinary comportment, and I want to take this comparison as far as I can. To be blunt, I wish to take both Confucius and Kierkegaard to the intersubjective dance.

Let's begin with Kierkegaard's 'distinction' between the 'ethical' and the 'religious': I put scare-quotes around the word distinction because the ethical is, as we heard earlier from Frater Taciturnus "…a passageway—which one nevertheless does not pass through once and for all…" (SLW, 477) This is why Kierkegaard scholars make use of the term 'ethico-religious,' since there is much that each type of activity share.

Here is the relevant phenomenological question: what can the faithful practitioner do that the ethical person cannot?

In order to provide an answer, we must revisit the essential feature of the ethical sphere: choice. As Judge William puts it: "…what a person chooses is always important. It is important that he choose properly, test himself…" (E/O, 2:157)

Judge William's observation is apt: a person can hardly become a fully-fledged social and civic participant until that person knows who, and what, he or she is:

> The person who has ethically chosen and found himself possesses himself defined in his entire concretion…He then possesses himself as a task in such a way that it is chiefly to order, shape, temper, inflame, control—in short, to produce an evenness in the soul, a harmony, which is the fruit of the personal virtues.
>
> --And here I pause to point out the obvious: the task of the self, the shaping of oneself in order to produce 'an evenness in the soul, a harmony' is surely suggestive of Confucian thought.
>
> But let us continue with Judge William's peroration:
>
> Here the objective for his activity is himself, but nevertheless not arbitrarily determined, for *he possesses himself as a task that has been assigned him*, *even though it became his by choosing*…The self that is the objective is not only a personal self but *a social, a civic self*. He then possesses himself as a task in an activity whereby he engages in the affairs of life as this specific personality. His task is not to form himself but *to act.* (E/O, 2:262-263, emphasis mine)

Notice that Judge William emphasizes the 'task' assigned to each person, one that directs the actions of an agent wholly wedded—indeed, utterly understood in terms of—a life of civic involvement and action: the ethical person takes action in the world. Again, Kierkegaard's rendition of the ethical life does seem to resemble Confucian exhortations about how a person should develop as a familial, social, and civic self.

And here we must pause.

Unsurprisingly, the good Judge has made a compelling case for himself. Why, then, isn't Judge William's ethical response to the demands of being human the complete one? What does 'faith' provide that this rich and coherent—indeed, seemingly Confucian—account does not?

The distinction between the ethical life and the life of faith is initially difficult to make. A first thought: 'faith' designates the way in which a fully realized self navigates the world, and not merely a set of beliefs that allow a self to so navigate: but this is not to say that faith lacks, or has overturned, the rational conclusions about the nature of things that resignation has put in place. The faithful individual, resigned to the rational limits of the world, can—of course—give (some) reasons for his actions, but the activity of reason-giving is not the goal of faith: in fact, that kind of ethical activity is existentially circumscribed by the demands of the particular life being lived.

We return to the words of Frater Taciturnus, who deftly sums up the demands of the ethical: "…the ethical [is] the sphere of requirement (and this requirement is so infinite that the individual always goes bankrupt."

This trope is instructive, and indicates a serious disanalogy with the Confucian scheme. A person committed to the ethical life will necessarily go 'bankrupt': after all, when will the reckoning end? We have already observed that the ethical sphere requires explanations: why this choice, and not that one? Judge William will never be done explaining, because he has never committed himself to something, or someone, in the world; instead, he is committed to the *choice* of something, or someone. The significance of his choice lies in the choosing, and not in the absolute worth of that which is chosen. Thus Judge William announces: "…the point is still not that of choosing something; the point is not the reality of that which is chosen but *the reality of choosing*." (E/O, 2:176, emphasis mine)

What, then, is the difference between the ethical Judge William, and a version that we may well imagine, a *faithful* Judge William (perhaps a truly Confucian Judge William)—one who has achieved these existential skills?

A first observation: Judge William's life as a chooser does not ultimately pick him out as an individual, located in a specific time and place. As he puts it, "…[A person] does not

dare to cling to himself as a singular individual…His comfort is precisely that he is just like other human beings and in this common humanity is in relationship with God…" (SLW, 164)

Judge William, of course, asserts that a person must *choose* his calling. This claim is obviously in keeping with his commitment to the life of choice, but it once again underscores the nature of the ethical life. A person chooses her life's work: but surely one could choose again?—Then, having chosen, a person is, of course, obliged to give reasons for that choice, and it is that reason-giving activity that never comes to an end.

