A world map is visible in the background, rendered in a dark orange color that blends with the overall design. The map shows the continents and oceans, providing a global context for the book's title.

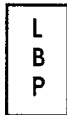
East-West Encounters in Philosophy & Religion

Edited by
Ninian Smart
B. Srinivasa Murthy

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and
B. Srinivasa Murthy



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*In memory of
Bimal K. Matilal
who dedicated his life
to the pursuit of East-West dialogue*

PREFACE

When Dr. Srinivasa Murthy conceived the idea of a series of conferences, beginning in Mysore and then reconvening in Long Beach, California, he thought of these occasions as ways of East meeting West. In particular he thought of philosophical and related ways of achieving a confluence of arguments and minds. Actually, though the major emphasis was on Indian and English-speaking explorations, the scope of the present volume is wider, and from the South. His vision was to stimulate a new debate between differing cultures and modes of thinking. This volume testifies to this aim; and it can be, I hope, a good example of the forward, cross-cultural thinking which the global civilization now emerging needs.

The range is striking. The first section concerns varied ideas of the person in diverse cultures, particularly in South Asia. It is to my mind extremely interesting that different humans have differing geographies of the inner person. Each language has a word for *nose* : not every tongue has a term for *Will*. We agree largely about our faces but not our psyches. This is itself a vital ingredient in our concerns about multicultural issues, which forms the topic of the next section. This is discussed here in part against the background of modern globalization, and also in the light of some developments in the last hundred years of Indian thinking, going back to Swami Vivekananda (that formative thinker in modern Indian nationalism and Hindu reconstruction).

The basis of fruitful interaction between traditions is the proper evaluation of similarities and differences : so the next section of the book deals with the comparative study of religion. The items discussed are in part philosophical, for instance to do with Jaina relativism, and its relevance to monistic views, of which the traditional Advaitin views are the most important, and religious issues about the contrasting styles of Buddhism

and Christianity; the Veda and the Torah; Japanese and Indian approaches to realization and creation; art and religion across traditions; differing modes of modernization; and religious narrative and changes.

Such comparative studies give way to comparative ethics (which on the whole is a neglected field), and here differing themes are explored : from punishment to Chinese laws or standards, and from Buddhist tradition to Vedānta and Aristotle.

The section on Asian and Western Thought is devoted more directly to philosophy East and West, and in particular to South and East Asian themes in relation to the Western tradition. The topics explored range from negative dialectics in Madhyamika and in the European Continental tradition to the relation of Wittgenstein to Indian views on evil and epistemology. There is an evaluation of Schweitzer's view of the Hindu world, and an essay on the possibilities in the field of comparative logic.

The last section concludes with aspects of diversity and cross-cultural analysis; cultural impact on global development, communication, nature, environment, self, culture and art.

Altogether, then, this collection is both rich and wide-ranging. What does it tell us about the future? I hope that it will engender some new directions of thinking and research (or should I say search?). First, I am sure that the present ghettoization of types of philosophy is ultimately fruitless. There are some of those in Western philosophy departments who have no use at all for non-Western traditions of thinking. This is surely shortsighted. I belong to a generation at Oxford who were brought up to despise modern Continental philosophy. Heidegger and Sartre were consigned to a meaningless limbo. But we have seen how times have changed. It will be (as it is already seeming to be) an anachronism to confine philosophy to the West. No longer will a history of philosophy be construed as from Thales to Derrida. Similarly, we can look forward to a more sensitively cross-cultural psychology. The assumptions of our own culture surely in this regard need questioning. Similarly the new global culture will surely promote a wider use of human resources in regard to ethical issues. There are in relation to religion many opportunities for the exchange of ideas : though the cross-cultural study of the subject is now taken for granted, there has been perhaps too little reflection on the meaning of the pluralism of religions in regard to human global civilization. It is important for us to consider the similarities of themes in the East and West and North and South : despite the differences. Do they tell us anything about human nature?

The topics in this volume are also highly relevant to education. Can we as humans afford any more to neglect the cross-cultural divergences and civilizational achievements of the world? And yet our universities and schools are too often confined to the values of our tradition. This is true in India and China, in Africa and Latin America, as well as in the West. And so the present challenge hopes to engage readers seriously with the varying topics in metaphysics, religions, ethics, psychology and so on which form the fabric of this book.

As I said at the beginning : this is a matter of the meeting of ideas. It is inevitable that the differing civilizations will merge and keep in interplay. This book is an attempt to hurry up the process somewhat. It is such a pity that the great civilizations know so little of one another—the cultures of South Asia, Europe, East Asia, Africa and the Americas. But times are, happily, changing. To that we testify here.

University of California
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NINIAN SMART

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

While I was a student of philosophy at the University of Mysore, India, and later at the University of Mainz, Germany, I had the privilege of hearing lectures by many eminent thinkers from around the world. After I came to Los Angeles, I began thinking of a project that would bring together creative minds to share their insights in the areas of religion, philosophy, and cross-cultural communication. A conference seemed to be the perfect forum.

In this spirit, the international East Meets West Conferences have been organized. The first took place in Mysore, India, in 1991 and the second was held in Long Beach, California in 1993. The third International East Meets West Conference is planned to be held in Bangalore, India, in 1997.

East-West Encounters in Philosophy and Religion is primarily comprised of selected papers in religion and philosophy which were presented at the first two Conferences. I cannot begin to thank all of the contributors for their original and thought-provoking articles, enthusiasm, and support of this book and the Conferences. So many people from around the world contributed toward the success of the East Meets West Conference. I wish that I could individually thank each and every one of them. I would like to express my gratitude to a few people who were instrumental in supporting the Conferences: Dr. Selvie Das, former Vice-Chancellor, University of Mysore, and Dr. V. K. Nataraj, former Registrar, University of Mysore, Dr. Karl Anatol, Provost, California State University, Long Beach, Dr. Curtis McCray, former President, California State University, Long Beach, Dr. Charles Austin, former Vice-President for Academic Affairs, California State University, Long Beach. Last but not least, I would like to thank Ramdas Bhatkal and R. N. Gokarn for the excellent production of this book.

The opportunities for conferences devoid of ideology are few in the areas of philosophy and religion and cross-cultural communication. Ironically, U. S. business schools have taken the lead in exploring Asian trends of thinking, culture and religious traditions. Business leaders have predicted the importance of international economics and global commerce in the twenty-first century. I believe that religious thinkers, philosophers, and specialists in cross-cultural communication have a vital and unique role to play in this changing world to foster understanding and peace.

California State University
Long Beach

B. SRINIVASA MURTHY

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**East - West
Encounters in
Philosophy
and
Religion**

I

PERSON : EAST AND WEST

THE COMPARATIVE VIEW OF THE PERSON : EAST AND WEST

Ninian Smart

In this presentation I want to concentrate on India and the West, though I shall also include a few remarks about the Far East. In fact the differences in the ideas of the person between the cultures of the Hindu and Buddhist traditions on the one hand and of Christianity and Judaism on the other are rather marked. This contrast or set of contrasts (for Hindus and Buddhists tend to have rather divergent analyses) is obscured by the fact that we loosely use the word 'soul' to stand for rather differing conceptions. Let me begin however by some remarks about the Buddhist analysis of the individual, where in any case the notion of a soul, whether of East or West, is inapplicable.

As we well know the Buddhists deconstructed the individual human being by dissolving her into a series of *khandhas* or *skandhas*, that is of bunches of events of diverse types. An individual is composed of bodily events, feeling events, perceptual events, impulses and conscious events. Stick all these bunches together and you have a functioning human being. Moreover, that individual is somewhat controlled by *kamma* or *karma*, and so is in causal continuity with previous lives and future lives, unless she has attained sainthood or *nibbana*. Moreover, because of Buddhist emphasis upon causality the swarm of events making up an individual radiates out and is radiated into by events. So perception is a dynamic process of interchange with the environment. And so individuals are in interplay with other individuals both at the conscious and subconscious levels. While a Buddhist view is not absolutely necessary for a sense of the outer radiations of causality it does facilitate it. I think if our perceptual apparatus were more sensitive, we would see a cloud or aura (so to speak) accompanying each individual and indeed everything. What happens however is that our perceptions necessarily simplify what we encounter. It is useful simplification which we project upon the world. It is nice for

us : a beautiful sunset is better than an incredible jumble of radiating particles.

At the core however there is no permanent entity. This idea of a changeless self is both morally unfortunate and metaphysically inept. The changeless can never explain change (so much for God by the way), and egocentricity is constantly to be guarded against. This sometimes however brings puzzles about how the Buddhist virtues work. The cardinal virtues or divine abodes (*brahmaviharas*) are, as you will recall, friendliness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. How can you be friendly or compassionate towards others if there is so to speak no other there? Now in Mahayana things became a bit different because of the evolution of the notion of the Buddha-nature which in some respects became a substitute for a soul. It is that potentiality for enlightenment lying within every living being. We are all Buddhas in the making. There is a parallel here with Western conception of Christ residing within each individual, emphasized perhaps more in Eastern Orthodoxy than elsewhere.

The emphasis in the Theravada is more on the rights of the other as flowing not from themselves as from the duties of all others to help them in their dissatisfaction and suffering. But of course there remains a contrast between the Buddhists view of the emptiness of the individual and the Western emphasis upon the sacredness of the person. Note however, that there is a curious convergence at another level. The Buddhists acquired a well-developed metaphysics of emptiness, and the Christians had a narrative or mythic notion of how in following Christ we empty ourselves—finding our souls by losing them. (I explored this in a recent book called *Buddhism and Christianity : Rivals and Allies*.)

I would add a rather different observation about the *khandhas*, and by analogy also the Samkhyan somewhat differing breakdown of the individual into such entities as *buddhi*, *ahamkara*, *manas*, etc. Is it not curious how the models of differing cultures and traditions diverge so much? Every language has word for nose and ear and even (usually) for inner organs such as the liver and pancreas : but there are wildly diverse inner psychological vocabularies. This must tell us something.

This by the way points to an important function of comparative philosophy—to raise critical questions across boundaries. Think of the great investment in the West on discussions of the will. Despite Schopenhauer's affinity with Buddhism and the Upanisads, what is the Indian thinker, bereft really of any precise counterpart to the will, to think? If a Mahayana Buddhist he might prefer *The World as Process and Representation* or even *Energy and Representation*. But Will?

Also as we have noted there is the divergent aspect of kamma and rebirth. The Buddhist individual is in fact a macroindividual. The person Buddhadhatta stretches back beyond his Buddhadhatta manifestation to uncountable previous lives. Though this does not diminish the value of the present manifestation it sets it in a different perspective. Hence the individual's abilities and circumstances are put within a moral framework of past lives which differs from the Western frameworks, which ascribe a person's advent in the world to luck or bad luck, or see in her circumstances the work of God's direction.

Moreover, as in other Indian systems, the person is also placed in a spectrum of living beings. Admittedly humans are the top, from the point of view of soteriology, for you can only gain liberation if you are born a human [story of the turtle]. Gods, though more splendid in their life-style, have to take second place. But also of course the Buddhist sees the person as part of a range of other personal beings, namely living beings. Because of Christianity's rigid confinement of souls to humans, the ideas of animal rights and the like have had to be argued specially, and only rather recently. On the other hand the relevant Buddhist cardinal virtues apply towards all living beings.

Because of Buddhism's permeation of Chinese, Korean and Japanese cultures such values clearly affected these civilizations. Confucian perspectives are rather different : there is perhaps a clearer view here than in Buddhism of the social placement of the individual, whose sacrality is as it were ensured by the *li* or correct behavior of others. This points to something vital, namely the performative notion of the person. This is thought of in a wider than ethical context in the Confucian tradition; in the Buddhist context as we have noted it has an ethical application. That is the individual is valuable in so far as others should treat her with compassion, etc. Both systems imply that value is precipitated in the individual by society.