The ethicist is doomed to give an account of his work, his life, his choices, and that chronicle of self-reckoning can never come to an end. Judge William is condemned to choose (the specter of Sartre enters the scene), and the meaningfulness of those choices can only be located in the reasons he chooses to assemble for those choices, *ad infinitum*.

The ethical person wants to get it right; of course, as we saw in the case of Judge William, 'getting it right' is a process that never ends, since the task of giving reasons is never over; every articulation of what is the case, and why it is so, begs for further elaboration. Every ethical claim runs headlong into this epistemic boundary: a person can never be certain that her choices—or her evaluation of those choices, or of the choices of others—are absolutely the right ones.

Of course, the ethicist may well reply that 'absolute' certainty is not what ethical praxis aims at. And here the Confucian disanalogy becomes obvious: yes, the initial choice to learn is made; once that resolution is in place, the Way is clear. Of course, there is much work to be done, but mastering the necessary rituals and bearing forth the values that structure them is very much in place for the Confucian practitioner.

But we have moved beyond the purview of ethical action: Kierkegaard's phenomenological response now enters the scene. The question about 'being right' in

choosing is asked: by whom? From what perspective? The ethical dilemma is, for Kierkegaard, just this: 'one' can, of course, do a great number of things: but what can *you* do? Every person embodies a particular set of skills, habits, and cultural practices, and all of these can be enhanced or discarded—and indeed new skills acquired—but that depends upon an individual's predilections, desires, and cultural location: a person is always already located in an intersubjective setting that, to use the language of contemporary philosophy of mind, *solicits* certain responses and behaviors to the world. Of course, the way that the world *is*, or is 'available' to a person (or the 'affordances' of a person's environment)[6] has everything to do with the condition of the person in question. 'Condition,' for Kierkegaard, is surely an ontological designation: again, for the ethical person, the world is a terrain to be mapped by reflection, articulation, and choice (endlessly).

Now: the target of human development for Kierkegaard is not the ethical life, or any one of the 'spheres' or 'stages' of existence (and in turn what is made available in that existence-stage): the ideal 'condition' is that of 'faith,' the ultimate and highest manner of worldly engagement. For the faithful person, *everything is available*. The individual who lives faithfully is absorbed in the unfolding moment, rejoicing in, remarkably, *all things*. A faithful person has powers that the aesthete, the ethicist, and the religious practitioner do not (not to mention the human beings who have yet to set out on the path to selfhood): this person finds his quotidian environment infinitely abundant, significant, and the cause for joy, from moment to moment. The skill of the faithful person is comprehensive, and every moment expresses this.

'Movement' is Kierkegaard's consistent image for the life of faith: "I wonder," asks Johannes de silentio, the pseudonymous author who provides us with a depiction of faithful

[6] J.J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin), 1979; cf. Susanna Siegel, *The Contents of Visual Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 130-131.

comportment, "is anyone in my age actually capable of making the movements of faith?" (FT, 28) Johannes, in searching for a person of faith, tells us that he sizes up his candidates by looking "only for the movements:" such a person, as we have seen, occupies the world in a distinctive way. Johannes likens the faithful adept's confident motion through life to *dancing*:

> It is supposed to be the most difficult task for a dancer to leap into a particular posture in such a way that there is no second when he grasps at the position but assumes it in the leap itself. Perhaps no dancer can do it—but this knight [of faith] does. (FT, 34)

Johannes characterizes faith as embodying the poise, precision and focus of a dancer, a dancer who is—impossibly—able to leap and, proleptically, to be present in the next pose, all at once.

So: the highest life for a human being is, according to Kierkegaard, someone so skilled at being who there are, where they are, that they move seamlessly, and indeed joyfully, through their environment: the faithful person is a dancer. The case of Confucius is clearly comparable: the ease, and the delight, that Confucius feels at the age of seventy, that he could do anything he pleased without 'overstepping the boundaries:' surely this manner of world-navigation is a kind of dance. Nicholas F. Gier, in his essay "The Dancing Ru", remarks: "We should assume that the dances the Confucians performed had a set choreography, but we could easily imagine each having particular styles as varied as all classical ballerinas do. [This example] obviously supports the idea of personal judgment rather than a group decision…it is also role specific…[for example,] even though the

younger brother may have his own particular style of deferring to his elder brother, he has no freedom not to defer or take on other roles not appropriate to *li*…"[7]

Why dance? Yeats' famous lines from "Among School Children" deftly spell out this phenomenological meaning: "O body swayed to music, O brightening glance/How can we know the dancer from the dance?"[8] The dance is nothing more than its expression in the moment: the choreography guiding the dancer is merely the plan, not in any sense actual the *dancing*, just as Confucian ritual is a prescription not to be confused with the creative moment of putting these rules into practice.

Consider also what it is like to be a dancer engaged in a dance. The dancer must be utterly committed to and focused on the body's movements; this person does not do something in addition to or besides the dance, if he or she is really to *dance*; the dancer is completely absorbed in the dance as it happens. The floor may be uneven in spots, the room may become too hot or too cold, the foot may catch and the body stumble: a dancer cannot and does not anticipate what may come. Adjustments are made as the dance is danced out, not plotted out beforehand.

These qualities—the existential nature of dance itself, the dancer's absorption and temporal focus—are central to Kierkegaard's phenomenological account. Here is Johannes de silentio's description: "…[for the dancer] to be able to come down in such a way that instantaneously one seems to stand and to walk, to change the leap into life into walking, *absolutely to express the sublime in the pedestrian*—only [the person of faith] can do it, and this is the one and only marvel." (FT, 40-41, emphasis mine)

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[7] Nicholas F. Gier, "The Dancing Ru: A Confucian Aesthetics of Virtue," Philosophy East and West 51, no. 2 (2001): 280-305.
[8] W.B. Yeats, *The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats*, Richard Finnernan, ed. (Simon and Schuster: New York, 1996) 215.

The faithful person has the skill of embodied, temporal expression, able to respond to her or his environment, as it truly is. Such a person sounds remarkable, and perhaps remote: so here is a real-world example (one that literally involves both a 'Kierkegaardian leap' and a Confucian 'overstepping a boundary' that is, for this particular practitioner, *not* an 'overstepping'). In January 2007, Wesley Autrey was waiting with his two young daughters for a subway train at a station in Manhattan. Just after noon, he noticed a young man, Cameron Hollopeter, having a seizure. Following the seizure, Hollopeter stumbled from the platform, falling onto the tracks.

As Hollopeter lay on the railway bed, Autrey saw the lights of an oncoming train. Autrey then threw himself onto the tracks. He 'thought' he would be able to take him off the tracks, but he realized there was not enough time to drag Hollopeter away. Instead, he protected the young man by throwing himself over his body in a drainage trench between the tracks, where he held him down. Though the operator of the train applied the brakes, all but two cars still passed over them, close enough to leave grease on his cap.

Mr. Autrey, in describing what happened, said that didn't feel heroic; he just did 'what he felt he needed to do' and that he 'wanted to do it.'—But *how* was he able to do it? That, he said, was due to his training in the Navy, and his many years as a construction worker in, as he put it, 'constricted places' (like elevator shafts, and ductwork)—as he put it, the space between the tracks looked like it could hold both of them, and it did.

—Of course, that really doesn't explain anything. It does explain why *I* would have been useless on that day: horrified, yes, and wanting to do something, yes: but I don't have the necessary embodied resources.

But that doesn't explain anything, either. We can well imagine another person with an identical skill-set to Autrey's—equally able to perform the rescue—who saw the coming train, inhabited the necessary space for the rescue, and then deliberated: 'but my daughters

are here on the platform, and what if I fail? And what if I misjudge?' And, of course, that's when the young man is run over by the train. (And we would hardly blame someone who did so deliberate)

How do we distinguish these two cases? The latter case is absolutely familiar, and in less dire ways: most of us have had to respond to requests for money from street beggars, often when we're in a rush, or in a philosophical conversation: by the time that you wrestle with the possibilities, the moment is gone (and even the chance to apologize, or wish the person well).

But what would it be to seamlessly respond to that call? That doesn't mean habitually, or mindlessly, forking out cash to every open hand, but it does mean that the—now to revert to our Kierkegaardian terminology—faithful adept is able, as Mr. Autrey was, to see what was possible for *him*, or *her*, and to understand that this solicitation was *for* him, or her, and specifically so.