If we now turn to the Hindu tradition, we have here various notions of an eternal something residing within or in connection with the individual. These ideas range from the concept of the *purusa* in Samkhya-Yoga, often translated 'person', to the one Atman or Self in Advaita Vedanta. In between there are the many selves of Visistadvaita which are as it were offshoots of God. The nearest to the Buddhist doctrine is Non-Dualistic Vedanta : if there is only one Divine Self then there are not differing selves for individuals. This is one reason why the system was regarded as cryoto-Buddhist. The many *jivas* or individual life-monads are impermanent, like the persons of the Buddhist tradition. So the more

important examples of contrast are those systems which believe in many souls or selves. Now here there is a problem once more of terminology. The big contrast, so paradigmatic and pervasive in Indian thought, is between the permanent and the impermanent. *Cit* or consciousness, supposedly permanent, is not part of the apparatus of the psychophysical organism, but lies as it were behind it. Our mental attributes, such as the *manas* or synthesizing common sense, and the ego-maker or *ahamkara*, as well as the senses and feelings, are really all part of the *prakṛti* or 'nature.' They are all material, though often material in a highly refined sense: subtle matter plays an important role in Hindu cosmology. On the whole the Western soul is more intimately involved with mental operations. The function of *cit* is so to speak to illuminate the mental apparatus, as a light illuminates the film in the projector. Consequently on the Samkhyan scene liberation, meaning in effect the disconnection of *purusa* from the transmigrating bodily manifestation, becomes thoroughly empty from the perspective of individuality and so somewhat like nirvana, though expressed within the frame of a divergent metaphysics.

In short Hindu views of the person as expressed in traditional philosophical systems draw the line in a different place than do Western systems, typically, though Visistadvaita more resembles Western soteriologies.

In general, it is worth remarking that certain traditional theological ideas in the Christian context have certain analogies. Here what is important is to concentrate on the idea of the divine as being immanent in individuals. The notion that Christ or the Spirit exists 'within' does not deny that God is essentially transcendent. The concept of the transcendent needs analysis of course, but basically it is the same (as I have argued elsewhere) as the immanent: given that both are 'beyond' the world, one inwardly and the other 'beyond.' These ideas of beyond and within, though superficially spatial, have deeper meanings. Both imply that the entity in question is non-spatial (except in some metaphorical way) and yet in interaction with spatial events. The divine 'within' lies beyond the mental and physical, beyond even the spiritual resources available to people within their psyches. And so it turns out that the divine spirit dwelling 'within' the individual has an analogous place to the *antaryāmin* or inner controller of the Indian tradition.

So far we have been talking of traditional notions of the person. In the Indian case, both Hindu and Buddhist, we are involved in very different cosmologies from those of the modern West. Modern secular cosmologies see profound value in the individual, especially the human. If there is

something which tends to unite the very diverse systems it may lie in the perceived potentiality for liberation and some divine status contained in traditional views of where we stand. Things may be different if we are thinking of modern liberal humanism. This outlook sees something of profound worth in each individual. But there is some illusion in seeing personal worth as depending upon some interior changeless entity. For, to repeat a point made earlier, the changeless cannot help the changeable.

The connection between the person and cosmology is also worth noting. In *śramanic* and in particular Buddhist and, later, Hindu thinking the universe pulsates, virtually beginningless—and the same applies to the individual. But in the Jewish, Christian and Muslim cosmologies the world starts with a sudden fiat. Many secular cosmologists see it all starting with a big bang. Likewise the individual is not seen as pre-existent. I caricatured this conceptual lack of adventure with some verses about Peter Strawson. In his book *Individuals* he has a chapter exploring the idea of disembodied consciousness after death. At that time Strawson identified himself as a descriptive metaphysician.

Peter Strawson has laid a logical curse on the thought of a never embodied person :

Such a naked soul just wouldn't be viable,
 But worse it'd be *unidentifiable*.
 But things may be better than we had reckoned—
 For couldn't a soul for about a second
 Acquire a body and get an identity
 And so become a respectable entity?
 It's a bit of a chore is this body filling
 But the flesh is brief and the spirit is willing.
 Yet it's bad to be shamed into apparition
 By a merely descriptive metaphysician.

I would like to note one or two modern developments. Since this is Chicago year I may mention Vivekananda. He adapted Advaita Vedanta in a way which makes his doctrine of the universal self seem closer to the idea of the divine presence within a person familiar to traditional Christianity. Also significantly he responded to utilitarianism by insisting on the transcendental character of true happiness.

In the Theravada, thinkers such as K.N. Jayatilleke and Padmasiri De Silva have brought Freud into play (he too of course has his somewhat idiosyncratic inner psychic geography). Since notoriously Freud does

not fit the Theravadin case among others you might suppose that Freudian theorists would have qualms, though they don't seem to.

Jayatileke and Padmasiri can use Freud to criticize Western religion, while Buddhism remains unscathed on the whole.

But I mention these developments as indicating that traditional Hindu and Buddhist views of the person are perhaps shifting.

At any rate such simple crosscultural reflections as I have spun out here should lead us to see divergences as challenging and thought provoking. If so far Western ethicists and psychologists have not paid too much attention to comparative philosophy and religion that is because of lingering tribalism, pervasively evident in our whole educational system.

PURUSHA AND PERSON : A COMPARATIVE INTERPRETATION

Jasper Blystone

Our theme is the most human of all topics : What does it mean to be a “human”? Following the etymology of the word, is it enough for us to say that to be human is to be an “earthling” (from *dhghem-*, “earth”)? Are not all known creatures earthlings? Why do we name ourselves so redundantly? Is it that we arrogantly thought of ourselves as *the* Earthlings of earthlings? Hardly. Our forebears, who invented the word, gave divine status to many of the other animal earthlings. Yet, why do we designate ourselves as *the* earthlings among the progeny of all earthlings?

Perhaps what we are really saying is that we are the “x” of the earth, as if we were announcing ourselves to beings *not* of the earth. To whom is the term “human”—“I am an earthling”—addressed? Did we have to convince our primeval earthling kind that we are of the earth? Maybe. Or are we really speaking to a non-earthling and declaring our own provenance? Either way, the issue remains the same : what is the “x” that is undesignated, yet implied? What is the “x” of which we are the earthling species?

Since our etymology gives us no further information about our “x”, we therefore must turn to another methodological source : to the broader semantic field of “human”, specifically to how we in Western civilization define ourselves. Let us, therefore, begin *in medias res*, “in the middle of things”, amidst that in which we find ourselves. As we ask these questions while writing and reading this paper, we find ourselves at the end of the so-called 20th Christian century in the City of Los Angeles, in the State of California within the United States of the North American Continent. We are thinking and writing in the English language within the Western branch of the Indo-European cultural complex. According to the tradition of this socio-cultural matrix, the human species has been specified as *Homo sapiens sapiens*, “the human that knows knowing”, i.e., the

reflectively self-conscious being. In the course of the centuries, we have come to designate such a sapient being as a "person." That is, after many generations of conscious self-reflection on what we are, we in the West have decided that we humans can be called "persons."

What we wish to say, therefore, is that at least within the cultural context out of which we are writing, the "x" of the human is to be the person of the earth. That is, among the earthlings, we humans are the persons. To be a human, therefore means to exhibit *personability*. What, on earth, is "personability"? How does it manifest itself? What does a person look like? How do they smell? Do they have a taste? A texture? What do they sound like? What do they *do*?

In the West, the notion of the person originates out of two known sources, the Latin *persona* and the Greek *prosopon*, both of which were terms denoting "mask", specifically that worn by actors or the role-playing participants in ceremonial rituals and theatrical drama. It is, in other words, not just a "theatrical" term, for its primeval origins are distinctly "sacerdotal." To be a person—in the most ancient context—meant "doer of the sacred."

Nevertheless, the proximate origins of the Western notion of the person are Hellenistic. They derive from the confluence of socio-cultural forces reigning in the Greco-Roman world from 300 BCE to 500 CE. This was the era during which the words *persona* and *prosopon* began to be used in extra-terrestrial, extra-theatrical and even secular ways. The time had come for multiple extensions of the words into the full spectrum of life. Two of the most important domains outside of the theatrical were the juridical and the religious. It is possible, however, that in very ancient times all these were combined into one. In any case, the quintessence of the activity is the ability to perform an ethos self-consciously and intentionally, to represent both oneself and something else. This is consonant with both the theatrical and the ritualistic origins of these words.

We in the Western traditions are not alone, however, for what is called "Western civilization" is only the European—specifically now the Euro-American—branch of the total Indo-European cultural complex. No understanding of our own branch is complete without the inclusion of the Indic component. And even that will in time prove itself too narrow, for the Indo-Europeans are only two branches of an even larger system: the Indo-Euro-Irano-Aryan cultural complex. Why do we consistently neglect our Persian and Zarathustrian legacy? For the present, however, let us suffice with the Indo-European and defer our researches into the Irano-Aryan until a later date.

Any complete understanding of the notion of the human must be, of course, global. It must include all human cultures. In this, our present approach, we are indeed aware of that. Nevertheless, we are proceeding in such a way as to be able to set up the theme of the person in our own cultural sphere before advancing to the other cultures of the world.

In the West, the notion of the person had no effective socio-cultural definition until the emergence of Christianity. Neither the Greek philosophers nor the Roman humanologists ever referred to the human *per se* as a "person." It would have been unthinkable, for they were doing ontology, not theological anthropology. Nevertheless, the praxiological bias of the Roman mind certainly paved the way towards looking upon the human individual as a "who" rather than a mere "what." However, only with the rise of the Christian theologians' attempts to understand "who" and "from whom" Jesus really was, that is, for them the function and significance of Jesus of Nazareth *as* the Christ, the *persona* of God, did the idea of the capacity for personability take on any anthropological meaning. Why? Because each and every human individual who commits to the Christian ethos is expected to be a player in the cosmic drama of God's agape, i.e. is required to perform as a Christ-person. This thence became the basic sociopolitical reality of the Western world—to regard every human individual as a potential Christic *persona* in Rome's staging of the drama of divine salvation. In the course of time, the concept of the person developed by the theologians was eventually applied politically and secularly. Suddenly, we were all granted the right to be persons. This was one of the most significant sociopolitical achievements in the history of our species because it paved the way for what we today call "representative democracy." Without the Christic notion of the person such "personalistic" democracy is impossible because only as persons are we granted the right to represent the law dialogically. We are thus given "metanoetic" rights: the right to change our own minds as well as the minds of others. This does not come without its price, however, for its performative model and paradigm is the person of the crucified Jesus as the Christ, the historical and praxio-dramatic source for our definition of the person. Categorically essential to the original concept of personhood is the function of self-sacrifice. And insofar as Jesus of Nazareth "did the sacred", he entered the ranks of the great "sacrificed" persons that preceded him in the more ancient times (cf. Odin, Prometheus, the Hindu Purusha, and closer to him, Socrates).

To some it may seem both shocking and silly to claim that our notion of the person originates not only in the arenas of the sacred, but that to be

a person is by definition the willingness to risk one's own death by being a doer of the sacred. Nevertheless, those are the facts, and it might behoove us to understand the anthropological profundity which they entail before reducing our notion of the person into inanity. For the hallmark of the human individual *qua* person is the ability to engage in self-sacrificial activities. In effect, therefore, the logic of personability suggests that self-sacrifice could constitute the highest human value.

The notion of the person in the Christic West finds its equivalent in the Hindic East in the notion of *purusha*. Although the term "purusha" is ordinarily translated as "man", "male", "spirit" and "self", it is clearly the Vedic equivalent of our notion of the person in its primeval mythodramatic sense. The original source is the Rig-Veda with its account of the creation of the world out of the ritual dismemberment of the primordial Purusha, the primeval Cosmic Man or Cosmic Male, the spiritual and person-like reality, the cosmos in "personal" form from whose fragmented body creation emerges (emerges eternally and perennially through *all* "persons"!) through the process of cosmic sacrifice. In this context, the Christic Person is a latter-day Hindic Purusha.

In both the East and the West, therefore, a "person" is originally a paradigmatic individual who is ceremonially sacrificed so that a new world can come into being.

Is this the primordial and ultimate message of the Christic personas as well as the Hindic purushas—and *mutatis mutandis* their descendants—to submit, commit and permit themselves to being the means whereby new worlds are brought into existence?