There are parallels to the Confucian case. As Philip Ivanhoe remarks: "The practice of the rites and the reading of the Odes were both pursuits with a moral dimension, integral parts of the larger project of self cultivation. The person who successfully completed this process developed an enhanced sensitivity in understanding traditional patterns and applying them to actual affairs. Such a person could and would on occasions when the situation warrants, depart from the traditional forms in order to realize the greater goal that these patterns were designed to achieve."[9]

What else does the trope of dance indicate? It reveals a 'with' or a 'for': a partner or an audience is implied. 'Dance' surely indicates our intersubjective condition, and I will conclude with some thoughts about how Kierkegaard's 'subjectivity' is better understood as a kind of Confucian intersubjectivity.

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[9]Philip Ivanhoe, *Confucian Moral Self-Cultivation*, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000), 7-8.

Kierkegaard is infamous for his claim, 'truth is subjectivity.' It does not mean, as one of my colleagues once remarked, 'if you believe something then it is true for you.' No. It means that a person stands in the right relation to their utterances (just as when, in the *Meno,* Socrates makes a distinction between correct opinion and knowledge: a person with correct opinion will make the same claim as someone with knowledge, but without truly understanding it). And it does not mean, now returning to Prof. Jung's initial salvo, that the 'subjective tendency' of Kierkegaard's thinking stands in stark contrast to Confucian thought.[10] Far from it. Kierkegaard's 'subjectivity' is simply the subject's knowledge of who she is, and where she is located in the world, and—most importantly—

among others. In fact, Kierkegaard's notion of subjectivity goes further: the 'truth' in question is how the world shows up for the faithful subject in terms of her or his intersubjectivity. Every moment, every encounter, is understood in terms of who she or he is, and that identity is in turn always constituted by others.[11] Wilfrid Sellars—a philosopher who is surely in some ways as far from Kierkegaard's coordinates as Confucius is—argues for what he calls 'we-intentionality'; Sellars writes, "…[a] really intelligent and informed self-love supports the love of one's neighbor which alone directly supports the moral point of view…If we replace 'most people but not I' by '**we** but not I'…we move from consistency to incoherence. There is no logical place for a compromise between benevolence and self-love, where 'benevolence' is understood as the consciousness of oneself and one's fellow men as **we.**"[12] When Kierkegaard reminds us that 'you shall love the neighbor,' the 'you' in question is the fully developed subjectivity of the faithful adept, and that subjectivity is in fact intersubjectively located.

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[10] Jung, 202.
[11] Kierkegaard's monumental *Works of Love* is an intersubjective analysis of how the faithful self *must* love the neighbor (the 'neighbor' is, of course, all human beings.
[12] Wilfrid Sellars, "Imperatives, Intentions, and the Logic of 'Ought'." In *Morality and the Language of Conduct*, edited by Hector-Neri Castañeda and George Nakhnikian (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1963, 210).

To return to Hwa Yol Jung's critique: he writes, "Like Kierkegaard, one may insist that to be authentic, human existence must be primarily subjective…unlike the existential movement, Confucian philosophy is free of a subjective tendency." I will leave it to the experts in the room to sort out the Confucian end of that claim, but I am thus understandably curious about the observation made in *Analects* 4.15: "The Master said… there is one single thread binding my way together…the disciples asked, 'What did he mean?' Answer? 'The way of the Master consists in doing one's best and in using oneself as a measure to gauge others.'

This, it seems to me, is absolutely a kind of subjectivity. It resembles the kind of skilled self-knowledge that is available to the person who has 'faith' in the Kierkegaardian sense: having become committed to her or his work in the world, that is theirs alone, this person is able to navigate their environment and see what can and must be done not by someone, but by him or herself.—And, of course, this kind of 'inwardness' is always already 'outwardness,' since the faithful life is not realized through introspection but by work in the world, work that is always already engaged with a familial, civic, and indeed neighborly task, a task that is Confucian in its scope.

ABBREVATIONS

CUP *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to "Philosophical Fragments*," two vols., trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.

E/O, 1 & 2 *Either/Or*, two vols., trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987.

FT *Fear and Trembling*, trans. Sylvia Walsh. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

SLW *Stages on Life's Way*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.

SUD *The Sickness Unto Death*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna V. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980.

UDVS *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

WL *Works of Love*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.