Both the Eastern and the Western branches of the Indo European traditions of the human heritage tell us that the "x" of being a human is to be a purusha or a person. That is, that the quintessence of reason, intelligence, spirit, mind and self-consciousness is manifested in personability and purushability. Although both the East and the West differ in their elaborations of this capacity, they both understand personability and purushability as the capacity to participate in a divine self-sacrificial mythopoetic drama. We thus see that the human as "x" is to be the representative or "person of the spirit" in the world. This is just as the conventional etymology of "purusha" attests: "the spirit in the citadel", the voice in the body of the world. And for the West: to be human is to be a *personae* or "mask" of the gods on earth.

Both traditions give witness to an understanding of persons and purushas as being spokespersons, as beings that can speak not only for their own selves, but for others, both immanent and transcendent to our

terrestrial world. Above all, they are the personae of the Other, the Absolute.

Why this should entail self-sacrifice is a question to which we must devote ourselves to gain a deeper understanding of the ethical consequences of being persons and purushas. Also, we must now engage in a global study of this East-West phenomenon to see if this might indeed be an anthropological universal and thus essential to the understanding of our human heritage as well as our own selves qua persons. For it is becoming clear sociopolitically that all humans are now being called upon to actualize their “x”, to become persons and purushas. What will be the moral consequences of this trend? Are we willing to accept the destiny of being “persons”: those who live in the willingness to die for something other than their own selves in order to create new worlds?

INDO-TIBETAN ANALYSES OF THE PERSON IN ANGLO-AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE

Joe Bransford Wilson

The notion of personal identity in Anglo-American philosophy involves characteristics such as rationality, intentionality, and self-consciousness, as well as a sense that a person is qualitatively different from other sorts of entities. After a brief presentation of some of these characteristics as articulated by John Locke, Terence Penelhum, and Daniel Dennet, the philosophies of Buddhism as they are understood by Tibetan commentators are examined in this paper. Buddhism is mainly a doctrine not of personal identity (that is, 'self') but of selflessness. Nonetheless, examination of what precisely is denied in the doctrine of selflessness does provide insights into personal identity. Moreover, some Buddhist writers have paid attention to the identity of a person over time, mainly in the context of karma and the continuity of a person from one lifetime to another. Indian Yogācāra Buddhism, as understood and interpreted by Tibetan philosophers, provides models of personal identity that serve as bases of comparison with Anglo-American notions of personhood.

1. Some Philosophical Notions of Personhood

One of the central concerns of philosophy—be it Indian, Greek, British, Tibetan, or American—is what makes a person a person, and why persons are different sorts of entities from tables and trees and cattle and fish.¹ In Anglo-American philosophy, this is sometimes treated as metaphysics, at other times discussed in the context of ethics. Under whatever rubric it has been discussed, personal identity and continuity are important issues in the philosophical traditions of the West, and their analysis has come to focus on certain topics which are seen as key issues. For example, John Locke says the following about persons and personal identity in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*:²

[A person] is a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places. . . and as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past thought or action, so far reaches the identity of that person; it is the same self now as it was then; and it is by the same self with this present one that now reflects on it, that that action was done.

Locke here posits rationality and self-consciousness as criteria of personhood and the ability to recall past events as the criterion for personal identity over time.

Concerning the term 'man,' on the other hand, Locke asserts it (and I think we can say, by extension, the term 'human being') to refer to a kind of living organism whose identity is rooted in its biological organization.³ He thus separates the person as moral agent from nature. For Locke, the concept of personal identity was rooted in legal responsibility—posited for the sake of having someone to reward and someone to punish.⁴ A person chooses and acts, and so is legally responsible.

I will return to these issues later in order to show parallel arguments in Buddhist philosophy, focussing on the ontological difference of the more general entity (person) from the more specific (human) and the rootedness of some forms of personal identity in the ethical responsibility described by the principles of karmic cause and effect.

More recently, Terence Penelhum, in his article 'Personal Identity' (in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*), identifies two main problems and four related issues in the Western discussion of personal identity.⁵ The two main problems are those of (1) reidentifying persons (that is, personal continuity) and (2) individuating persons (distinguishing them from one another). The four related issues are : (1) dualism, (2) self-knowledge, (3) immortality, and (4) ethics. The issues of immortality—that is, survival beyond death—and ethics are important contexts for the Buddhist positions as well.

Another systematic treatment of the subject is seen in Daniel Dennett's 1976 essay, "Conditions of Personhood." There, Dennett postulates six criteria that are, in various guises, presented by philosophers (from Aristotle through Strawson) as necessary conditions for being a person.⁶

First, Dennett says, persons are held to be rational beings.

Second, they are "beings to which states of consciousness are attributed."

Third, they are entities that, once identified as persons, are objects to which a certain stance is taken; that is, they are treated in a special way, a way different from that in which entities that are not persons are treated.

Fourth, the person, to whom this special attitude is taken, is capable of reciprocating it—that is, a person has “not only simple beliefs, desires, and other Intentions, but beliefs, desires and other Intentions about beliefs, desires, and other Intentions.”⁸

Fifth, persons must be capable of speech, of communicating verbally. Sixth, they have a special sort of consciousness, that is, they are self-conscious and, thus, morally responsible.

He argues that the first three—being rational, having consciousness, and being thought about in a certain way—are mutually interdependent. They, in fact, determine a wider set of phenomena (including more than persons) that he calls ‘Intentional systems.’ An Intentional system is “a system whose behavior can be (at least sometimes) explained and predicted by relying on ascriptions to the system of *beliefs* and *desires*. . . ([and other *Intentions*, that is] hopes, fears, intentions, perceptions, expectations, etc.).”⁹ Intentional systems include not only persons, but dogs, fish, and chess-playing computers.

The fourth criterion, reciprocating this special stance taken towards one, may be stated “to be a person is to treat others as persons.”¹⁰ This then might be taken as the basis of an ethics of altruism or at least mutual respect (although Dennett notes, quoting Thomas Nagel, that “extremely hostile behavior toward another is compatible with treating him as a person”).¹¹ It is certainly the case that Buddhist ethicists have claimed that recognition of the fact that self and others both desire happiness and want to avoid suffering should lead to an attitude in which others are valued equally with oneself. This unbiased equanimity is then taken to be the basis of an ethics of altruism.¹²

The fifth of Dennett’s criteria for being a person, that of the capacity for verbal communication, is a way of eliminating animals from being persons (and thus from being morally responsible beings) and, I suspect, a way of eliminating some humans, for example infants and the severely retarded, from personhood. This criterion is invoked within Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, but not as one for personhood. Bundled with some other criteria, it helps to determine when a human life might be religiously valuable (from a Buddhist perspective), since verbal communication is, generally, indispensable for learning to make moral decisions.

The sixth and last criterion for being a person, that of having a special kind of consciousness not found among all that are sentient, seems to be yet another way of excluding animals, infants and some mentally defective people from being honored with the title 'person.' Dennett quotes an article by Harry Frankfurt :¹³

[Humans] are capable of wanting to be different, in their preferences and purposes, from what they are.

. . . No other animal than man, however, appears to have the capacity for [such] reflective self-evaluation . . .

I will return to these criteria later in this paper, after the Buddhist position has been presented.

2. Informal Criteria for Personhood

Before turning from West to East, however, it would be good to touch on another important dimension of the way in which the term 'person' is used in the Western tradition, one more informal than formal. This is the sense of a person as an actor, a doer, an initiator, someone substantially different from all other persons. Persons are, or ought to be, assertive (self-assertive), striving for success in competition with others. Here we have a duality not merely of the person as actor as opposed to the person as biological entity, but of the individual and nature. Persons are, in this view, qualitatively different from their environments and may rightly control and dominate those environments.¹⁴ This perspective, one influenced by biblical notions of the place of humans in the universe, has come under criticism by those concerned with environmental philosophy.

In general, the Western cultural heritage and its attendant presuppositions concerning individuality, morality, and personal responsibility rest either on (1) a dualism between body and mind or (2) a dualism between a superficial body/mind and an inner rational and spiritual soul.¹⁵ The former—the body-mind dualism—is implicitly rejected in Buddhism. While it is undeniably true that, from the earliest times, Buddhist doctrine separates the physical (*gzugs*, *rūpa*—literally 'form') and the mental (*shes pa*, *jñāna*), they are related in the sense that the physical world determines, in part, the content or shape of the mental. Sense perception, for example, is mental but relates to its objects (which are physical) through physical sensory organs.¹⁶ More profoundly, actions (that is, actions in the moral sense, *kārma*) are basically intentions

(*sems pa, cetanā*)¹⁷ and thus mental, but it is these actions that structure future rebirth, that is to say, future physical embodiment.

The latter dualism—that between a manifest body-mind composite and an inner spiritual entity (a soul)—is explicitly rejected in the Buddhist doctrine of no self (or selflessness—see below) and in many other (for example, ritual and mythic) ways as well. The account of Siddhārtha's rejection of both the hedonism of the palace and then, later, the asceticism he practiced with his five companions prior to his enlightenment speaks at the mythic level to this point. The rejection of hedonism is a rejection of identification of the person and the body. The rejection of asceticism is a rejection of the idea that there is some pure immaterial essence unrelated to ordinary physical or mental experience that will survive the ascetic's destruction of his body.

Having examined some of the issues involved in thinking about personal identity in Anglo-American philosophy, let us now turn our attention to Buddhist persons. This will be done first within the basic Buddhist context of selflessness (*anātmya*), a doctrine that presents itself as a radical critique of intuitive understandings of personal identity. However, there are presentations of persons and personal continuity within Buddhism, and some of these will be examined as well.

3. Buddhism on Personal Identity and Continuity : Existent and Nonexistent Persons

Buddhism has always perceived itself as a middle way (*madhyama pratipad*) between extreme positions. This has taken the form of advocating a middle between what are often called extremes of existence and nonexistence. An extreme of existence is a case of too much existence—a superimposition of reality on what does not really exist. It may be a consciously undertaken philosophical stance such as the conception that there exists a self which is permanent, partless, and independent.¹⁸ Again, it may be merely the commonsense, unlearned (that is, not consciously chosen) affirmation of the existence of a self-sufficient center of personality.¹⁹ Thus, Buddhism, as it is understood in Tibet, denies the ordinary person's understanding of personal identity as well as denying various philosophical and religious positions on the subject. The former, the ordinary person's understanding, is not so much a consciously assumed stance as it is an unconscious potential that systemically shapes an individual's conscious attitudes about himself and about others. The unconscious potential is technically termed 'ignorance' (*ma rig pa*,

avidyā)²⁰ and is innate. The latter—philosophical and religious conceptions of personal identity—although ultimately deriving from ignorance, are not innate but learnt.²¹ Using Buddhist technical terms, personal identity becomes ‘self’ (*bdag*, *ātman*) and the well known Buddhist rejection of it is ‘selflessness’ or (perhaps less confusingly) ‘no-self’ (*bdag med*, *nairātmya*).

What is not so obvious is that Buddhism does not reject every conceivable sort of personal identity. That is, there are different ‘sorts’ of selves or, more precisely, there are many different ways of conceiving personal identity and continuity, at least one of which is correct. (It is not precisely accurate to speak of many different sorts of selves as the referents of these ‘[mis]conceptions of self’ (*bdag tu ‘dzin pa*, *ātmagrāha*) because these selves are the *imaginary* objects of those misconceptions; that is, such selves do not exist.) Buddhist philosophers are much more concerned with identifying the nonexistent selves than with the existent one, to the extent that any assertion of something that smacks of a self or person is viewed as potentially non-Buddhist.²²

Thus, the Buddhist denial of a self is complex, involving various levels of understanding of self, some more subtle, some less so. Painting in very broad strokes, we can say that Buddhists all deny at least two misconceptions of self.²³ The more pervasive one is that of a self-sufficient self—an individuality that can stand by itself without depending in any way on the aggregates of mind and body. This misconception is said to be innate in all sentient beings—humans, animals, and so forth. More superficial, and necessarily learnt, is the misconception which holds to a permanent, partless, and independent self. Here the Buddhists are explicitly rejecting the self (*ātman*) advocated by their rivals among the classical Indian philosophies. What is important here for our purposes is that Buddhists are not rejecting the existence of a self, or person, across the board, rather they reject just the validity of certain, admittedly pervasive, conceptions of self. These pervasive conceptions are misconceptions because, Buddhist philosophers say, they are not descriptions of personal identity but rather imaginative constructions of types of personal identity that do not exist. In both cases, the Buddhist concern is to reject the possibility of a person that is unrelated to an individual’s body and mind. In the former case, the self-sufficient self, were it to exist, would be able to change over time, but would be only loosely tied to an individual’s body and mind. In the latter case, the permanent, partless, and independent self would be an entity radically different from mind and body; it would be unchanging and unitary. In

neither case does the Buddhist rejection of self invoke the concerns that we have seen in Locke and Dennett, except implicitly. In rejecting the claims made by Vedāntins and others among non-Buddhist Indian philosophers of an *ātman* that is pure subject—a self that is *saccidānanda*, being, consciousness, and bliss—Buddhism notably does not reject consciousness here.

Moreover, although Buddhist philosophers do not devote as much attention to it, the Buddhist denial of self implies, or hints, that some form (or forms) of conceiving a self are appropriate. It follows that to deny existence to the self rightly understood is to fall to the other extreme to be avoided in the Buddhist middle way : the extreme of nonexistence, a case of denying reality to what does exist. An example of such an extreme is the position that there is no continuity of personality from one lifetime to another, in other words, a rejection of the doctrine of karma. Thus, avoiding the second extreme entails affirming the existence of at least some sort of self.

All Buddhist philosophers have taken care to avoid these two extremes. Since Buddhism defines itself in some ways by its doctrine of selflessness, avoiding the extreme of existence (through rejecting an unchanging substratum of personal identity) has not been a problem. By this I mean that avoiding the extreme of superimposing existence has not required an accommodation in terms of the central doctrinal stance of Buddhism—selflessness. It has been somewhat more of a problem for Buddhists to articulate positions which preserve some sense—not necessarily the ordinary one—of personal continuity and identity without compromising the doctrine of the selflessness of the person. Nonetheless, for Buddhist philosophies to be coherent, there must be—in addition to the nonexistent self of selflessness—an existent self which serves as the basis of transmigration in cyclic existence (*samsāra*) as well as liberation from it. There has as well to be something that can be seen to be behind the mistaken sense of self, something which, when incorrectly apprehended, appears to be a self-sufficient self or an independent self. What makes the quest for this existent self interesting is that in much of Buddhist literature allusion is made to it either ambiguously or not at all.

4. Buddhism on Personal Identity and Continuity : The Person as a Conventional Designation

As in the case of the Western discussion of the person, the Buddhist

analysis is a mixture of metaphysics and ethics. If Buddhism is to speak of ethics at all, if it is to speak of moral and immoral intended actions, there must be an agent who is morally responsible, which, in Buddhist terms, means the experiencer of the fruits of previously committed actions. Buddha speaks of such a person—although he uses the term ‘sentient being’ (*sems can, sattva; Pali satta*)—in the *Collection of Related Sayings* (*Samyuttanikaya*). There, he describes the way a sentient being is a designation made in reference to the aggregates of mind and body :²⁴

Just as a chariot is spoken of
In dependence on the collection of its parts,
So there is the convention, ‘sentient being,’
In dependence on the [psychophysical] aggregates.

The simile of the chariot occurs again in early Buddhist literature in *The Questions of King Milinda*, presented as the recorded dialogues between a Greek colonial ruler of northwest India during the second century BCE—King Milinda (or in Greek, Menander) and members of the Buddhist intellectual community.²⁵ When Menander greets one of the Buddhist clergy, a monk named Nāgasena, Nāgasena explains that in fact there is no Nāgasena, that the name given him by his parents implies no permanent individual. To this, Menander replies that if there is no permanent, enduring person, then who is there to feed and support monks like you? And what monks are there to make use of that food? Who is it that meditates and thereby attains nirvana? Who, on the other hand, is there to kill, steal, and lie? And who to experience the fruits of these actions in the future?

Menander then queries Nāgasena on the basis of his assertion that there is no permanent, independent, and superempirical Nāgasena. Is Nāgasena then his hair, is Nāgasena the other parts of his body, or his mind? To all this, Nāgasena must, of course, answer no. For Menander, this means that there is no Nāgasena at all. Nāgasena’s response to this is to ask Menander about his chariot : is the pole the chariot? Is the axle the chariot, or the frame, or the yoke? Are the parts taken together the chariot? Is there some chariot apart from its parts? To all these questions, Menander must answer no. And he must admit that chariot is only a designation for the parts working together. Just so, says Nāgasena, am I merely a designation, a convenient appellation for my mind and body working together. (The chariot metaphor is also used later by Candrakīrti in the *Madhyamakāvātāra*, from which it enters the Tibetan philosophical tradition.)²⁶

5. Buddhism on Personal Identity and Continuity : Imputed and Findable Persons

The person as described by Nāgasena—a convenient designation, a heuristic understanding, an imputation made on the basis of a prior perception of mind and body (or of one or another of the aggregates of mind and body)—is basic to most Buddhist philosophy, and to all Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophy. The paradigmatic nature of this idea is widely recognized, even outside of Indology and Buddhology. (Derek Parfit alludes to it in *Reasons and Persons*,²⁷ for example.) It is, however, not the end of Buddhist thinking on the subject of personal identity.

There are two directions that might be taken in analyzing the later analyses of the person in India and Tibet. One direction lies in examining the ways in which Buddhist thinkers reject the selves they hold to be imaginary. This was introduced above, in Section 3. Here we find the arguments against the person as a physical entity or as an entity somehow separate from one's mind and body, as well as clarification of the relationship between the person and psychophysical aggregates. The present essay, however, takes the other direction—an examination of part of a line of argument made by some Buddhist philosophers in the context of avoiding the other untenable extreme, the extreme of denying reality to what does exist. Thus, what will be examined are discussions of what sort of entity provides personal continuity within a single life and from lifetime to lifetime. The question we will need to ask about such an entity is whether or not it corresponds to the Western notion of person as construed by the philosophers cited above.

The specific arguments examined here are taken from a Tibetan presentation of the Buddhist philosophical stance known generically under the names Yogacara (literally 'meditative practice'), Cittamatra ('mind only'), and Vijñānavada ('consciousness school'). Systematic Yogacara goes back to the work of the Indian philosophers Asanga (310-390 CE), Vasubandhu (320-400), and Sthiramati (470-550).²⁸ Although Tibetan writers tend to favor the Madhyamaka school of Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, and Candrakīrti, they do comment on Yogacara texts and topics.

One of the more distinctive topics of Yogacara philosophy is that of the foundational consciousness (*kun gzhi rnam par shes pa, alayavijñāna*). Instead of accepting the commonplace Buddhist view that there are six sorts of consciousness (five sense consciousnesses and a mental consciousness), Asanga and his followers asserted that there were eight, adding an 'afflicted mentality' (*nyon mongs can gyi yid, klistamanas*)

and an eighth or foundational consciousness. The afflicted mentality is really only a variety of ignorance (see above), whereas the foundational consciousness, although its name suggests great and fundamental importance, is actually not conscious at all. It serves merely to hold the seeds (*sa bon, bija*) deposited by intentional actions (karma). Yet it is this foundational consciousness that survives the body and transmigrates from life to life.²⁹

The specific arguments examined here are among those raised in the course of a lengthy critique of the foundational consciousness and related issues by a Tibetan scholastic philosopher, Gung thang 'Jam dpal dbyangs (pronounced 'Gung-tang Jam-bë-yang'), in his 1802 work on the concept of foundational consciousness; this work is popularly known by the short title *Textbook on Foundational Consciousness*.³⁰ Gung thang wrote in the philosophic tradition of the Gomang (*sgo mang*) College of the Géluk (*dge lugs*) branch of Tibetan Buddhism. Besides interpreting the thought of Indian Yogacara writers such as Asanga and Vasubandhu, he is commenting on the founder of the Géluk school, Tsong kha pa (*Tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa*, 1357-1419 [pronounced, zong-ka-ba]). In some of the passages to which I will refer, Tsong kha pa is commenting on the *Madhyamakavatara* of the seventh century Indian Buddhist philosopher Candrakirti and the *Mulamadhyamakakarika* of Nagarjuna (150-250 CE), both of which are Madhyamika texts. Clearly an important agendum for Gung thang in his critique is to point out the untenability asserting that the foundational consciousness is the person, although this is done somewhat obliquely.

The history of Buddhist philosophy as understood in Tibet distinguishes four main schools of Indian Buddhism; in addition to the two Mahayana schools already mentioned—the *Yogācāra* and *Madhyamaka*—there are two others, *Vaibhasika* (the 'Great Exposition School,' those who follow the *Great Exposition* or *Mahāvibhāsa*) and *Sautrantika* ('Sutra School'). There are also subschools within these but, for present purposes, the only significant one is the Consequentialist or *Prasangika* branch of the Madhyamaka school. According to the tradition within which Gung thang writes, the Prasangika viewpoint (seen in Indian writers such as Candrakirti and Śāntideva) is normative.

And according to Prasangika, which takes a radical stance in this matter, a person is only an imputation, merely a designation. All phenomena, they say, are merely designations, dependent on their parts.³¹ Thus, if one sought for the person in itself, one would not find it. A person is neither a mind nor a body, but something radically contingent, a mere imputation.

Persons (like everything else) are empty (*stong pa, sunya*); they are transparent to philosophical analysis, that is, they cannot withstand philosophical analysis. Prasangikas, unlike all other Buddhist philosophers, maintain that such merely imputed phenomena are able to perform functions; they maintain that the cause and effect of karma makes sense within such a framework.

In contrast, the Yogacara position is that there is both an imputedly existent (*btags yod, prajñaptisat*) person (for example, sariputra) and a corresponding substantially existent (*rdzas su yod pa, dravyasat*) person (Śāriputra's foundational consciousness).³² That is, while 'sariputra' is a name, there is something that 'Śāriputra' names that is sariputra but is not merely a name. This position seems on the surface to be more sensible—sariputra there is something to which one can point that is actually sariputra the person and not merely a designation for impersonal phenomena (the aggregates of body and mind). However, there is both more and less than meets the eye here.

The 'more' is the overall context in which Buddhists think of persons. That is, in contrast to the case of Anglo-American philosophers, there seems to be no desire to exclude non-human sentient beings from personhood. The Indo-Tibetan tradition being presently examined claims sentience to six types of beings: humans and animals, gods and demigods, and hell beings and hungry ghosts. (Only humans and animals may normally be perceived by humans.) These six sorts of persons differ greatly in terms of their physical characteristics, but share a common mentality: they are all motivated by the innate ignorance discussed above, and they are all (at least theoretically) capable of moving from ignorance to altruism and wisdom (the goals of Buddhism). However, in practice, no one but humans are perceived to be capable of this move, and one of the central religious tasks of the Buddhist practitioner is to ensure, in the event that he does not attain enlightenment in the present life, continued rebirth as a human being.³³

This brings up another Buddhist assumption about personhood—that there need not only be continuity within the lifespan defined by continued operation of the physical body, there need also be continuity from one life to another. These 'lives' are distinguished from one another in terms of death and subsequent rebirth, which is to say that they are distinguished from one another only when there is a break of physical continuity (that is, when one body dies and a new body forms). Tsong kha pa speaks of this—in the context of Prasangika Madhyamika—in the following terms:³⁴

The selves, in the case of distinguishing Devadatta's individual rebirths,

which are the selves apprehended in the thought 'I' are each the minor self of an individual rebirth. Tsong kha pa differentiates this from "the mere I, the self abiding beginninglessly which is the basis observed in the conception of an I in which former and future I's are not distinguished."³⁵ The selves of individual lifetimes are each particular instances of this mere I or shared I. Thus, one can distinguish three selves existing within the context of a mere I: the self which comes to the present life from the past, that which goes from the present to the future, and that of the present lifetime.³⁶ In Yogācāra terminology, it is the foundational consciousness that endures throughout a single lifetime and provides continuity to the next lifetime.³⁷ All other consciousnesses cease at death and the body, of course, then ceases to function and begins to decompose.

Thus, when speaking of either the mere-I or the foundational consciousness as a person, care must be taken to distinguish between this basic level of personhood and the person who can be considered a monk, or a meditator, or a human or god.³⁸ Whereas Śāriputra is a human, and a monk, Śāriputra's foundational consciousness is neither. If a foundational consciousness could be reasonably considered to be a human (or a man), then it would (absurdly) have a mother.³⁹ Moreover, the foundational consciousness of the famous ancient Indian king (and patricide) Ajatashatru is neither a king nor a murderer, although Ajatashatru himself is both.⁴⁰

This brings us to the "less" to which I referred above ("there is both more and less than meets the eye here"). Although the foundational consciousness is enduring—it exists during so-called 'mindless' (*sems med, acittika*) or comatose states as well as during rebirths in which there is no physical body—it is morally neutral (*lung ma bstan, avyākṛta*) and neither self-conscious, rational, nor even aware of its surroundings in any meaningful sense of the term 'aware.' It *must* be morally neutral—that is, incapable of directing actions that yield karmic fruit—because it is the receptacle that holds the seeds (that is, the latencies or predispositions for future experience) deposited by both moral and immoral activity and by liberative activities such as meditation. (The presupposition here is that moral and immoral minds cannot coexist simultaneously in the same person.) The foundational 'consciousness' is, in modern Western terms, a species of unconscious mind.⁴¹

6. East Meets West

How do the foundational consciousness and the mere I hold up in

terms of the philosophical criteria for personhood articulated by Locke, Dennett, and others? Recall that Dennett's first set of criteria was that a person be an 'Intentional system'—something explainable and predictable when it is held to have beliefs, desires, intentions, perceptions, and so forth. As consciousness is defined at the most general level in Buddhism, its function is to know—that is, to be aware. And a consciousness is always capable of at least some very weak ability to distinguish pleasure and pain and to attend to objects.⁴² As the foundational consciousness is defined in Indian Yogācāra, therefore, it has these elementary abilities. Its 'objects' include the body with which it is associated and the sense objects in its environment, but it does not know them clearly; it cannot induce later ascertainment of them.⁴³ We would not wish to ascribe either rationality or self-consciousness to it. It would seem that the only reason for asserting such an entity is to account for continuity between lives and, within a lifetime, to accommodate unusual states (such as discontinuity of other consciousnesses during certain meditative states).⁴⁴ As for the mere-I, here again we come to the perceived need (but this time in a Madhyamaka interpretation) to account for continuity between lifetimes, while at the same time preserving a link to the individual of this lifetime.

In neither case is there an attempt to present an entity which is a morally responsible being. Nonetheless—especially in the case of the Yogācāra foundational consciousness—an explicit effort is made to explain why such an entity is a necessary (if not a sufficient) condition for moral responsibility, given that for the Buddhist, moral responsibility spans not merely the years of one's life, but the lives of one's continued existence. The foundational consciousness is a necessary condition for moral responsibility in that if there were no such enduring, yet transformable entity, then there would be no mechanism to account for continuity between the actor at moment A and the experiencer of the resultant karmic result at a later moment B.

Clearly, at least in the Yogacara case (as it is understood by Gung thang), the foundational consciousness, while it may be called a person (*gang zag, pudgala*), does not have the main criteria required by Dennett and Penelhum. Even if memory is invoked as a criterion, it fails, since, although it might be invoked to account for the possibility of memory (even over many lifetimes), it is not itself capable of knowing that it remembers and, thus, is not self-aware. The conclusion to which I am led in this case, however, is that we shall have to look elsewhere in Buddhism, under some rubric other than the obvious one to find the Buddhist idea of what it means to be a person in the sense that the term has come to be

defined in the Anglo-American tradition.

NOTES

1. The Indo-Tibetan Buddhist positions addressed in this paper agree with one another, and disagree with my Anglo-American sources, on whether cattle and fish are persons. Buddhist thinkers agree that humans and cattle are both types of sentient beings (Tibetan *sems can*, Sanskrit *sattva*) and that a cow living in, say, 1930 and a human born in 1960 might share a continuity not unlike that seen in the Joe Wilson of 1950 and the Joe Wilson of 1990.

2. John, Locke. "Of Identity and Diversity" (Chapter 27 of *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* [the second edition, of 1694]: pp. 33-52 in John Perry (ed.), *Personal Identity* [Berkeley : University of California Press, 1975]), pp.39-40.

3. John, Locke. *ibid.*, pp. 36-39.

4. Amélie Oxenberg Rorty (ed.). *The Identities of Persons*. (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1976), p. 4.

5. Terence Penelhum. "Personal Identity" (6 : 95-107 in Paul Edwards [ed.], *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [New York : Macmillan, 1967]), pp. 95-96.

6. Daniel, Dennett. "Conditions of Personhood." (pp.175-196 in Rorty [ed.], *The Identities of Persons*), pp. 177-178.

7. Dennett. "Conditions." p. 177.

8. *Ibid.* p. 181.

9. *Ibid.* pp. 178-179.

10. *Ibid.* p.178.

11. Nagel, T. "War and Massacre". *Philosophy and Public Affairs* (Winter 1972), p. 134—quoted in Dennett, p. 178.

12. This is argued at great length by Śāntideva in the eighth chapter of his *Bodhicaryāvatāra* and has been commented on many times in later Indian and in Tibetan philosophical literature. More recently, Tenzin Gyatso (the fourteenth Dalai Lama) has taken it as the focus of his thinking on ethics. See, for example *Kindness, Clarity, and Insight* (Ithaca : Snow Lion, 1984), pp. 11-12, 100-115.

13. Dennett. "Conditions." p. 192.

14. I am indebted for this characterization of dualistic/absolutistic views of self to Donald Bishop's "Buddhist and Western Views of the Self and their Ethical, Social, and Economic Implications" (1985—unpublished paper).

15. This may also be seen in Jain and some Hindu philosophical traditions in India.

16. There is an enormous body of Buddhist literature on the subject of

perception. The relationship between the physical and the mental in the context of sensory and mental cognition is explicitly treated in both the *abhidharma* tradition (exemplified by Vasubandhu in his *Abhidharmakośa*) and the logical-epistemological (whose seminal work, at least for Tibetan Buddhists, is Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇavārtika*).

17. This is the dominant position in Indian Buddhism, and is accepted as a given in Tibetan Buddhism. See, for example, Vasubandhu, *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* 4:3c (4:12-13 in the Louis de la Vallée Poussin translation as *L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu* [Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1923-31]) and *Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa* (edited and translated in Étienne Lamotte, "Le traité de l'acte de Vasubandhu, *Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa*," *Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques* 4 [1935-36]: 151-288), pp. 202-204 and 260-262.

18. Tibetan : *rtag gcig rang dbang can*. Many Tibetan Buddhist scholiasts would agree in classifying this as a coarse form of personal self. See, for example, Sopa and Hopkins. *Practice and Theory of Tibetan Buddhism* (New York: Grove Press, 1976), pp. 104, 117, 126.

19. Tibetan : *rang rkya thub pa'i rdzas yod kyi bdag*—literally, 'a self which exists substantially in the sense of being able to stand by itself.'

20. The Tibetan cited prior to the Sanskrit (and will be throughout this paper) because, for the most part, it is Tibetan writers and Tibetan versions and interpretations of Buddhist philosophies that are being discussed.

21. Learnt views are technically 'artificial' (*kun btags, parikalpita*). See Joe, Wilson. *Candrakīrti's Sevenfold Reasoning: Meditation on the Selflessness of Persons* (Dharamsala [H.P., India]: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1980), pp. 31, 33-34.

22. The Vatsīputriyas—a popular Indian school of Buddhism—asserted such a self. One refutation of this position may be seen in an appendix, entitled *Analysis of the Person*, to Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*. This appendix has recently been translated by James Duerlinger ("Vasubandhu's 'Refutation of the Theory of Selfhood' (*Ātmavadapratishedha*)," in *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 17 [1989]: 129-135 and 137-187).

23. On the different uses of the word 'self' (that is, *bdag* and *ātman*) in Tibetan Madhyamika philosophy, see Wilson, *Candrakīrti's Sevenfold Reasoning*, pp. 14-22 and Jeffrey Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness* (London: Wisdom Publications, 1983), pp. 35-41.

24. *Samyuttanikaya* I, p. 135 (Pali Text Society edition reprinted 1973) :

*yatha hi angasambhara ḥḥ
hoti saddo ratho iti ḥḥ
evam khandhesu santesu ḥḥ*

· *hoti satto ti sammuti* ||

25. The discussion relating to the Milinda Pañha is based on the presentation of the dialogue between Nāgasena and Menander in Steven Collins, *Selfless Persons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 182-184, and in Troy Wilson Organ, *Philosophy and the Self: East and West* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1987), p. 163.

26. See Joe, Wilson. "Pudgalavāda in Tibet? Assertions of Substantially Existent Selves in the Writings of Tsong kha pa and His Followers" (*Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 14, no. 1 [1991]: 155-80), p. 178, n. 36.

27. Parfit, Derek. *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 502.

28. The dates follow Hajime Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism: A Survey with Bibliographical Notes* (Delhi, India: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1987 [reprinted 1989]), pp. 264, 268, 281.

29. See Joe, Wilson. *The Meaning of Mind in the Buddhist Philosophy of Mind-Only* (doctoral dissertation: University of Virginia, 1984), pp. 320-379—corresponding to Gung thang, *Textbook*, 11b.1-14b.3.

30. Gung thang is also, more formally, known as Gung-thang dKon-mchog bstan-pa'i-sgron-me; he lived from 1762 to 1823. His *Textbook on Foundational Consciousness* is more formally known as *A Ford for the Wise: An Explanation of the Difficult Topics of (Tsong kha pa's)* "[*Extensive Commentary on the Difficult Topics of*] *Mentality and Foundational Consciousness*" (*Yid dang kun gzhi'i dka'i gnad rnam par bshad pa mkhas pa'i 'jug ngog* [Buxa, India: 1965]). It has been translated in Joe Wilson, *The Meaning of Mind*, pp. 184-763.

31. See, for example, Tsong kha pa, *dbU ma rtsa ba'i tshig le'ur byas pa shes rab ces bya ba'i rnam bshad rigs pa'i rgya mtsho* (also known as *Tsa she tik chen*) (Sarnath: Pleasure of Elegant Sayings, 1973), pp. 206-218.

32. Gung thang 24b.1-6 (explicated in Wilson, pp. 513-520).

33. This is made clear, for example, in the literature of meditation under the topic of 'realistic appraisal of the value of the human situation,' where human abilities are distinguished from those of animals, gods, and so on. For an English presentation, see, for example, Sonam Gyatso (Dalai Lama III), Tenzin Gyatso (Dalai Lama XIV), and Glenn H. Mullin. *Essence of Refined Gold* (Ithaca: Snow Lion, 1982), pp. 58-75.

34. Tsong kha pa, *dbU ma rtsa ba'i tshig le'ur byas pa shes rab ces bya ba'irnam bshad rigs pa'i rgya mtsho*, p. 215.12 (corrected according to the reading in the citation in Gung thang, *Textbook*, 28b.4).

35. *Ibid.*, p. 215.8-11.

36. Oral communication, Denma Lochö[*bstan ma blo chos*] Rinpoché, June 1978. Tibetan philosophical texts function mainly as vehicles for scholarly exegesis and, especially, debate. In an important sense, these exegeses ought to be considered as texts and, thus, they ought to be cited. The reader may, of course, have his or her own opinions concerning their reliability or the extent to which their authority should be weighed against published texts.

37. I advance this as my own conclusion; it is not one that is drawn by Gung thang, notwithstanding the fact that he brings the mere-I up for discussion in the midst of speaking on the fundamental consciousness as self.

38. See Gung thang, *Textbook*, 27b.4ff.

39. Oral communication of Géshé Ngawang Nyima [*ngag dbang nyi ma*] (Abbot Emeritus of Gomang College), 1980.

40. Gung thang, 24b.3ff.

41. I preserve the usage 'foundational *consciousness*' as an accurate reflection of terms that are misleading (and, thus, philosophically inaccurate) in Sanskrit and Tibetan as well.

42. The basic text in this regard for the Indo-Tibetan tradition is Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, where five continuously present mental functions are asserted.

43. Gung thang, 13a.5-13b. 6.

44. It is worth noting here that there are many Buddhist parallels to the puzzle cases of which philosophers are enamored. A parallel to Parfit's example of teletransportation and duplication of the body (*Reasons and Persons*, p.199ff.) is Gung thang's puzzle of the whether the emanation body (*sprul sku, nirmanakaya*) created by a Bodhisattva is a separate person or not (28a.2).

PERSON, DESTINY AND SOCIETY IN YORUBA (AFRICAN) PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

M. Akin Makinde

Every society has a way of looking at the world. Individuals in a society may, through inspiration or intellectual gift, observe their environment, study it, and begin to speculate on their findings. In most cases, the speculative thought of such individuals may influence the people's perception of reality. Thus Thales observed that his environment was surrounded by water and then speculated that water is the arche of all things. The scholastic philosophers, having accepted the truth of the Bible, looked at the wonders of the world and speculated about its origins and then postulated God as the cause of all things, including man. Even man could not understand his own existence until Rene Descartes attributed such understanding to clear and distinct ideas as guaranteed by God who, according to him, is not a deceiver. If we are to examine the concept of a person, most people, and even the layman, will probably accept that a person is the totality of what is observed and observable as a physical body, consisting of the external body and internal organs, the one directly visible, the other visible if we perform some sort of surgical operation. The layman's view will of course coincide with that of an empiricist philosopher who believes in the existence of what is observed or, in principle, observable. But between the layman and the empiricist is a group of people who think beyond what is observable.

How this thought came about is not clear, but I think it has its root in wonder (as Plato and Aristotle said), which often leads to speculative thought. For instance, man is in certain respects like animals—although a higher animal—who can walk, eat, drink, run, sleep, get annoyed, fight, make love, and procreate. What, then, is the essential difference between man and animal? In the tradition in which I grew up, this difference accounts for the distinction between a human being known as person or as beast. What is this difference? It is seen as the ability to think and talk

meaningfully in articulate sounds. Perhaps this ability is supported by a certain engine in the body which is absent in animals. This engine is not necessarily a "ghost in the machine" as Gilbert Ryle would say. It is a living thing, the real thing that makes a person what he is in himself and in society. And unless we have this essential thing in common, it will be impossible for the people to communicate and understand one another, appreciate or criticise one another's actions, give and take advice from fellow human beings, or believe that we can understand how other people think and feel about certain situations, e.g., experiences of joy and sorrow, excitement and wonder.

In the Yoruba philosophical perspective a person is made of *emi* (soul) and *ara* (body). The same is said of animals, trees, rivers, and some cash crops like yams, plantains, cassava, etc. But there is a difference, and this difference consists in the conceived origins of the human body and soul, in the silence of the souls of the beasts, and in the inclusion of the idea of *ori*.

The Yoruba Concept Of A Person Or Human Personality

Before I proceed with my discussion on the Yoruba concept of a person, or human personality, I shall assume that, since the Yoruba are Africans, my analysis could be seen as that of an African concept of a person. David Hume was a Scot, and Scotland is in Great Britain, but we often refer to David Hume's philosophy as British Philosophy, and sometimes Scottish Philosophy of common sense. It is in this sense that I would like my readers to regard the Yoruba concept of a person as African, since the Yoruba of Nigeria are Africans. Also, by talking of Yoruba or Akan or Bantu philosophy, I do not mean a group philosophy.¹ Rather, I mean a philosophy implicit in the belief and tradition of a people, as enunciated by individual thinkers in these societies. The individual thinkers could be informants whose ideas are recorded by other thinkers who in turn reflect on these ideas in order to bring out their philosophical import as a second order thought.

From oral evidence and written work, the Yoruba people of Nigeria believe that the human person has two main elements : the **physical and the spiritual**. The physical element of a person is known collectively as *ara* (body) and the spiritual element as *emi* (soul). The body and soul are not created simultaneously. According to oral tradition and written work, the body was created before the soul. The body was a creation of *Orisanla* (the Yoruba god of creation) who was charged with the responsibility of

moulding human bodies out of clay by *Olodumare* (God of Heaven). "These bodies were moulded in different shapes, some of which were characterised by their beauty, and some by their ugliness and deformity."² I remember Professor Whiteley's misgivings about God's creation of man in that some are created beautiful, others ugly and deformed. In his objection to such a creation, Whiteley thought that if he were God he would have done a better job—he would have created all men as beautiful creatures.³ Perhaps our passage above from the Yoruba cosmology is enough to spare God of the charge of incompetence, since *Orisanla* (a lesser deity) and not God Himself was responsible for the creation of the human body. The more important element, the human soul, is seen as God's own image, and His own creation.

In the order of priority, the body was created before the soul. After *Orisanla* had moulded all the physical elements, including the human heart, out of clay, *Olodumare* (God) completed the job by putting *emi* (soul) into the finished work. *Ogum* (God of iron) was said to have cut the legs, arms, and fingers into shapes.⁴ In the biblical account, the process of creation of man as body and soul out of dust was attributed to God alone, without reference to any lesser deity. "And the eternal God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul (Genesis 2:7). This position is not contradicted by the Yoruba belief which sees the soul, the giver of life to the body, as a creation of God (*Olodumare*). *Emi* (soul) is therefore seen as a part of the divine breath which *Olodumare* puts into every individual body in order to make him a proper human being, i.e., a person.⁵ The breath of God was seen as spiritual or divine breath and the immortal part of a person, because the giver Himself is immortal. It is therefore understandable why the Yoruba has to accord great importance to the spiritual element of a person. Because the body is a creation of *Orisanla* out of clay, it is destructible and mortal, while the soul as the creation of *Olodumare* (God) is not. It is also believed that after the death of the body, the *emi*, which does not die, goes back to His owner, God, from its earthly, temporary abode (i.e., the body). Thus, according to Abimbola :

On the spiritual plane, *emi* (soul) is of supreme importance because it is an imperishable element of human personality. When a man dies, his *emi*, the spiritual part, does not perish; rather, it goes to *Orun* (heaven) where it enters a new era and thus takes its proper place among the ancestors.⁶

Although the human person consists essentially of two elements, both of which are known to the Western world, there is a third element in the Yoruba system of thought. According to Professor Abimbola “the spiritual elements of human personality consist of *emi* (soul) which has its physical realisation in the human heart which bears the same name, and *ori* (the inner or metaphysical head) which has its physical counterpart in the human head.”⁷ From our discussion above, there exists a tripartite conception of the human person in Yoruba thought, namely body (*ara*), soul (*emi*), and inner head (*ori*), with the latter two as the metaphysical or spiritual elements of a person. Incidentally, a similar tripartite conception exists in the thought of the Akan people of Ghana.⁸

In the history of Western Philosophy two competing conceptions of a person are generally known : viz., “dualism” and “monism/identity/materialist” theory. Dualism is the theory made popular by Descartes. A person consists of body and, then, soul or mind. The Yoruba system of *ara*, *emi*, and *ori*, reduces, in comparison to Descartes, to dualism inasmuch as the *emi* (soul) and the *ori* (inner head) are spiritual entities. It appears that in the western concept, the soul was known prior to the body. For instance, Descartes was aware of his soul or mind before he went on to prove that he had a body. Unlike the Yoruba, Descartes did not specify whether the body or the soul was first created, although he seems to have attached greater importance to the soul whose existence seems, to him, more certain than that of the body. Plato was also more interested in the soul, and the relation of the soul to Ideas. He attaches importance to the soul in much the same way that the Yoruba do—as the essence of life and motion, the essential property of a person, and the seat of human rationality.

While the body was first to be created in Yoruba belief, Plato suggests that the soul was first. According to Plato, what was first created by the Demiurge (world artificer)⁹ was the “world soul.” It is incorporeal, but occupies space, spread out “like a huge net in empty space.” The human soul in Plato’s *Timaeus* is moulded by lesser gods using the world soul as their model. It is the cause of the motions in the human body, the thing which gives body its life and form, and the seat of human reason; that is to say, it is in the soul that human reason dwells. Plato seems to be more detailed in his characterisation of the soul than the Yoruba, although the essential characteristics of the soul remain the same in both philosophies. For instance, like Plato, the Yoruba believe in the immortality and indestructibility of the soul and that the soul gives the body its vital force. Curiously enough, both also believe that animals and plants have souls, while Descartes believes that animals are soulless automata. One difference

in Plato's conception of the soul lies in the use Plato makes of it for epistemological and ethical purposes. Also, as we have pointed out, the Yoruba conception of a person is more complicated because of the introduction of a third element, *ori* (inner head). Both Plato and the Yoruba tried to explain the soul's immortality through myths: the myth of Er and the myth of Seven Heavens (*Orun Meje*) respectively. I have discussed this topic extensively in my article "Immortality of the Soul and the Yoruba Theory of Seven Heavens (Orun Meje)."¹⁰

***Ori*, Person and Human Destiny**

"*Ori*" in Yoruba language means "physical head," but in the present context it means "inner head" or "metaphysical head." It is also known as the guardian spirit. According to Abimbola, predestination among the Yoruba is known to be always associated with *ori* (inner head).¹¹ *Ori* is the symbol of free choice which everybody elected from heaven. Thus, "a man's destiny, that is to say, his success or failure in life, depends to a large extent on the type of head he chose in heaven."¹² The concept of *ori*, therefore, is seen as the element which represents the concept of human destiny in Yoruba thought. *Ori* is, so to say, the bearer of human destiny: "the choice of a good *ori* insures that the individual concerned would live a successful and prosperous life on earth while the choice of a bad *ori* condemns the individual concerned to a life of failure."¹³

It is advanced by Abimbola that most people choose the wrong *ori* from Ajala's storehouse of heads in heaven, and, as a result, are destined to a life of failure on earth.¹⁴ Thus it is understood that "if a man achieves great success in life, the Yoruba usually attribute his attainment to the choice of a good *ori*, but if he fails in an important endeavor or if he fails to catch up with his colleagues, his failure is attributed to the choice of a bad *ori*."¹⁵ From this it seems evident that the belief in predestination is used to explain the success or failure of every man on earth, as Abimbola has pointed out.¹⁶ Although it is maintained that the choice of *ori* is a free choice, it is also maintained that the type of *ori* chosen by a particular individual remains unknown to him and to all others except *Orunmila* who is the witness of the act of the choice of destiny (*eleri ipin*).¹⁷

As an important aspect of a person, *ori* is responsible for human destiny. Its function, like that of the soul, is a metaphysical one. As an inner (metaphysical) head, it is a mere symbol of the outer, physical head. The choice of a good *ori* in heaven brings success while that of a bad *ori*

brings failure. But the Yoruba also believe that the *ori* cannot perform its function properly without the aid of *ese* (leg), both in a physical and spiritual sense.

As Abimbola puts it :

It must be emphasised, however, that the Yoruba concept of the choice of destiny through *ori* also emphasises the need for hard work to bring to fruition the potentiality for success represented by the choice of a good *ori*. This leads us to believe in *ese* (leg) as an important part of human personality make-up, both in a physical and spiritual sense. *Ese*, for the Yoruba, is the symbol of power and activity. It is therefore an element which enables a man to struggle and function adequately in life so that he may bring to realization whatever has been marked out for him by the choice of *ori*.¹⁸

The point made here is that even if one is predestined to succeed in life by the choice of a good *ori*, one cannot actually achieve success without the conscious use of one's *ese*, which is the symbol of power and activity. It may, of course, be argued that, if predestination is already assured, the point that one has to make an effective use of one's *ese* in order to be successful in life is unnecessary, for it is precisely success in life that the choice of a good *ori* implies. The question might then be raised : Why the fear of not using one's *ese* if it has indeed been predestined through the choice of a good *ori* that one would succeed in life? In fact, it can be argued that since that *owo* (hand) and *opolo* (brain) are as useful to one's success in life as one's *ese*, why not consider these also as important elements of the human personality? Especially since *owo* (hand) does most of the work by man on earth, while the effective functioning of both *ese* and *owo* depends on the centrally coordinating activity of the human brain (*opolo*). We may answer this question by the Yoruba belief that *ori* is a mere potentiality. While it represents human destiny, it does not do so automatically. As a mere potentiality it means that certain things have to be done along with the choice of a good *ori* in order to bring the potentially good choice into fruition. Among the things to be done, therefore, will not only be the effective use of one's *ese*, but also of one's *owo*, *opolo*, and, finally, the sacrifice to one's *ori* whenever such a sacrifice is deemed necessary. An element of freedom is thus involved in using one's *ese*, *owo*, and *opolo*, and sacrifice or propitiation to one's *ori* is a way of modifying one's destiny. It is however interesting to note here that, apart from the western conception of a person as either body or soul

or both, the inclusion of *ori* in Yoruba thought makes the conception of a person broader and probably more complicated than those found in Western philosophy.

The concept of *ori*, which plays a prominent role in the Yoruba concept of human personality, brings out certain philosophically interesting questions, and is, therefore, subject to analysis and criticism. For instance, I have argued elsewhere that the choice of *ori* in heaven is not a free choice.¹⁹ What is the relation of *ori* (inner head) to *ara* (physical body)? Is there a relation between *emi* (soul) and *ori*, both of which are metaphysical entities? These questions are still begging for an answer just as the question of the relationship between body and soul or mind is in need of a definitive answer. But the most interesting issue that arises from our analysis of the Yoruba concept of *Ori* is that of the relation between *ori* and human destiny, since *ori*, unlike *Ayanmo*,²⁰ is not destiny but the bearer of destiny. This question becomes important because, although it is said that it is impossible to alter one's destiny once a choice of *ori* has been made in heaven, the Yoruba concept of *ori* and human destiny find an avenue where an alteration could still be made. A bad *ori* could be purified and made good by means of sacrifice or propitiation to the same *ori* while a good *ori* could be spoilt by a person who refuses to use his *ese* (leg), *owo* (hand), or *opolo* (brain). But this leads us to contradictory positions. "Destiny is unalterable" but "there are some cases in which destiny is alterable." As it is, the latter proposition contradicts the former if the concept of destiny is to have the same meaning in both cases. And, surely, our concept of destiny is contradicted by the possibility of its slightest alteration by means of sacrifice to one's *ori*.

The statement that destiny, once chosen by one's *ori*, remains unalterable in life raises the fundamental question as to whether anything could be gained by a sacrifice or propitiation to one's *ori*, just as the story that Jesus Christ was destined to die on the cross raises the questions as to whether anything could be gained by His prayers, fasting, and sacrifices in the Garden of Gethsemane. Also, the revelation that a particular child, when grown up, was destined to kill his father and marry his own mother (in Ola Rotimi's *Gods are Not to Blame*) raises the question as to whether anything could be gained, if the concept of destiny is fully accepted, by trying to kill the child before he actualised what was to be; or if, peradventure, the same child was unwittingly prevented from being killed by somebody else, the course of his destiny could still be altered by the grown up child himself if, on learning of his destiny, he ran away from it all in a desperate attempt to avoid a predestination as expressed in the

statement : "You shall kill your father and marry your own mother." The story of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and Ola Rotimi's play (an adaptation of Oedipus complex) seem to show that it is futile to want to alter the course of destiny. In other words, "what is, was to be."²¹ But this position seems to have been subverted by the possibility of altering one's destiny by means of sacrifice to one's *ori*. The philosophical issues that arise from our analysis of the Yoruba concepts of *ori* and human destiny can now be summarised as follows:

(1) The choice of *ori*, and hence of destiny, cannot, as claimed by the Yoruba conception of it, be a free choice since what is being chosen in heaven is unknown to the so-called chooser. One argument for this stand is that, in the real sense of it, the choice of *ori* as maintained in Abimbola's analysis is not a preferential choice. A choice, we maintain, presupposes a preferential system, and this system is never presupposed in an individual's choice of *ori*. Apart from the fact that a choice without a preferential system is inadmissible in deciding what kind of *ori* one wants for one's destiny in life, we also argue that nobody, granting that he is rational, willingly chooses a bad *ori*. Even if it is argued that it is not really impossible that an individual may prefer to choose a bad *ori* to a good one, we still maintain that, in the context of our analysis, no individual is capable of making such a preferential choice of *ori*. The advance knowledge of which *ori* is good or bad is not available. In this exercise, it appears that the kind of *ori* an individual chooses in heaven is a matter of chance or luck. It is, we may say, like picking a lottery ticket—nobody could be blamed for picking a losing lottery ticket just as nobody need be praised for selecting a winning one. It is all a matter of luck.

(2) The Yoruba concept of *ori* stresses the importance of sacrifice or propitiation just in case a particular *ori* chosen in heaven is not a good one. Presumably the sacrifice is aimed at altering one's destiny from bad to good, from failure to success. Again, the need for hard work in bringing to fruition the potential success that the choice of a good *ori* carries with it is well emphasised in Abimbola's work. This is suggested when he says : "The choice of a good *ori* does not automatically lead to success on earth."²² Although the greater part of human success or failure can be ascribed to predestination in Yoruba thought, human effort cannot be ruled out in the attainment of success or failure, as already suggested by one's use of *ese*, *owó*, *opolo*, and the act of sacrifice or propitiation.

(3) The requirement for hard work for the potential success of a good *ori* makes it clear that in Yoruba thought predestination is not analogous to fatalism. There seems to be an implied belief that it is in

one's power to make a good *ori* successful as it was "destined" to be, or a bad *ori* successful as it was "not destined" to be. This is the purpose of making sacrifice to one's *ori* after it has been chosen. It therefore appears from the above that, while the choice of a good *ori* does not automatically lead to success or long life, the choice of a bad *ori* does not automatically lead to failure or premature death. But here the concept of human destiny breaks down or at least becomes divided. Does, or does not, destiny change? In one important sense we are told that once an *ori* is chosen in heaven, a change of destiny is impossible, and that even in this case, the gods are not to blame.²³ In another sense we are told that some destiny can be altered either by the dint of hard work or the lack of it, or by means of appropriate sacrifice or lack of it to one's *ori*, and this is probably the reason why the choice of good *ori* does not automatically lead to success on earth. There is a *prima facie* difficulty here about what precisely is meant by human destiny in Yoruba thought. In this connection there is need to examine the implications of what one might be saying when one affirms that an adjustment to *ori* may lead to a corresponding adjustment to human destiny. That is to say, a bad *ori* may be altered to a good one by means of purification of it through some sacrifice or propitiation while a good *ori* may be altered into a bad one through laziness, carelessness, or sheer stupidity. Now I must submit that the implication of all this is a possible abandonment of our concept of destiny in the strong sense. If destiny is to be given its proper interpretation as "what is, was to be and not otherwise," and if it is something that can never be altered, and if this concept is represented by the choice of *ori*, then it appears that destiny has been altered once a bad *ori* is altered into a good one and vice versa. But in any case, we either admit that an *ori*, once chosen in heaven, could be altered from bad to good or vice versa or accept that no *ori*, however good or bad, is subject to change. In either case, the philosophical concept of *ori* in Yoruba thought may still be retained, but there is a pressing need to re-examine the concept of destiny together with the concept of its bearer, *ori*, in order to see which one is in need of conceptual modification.

On the other hand, we may conceive of the possibility of an alteration of human destiny as meaning that, although the choice of *ori* in heaven guarantees a particular destiny in life, such a guarantee is by no means an absolute one. The reason for this would rest on a further premise, that an individual has the freedom or option to interfere with his destiny since he is free to make or not make appropriate sacrifice to placate his "inner head," and free to work hard or be lazy. In either case, some element of freedom is involved in the act of making sacrifice, working hard, or being

lazy. Surely, if there is no freedom involved in these exercises, either an individual would not be in a position to choose between making some sacrifice to improve his inner head and refusing to make such a sacrifice to improve his destiny; or, between working hard to see that his "destined" success in life remains unalterable and seeing his "destined" success altered by sheer laziness or stupidity.

(4) From our analysis, it now becomes clear that, as far as the Yoruba concepts of *ori* and human destiny are concerned, two philosophical schools of thought are likely to emerge, at least from the implication of Abimbola's exposition of the subject. The first school of thought maintains a "strong" relation between *ori* and human destiny to the effect that once an *ori* is chosen in heaven, it becomes impossible to alter it in life, for, as Abimbola maintains, the gods are not even in a position to alter a man's destiny once it is chosen.²⁴ We shall call this "strong" sense of destiny (SD) for short. The second school of thought asserts something quite different from the above: that once an *ori* was chosen in heaven, it cannot be altered unless one takes the trouble to make some sacrifice to one's *ori* just in case it was a bad one, or work hard in order to be successful even if the *ori* chosen was a good one. The above claim, which is also found in Abimbola's exposition, asserts a "weak" relation between *ori* and human destiny. By "weak" relation I mean there is no necessary connection between a choice of bad *ori* and failure. We shall call this (WD) for short. From our analysis we are able to reach a situation similar to the two conceptions of determinism in Western philosophy—soft and hard determinism. And our discovery of (SD) and (WD) in Yoruba thought seems to have shed a light on a possible African view of moral responsibility and punishment.²⁵

(5) If we go back to my earlier argument that an individual's choice of *ori* in heaven is not an act of free choice, then we can safely say that no individual could be held responsible for his choice of *ori*, be it good or bad, as his bearer of destiny on earth. This would be an important implication of our (SD). From this point of view, it looks as if we have no moral right to blame those who are unsuccessful in life any more than we have any moral right to punish them for having unwittingly chosen some particular *ori*. My argument is hinged on the aforementioned analogy between the so-called choosing of a bad *ori* in heaven and picking a losing lottery ticket. Both exercises are, to my mind, carried out in ignorance. We cannot blame an individual for his choice of a bad *ori* just as we cannot blame him for choosing a bad lottery ticket. Consequently, for the same reason, we cannot punish him. I cannot see how one could be said

to have made a "choice." Surely the man making the "choice" of *ori* had no idea of what he was choosing at that particular time. He would only know if the *ori* were good or bad when it came to fruition on earth, or after the deed had been done. From this analysis it turns out that a choice of *ori* and destiny in heaven is purely a matter of luck, like playing a game you either win or lose in advance. And just as no one willingly chooses a losing lottery ticket, no one willingly chooses a bad *ori*. The conclusion we can draw from this is that an individual's choice of *ori* from heaven is not an exercise in free choice, i.e., free in the sense in which an individual is given the preference to choose a particular kind of *ori* as the bearer of his destiny in life. After all, nobody could be said to be free in his choice of a womb that would bear him, or in his choice of father.

Person, Destiny And Society

By **person** is meant "the living body or a human being," while **personality** is defined as "a state of being a person, existence as an individual," and, more importantly, "the qualities that make up a person's character" (Oxford Dictionary). From the point of view of the Yoruba concept of human personality, the choice of *ori* seems to be more important in character formation and the qualities that make up a person than the combination of *emi* (soul) and *ara* (body), which are the other components of a person. This is to say that a good choice of *ori* in heaven would, when superimposed on *emi* and *ara* (the only two elements of person known to Western thought), bring out the qualities that make up a good or bad person or personality. Thus the relationship of *ori* to the status and function of the spiritual and physical elements in human personality is suggested by the following passage from Abimbola :

Since all the elements in the Yoruba personality make-up are pre-destined, the status and function of each individual on earth in relation to these pre-destined elements is determined by what type of personal qualities each individual selects from orun (heaven).²⁶

Now, since *emi* has no variable qualities when put into the body by *Olodumare*, it appears that the only elements whose qualities vary are *ara* (body) and *ori* (inner head). In an important sense, *iwa* (character), which is a function of *ori*, shows that man is inherently good and that he exists for the purpose for which he and everything was created—goodness.

We may conceivably describe goodness as one essential characteristic of humans' destinies, as presupposed by the *asuwada* principle which, according to Akiwowo, is said to govern human society and human destiny, as opposed to those of animals' destinies where the concept of *iwa* (character) is non-existent.²⁷ Although the actual relation between *ori* and *asuwada* has not been clearly worked out, *asuwada* can be regarded as an ultimate presupposition according to which an individual's choice of *ori* and his destiny is formed or made.²⁸

Ori, as the bearer of human destiny, seems to play a central role in the Yoruba concept of a person. As we have pointed out above, it represents the human character and consequently the *human personality*. It is from the point of view of human personality that a person is judged as good or bad, moral or immoral, rich or poor, etc. And all these taken together account for one's position in a society or nation. But some questions now arise. A society is individuals-writ-large, or what Sorokin describes as "super-individual reality."²⁹ Granted that *ori* is the bearer of human destiny and hence of human personality, and given the fact that a society is made of individuals with different *ori*—some good and some bad—what then is the relation of an individual's destiny to that of society or nation? To be more precise, what effect does an individual's destiny have on the destiny of a society or nation?

If we assume that the quality of a society or nation depends on the qualities of the personalities of its citizens, shall we say that successful societies like those in America are made up of persons who had chosen good *ori* from heaven and some, if not a majority, of the societies in African countries are made up of persons who had chosen bad *ori* from heaven? In these two cases we may argue that the choices of *ori* are responsible for the successes or failures of the different countries. Since there is no biological proof that one race is necessarily superior to any other, we do not know whether the concept of *ori* can explain the remarkable differences between the peoples and societies of the Third World and the advanced countries. If the choice of good or bad *ori* does not necessarily lead to success or failure on earth, then it means that the mere choice of good or bad *ori* of individuals in a society does not entail success or failure of that society. Other things are necessary, such as hard work or laziness, honesty or dishonesty to oneself or fellow men, and so on—all of which come under the human character or the behavior of individuals. An individual's character or behavior comes as a result of his habit which is nurtured by certain cultural beliefs. When we relate the individual *ori* and destiny to that of a society at large, we may see the

effect of human character and personality, belief, and culture on the destiny of a society.

We may go on to ask a further related question : Does the success or failure of any nation correspond to the successes or failures of its individual citizens? And if success or failure depends on an individual's choice of *ori*, can we say, for example, that a majority of the successful nations like the U.S.A., Great Britain, Germany, and France is made up of individuals who had chosen good *ori* and a majority of the Third World countries is made up of individuals who had chosen bad *ori* from heaven? If you subscribe to our "strong" conception of destiny (SD), you may answer the question in the positive. But if you subscribe to our (WD) form of destiny, your answer will be "no." But then this only leaves us with the question to make good or mar one's choice of *ori* by means of propitiation or absence of it, hard work or laziness, achievement or its lack, and other things that make up one's character and personality. In this case an American and an African may very well have chosen good *ori*, but one of them had spoilt it on earth, or both of them had chosen bad *ori* in heaven and one of them improved on it under one of the circumstances stated above. From this point of view, the kind of *ori* chosen in heaven as reflected in his character or behavior (which may have a cultural basis) is always subject to change through conscious improvement. The character making up the human personality thus described is not necessarily related to morality. That is a different matter. A person may have a high achievement motivation and work hard and consequently succeed in life, e.g., in business, politics, academics, etc. Yet, he may not be of good moral character. Similarly, a nation may be highly successful in economic, political, educational, and technological advancements, and yet keep its citizens under constant threat of nuclear war and the possible destruction of human civilization. Another nation, however, may be very poor owing to the laziness of its citizens, superstitious cultural beliefs, lack of achievement, motivation, etc., and still live a life safe from all terrorism and fear of assassinations.

From the foregoing, it does appear that what we call the human personality, whether in an American or African society, is rather complex. While *ori* may play a prominent role in human personality and destiny through character modification, it does not, by itself, count as the differentiating criterion between individuals of different societies. To this we may add culture, as mentioned earlier. Human personality and destiny may well be a reflection of one's culture and vice versa. This is the extent to which an individual's personality and destiny may be determined by

his culture, irrespective of what *ori* he brought from heaven, especially as such an individual *ori* might have been overwhelmed by the beliefs and activities of that culture. When this culture is entrenched, general attitudes of people may be difficult to change, irrespective of the deviants we have in society. It may then require some enlightenment through persuasive writings or a revolution of a sort to change such attitudes or characters of a people and, consequently, the personality and destiny of an individual.

Deformed Persons and Society

The position stated above in respect of culture and beliefs has led us to reject a traditional view which undermines the place of certain individuals in the Yoruba society. Having argued that *ori* is responsible for human destiny on earth, it is also argued that deformed people have little place in the Yoruba hierarchical system of authority,³⁰ thus undermining the very concept of *ori* and usefulness of certain individuals in (Yoruba) and (Igbo) societies. The reason for this is far-fetched and most certainly unconvincing, granted our analysis of *ori* and human destiny and the role it plays in the human personality. Presumably, a deformed person is a person who either has deformed *ese* (legs), *owo* (hands), or *ike* (hunch back), or some other physical deformity. Quite apart from the fact that physical deformity has nothing to do with mental or spiritual qualities (and we never talk of deformed souls), some physical deformities are accidental rather than predetermined, unless it is argued that all accidental deformities are themselves predetermined. Success in life does not always depend on being a physically fit person, any more than failure on earth can be said to always depend on being a physically deformed person. Presumably, an argument might be given to the effect that a choice of good *ori* would not lead to success without an effective use of one's *ese* or *owo*, so that, in this case, we can write off deformed persons as incapable of succeeding in life. But in this case, the importance of *opolo* (brain) cannot be ignored. For this reason it is possible for a person to have chosen a good *ori* in heaven and yet fail on earth, in spite of the use of his legs and hands, if such use is not properly coordinated by his brain. On the other hand, a deformed person (with deformed legs or hands) may yet succeed in life if he makes good use of his mental qualities. In fact, there seems to be empirical evidence to show that the traditional Yoruba attitude to the physically deformed is untenable.

It is gratifying to note that the events of modern times, even among the Yoruba themselves, have disproved this aspect of their conception of human personality. There are many institutions for the physically

handicapped or deformed children nowadays. In addition to a choice of *ori*, the mental qualities seem to be more important than physical make-up in the determination of human personality. People who are blind, lame, or deaf do often become prominent personalities in many societies. Therefore, even if we have to argue from the point of a choice of one's *ori*, it is always possible that a deformed person who has a good choice of *ori* in heaven may succeed in life if he makes use of his mental qualities, while an able-bodied person is very likely to fail in life if he chose a bad *ori* and does nothing about it. Even if he chose a good *ori*, he is not likely to succeed if he does not make use of his *ese*, *owo*, and *opolo*, or makes use of them in the wrong way. As Abimbola writes :

. . . as for the able-bodied person, how far they can go on the hierarchical structure depends to a very large extent on the type of *ori* they selected for themselves in heaven. Those who chose the best of the *ori* made by Ajala would, if they combine this potentiality with hard work, become successful, whereas those who chose bad *ori* are doomed to failure.³¹

What the above passage is saying, therefore, is that whether able-bodied or not, how far people can succeed on the hierarchical structure depends to a large extent on the type of *ori* they selected, and that the relation between one's choice of *ori* and destiny is not an invariable one. Our discussion has shown so far that *ori* is more important than the physical body in determining an individual's place in society. And from the foregoing analysis, there seems to be no justification for the Yoruba to condemn deformed children to the care of the high priest or *Orisanla* (whose title is *Aborisa*) to be taken care of and made use of as part of his religious and domestic staff.³² What is more, since persons of this kind are banished from their own lineage households, it means, as Abimbola explains, that deformed persons are denied the full opportunities often given to "normal" people within the narrow limits of the hierarchy of the society. They cannot, for instance, function as *Baale* (heads of households, or village/town heads) or as *Oba* (king). At death they cannot become ancestors because they are not buried inside the lineage households.

Now, since it appears that two of the Yoruba elements of human personality—*emi* and *ori*—are spiritual elements of a person, the former an indestructible "living force" and the latter the bearer of human destiny and other discernible characteristics of human personality (including the ability to make friends and succeed in life), the question remains why a

person has to be condemned just because the physical element (*ara*) is deformed. It is said that a deformed person is not a "normal" person.³³ Just what is meant by "normal" in this sense? What are we to say about a person who has a good choice of *ori* in heaven but is blind, lame, or hunchbacked, and yet is able to make his way through a university and later become a well-known scientist, poet, or musician? He too, certainly, has a soul, and this soul is not deformed. Perhaps one of the reasons for treating deformed persons in the way suggested in Abimbola's exposition of Yoruba thought is the assumption that *ori* cannot perform its function well without the aid of *ese* and *owo*. But as we suggested earlier, *opolo* is crucial, probably more important than both *ese* and *owo* in this regard—provided, of course, the brain itself is not part of such deformities, and the deformities are not part of the choice of one's *ori*. For example, do we say, just because he is deformed, a living person is not fully a person even when he has a soul and an *ori*? Should he, on these grounds, not be given the opportunity to explore his non-physical talents which are purely the offspring of his mental rather than physical qualities? Again, since the Yoruba believe that a person consists of *emi*, *ara*, and *ori*, does the possession of a deformed body make a person less than human even when he has a soul which is not subject to mutilation or annihilation? Does a deformed body have any negative or "deformed" effect on the human soul and his chosen *ori*?

Precisely what, then, is a **person**? Surely the traditional Yoruba attitude to deformed persons needs a drastic revision since a deformed person has both *emi* and *ori*, without which we cannot talk of a person. Gladly, the old belief that twins (*Ibeji* and *Ejima* in Yoruba and Igbo respectively) represented some sort of deformity and are so either to be destroyed or treated like deformed persons (as if they had no souls and *ori* and no future), is no longer tenable among the Yoruba and Igbos. Modern trends have also shown that a deformed person is no less talented or no less likely to succeed in life than an able-bodied person. Simply put, both the deformed persons and the able-bodied persons are *persons* and should be recognised as such in society despite the serious limitation to our knowledge concerning what, philosophically speaking, a person really is—body or soul or both, or body and soul with, or without, inner head.

Conclusion

Our discussion in this paper has focused on the three elements of a person in Yoruba thought. It has not entered into the already well-discussed

issue of the problem of the relation between body and soul or mind. This is so because, where the problem is acknowledged, the Yoruba version identifies with dualism, in spite of its tripartite conception of a person. The Yoruba dualistic conception of a person arises from the fact that, of the three elements, one is physical and the other two are spiritual. Because of its newness, our attention was focused on the concept of *ori* as the bearer of human destiny and hence of the human personality. We have not found any specific relation between *emi* and *ori*, even though both are spiritual entities. But from our findings, the soul is not the person, for it has no personality or destiny except when it resides in a body (although the soul can, strictly speaking, live without the body). That is what we mean by the soul outliving the body. Also, the body is not the person, although the attitudes of some traditional Yoruba people about physically deformed persons make this claim suspect. Without soul the body is not a living person. The soul and the body are, therefore, complementary.

The third element, *ori*, performs a function over and above the soul and body: it is the bearer of human destiny. *Ori* thus gives body and soul together a distinct character of a human being—good or bad.

After death, the body is destroyed through the process of decay. Because it is immortal, the soul disappears by returning to its giver (*Olodumare*) in the spiritual realm while *ori*, a symbol of human destiny and personality, continues its own spiritual existence in the minds of living men, in the form of both good and notorious men, like Winston Churchill and Adolf Hitler, for example.

My contribution to the concept of a person, then, is to be seen in the light of a new concept, *ori*, as introduced and discussed in this paper. It should be seen as an introduction to a further discussion on the topic which cuts across different disciplines, e.g., philosophy, psychology, sociology, and intercultural communication. We have raised the issue, but could not come to any conclusion, as to whether individual destiny or personality has any bearing on the collective destiny of a people or society, like an African or an American society, or, indeed, the German nation under Adolf Hitler. It may be assumed that an individual personality may affect the destiny of a whole society for good or ill, at particular points in time. Our discussion on this issue is likely to raise some other questions far beyond the scope of this present paper. I am sure that when all the defects and lapses in my arguments and analyses are removed, we may begin to see some light in the tunnel, some ways that could lead us to a better understanding of the difficult concept of person and, indeed, of the human personality in cross-cultural contexts and in the human societies

(*asuwada enia*, i.e., societies of human beings as opposed to animals).³⁴ This is so because, while an argument might be raised as to whether animals have souls, the concept of *ori* is applicable only to human beings who alone qualify to be called persons.

NOTES

1. The idea of group philosophy or group mind, otherwise known as ethno philosophy, has been discussed and criticised by some African philosophers. See, for instance, Richard A. Wright ed. : *African Philosophy*. New York : University Press of America, 1983; and my critique of this idea in M. Akin Makinde. *African Philosophy, Culture, and Traditional Medicine*. Athens : Ohio University Press, 1988. Chapter 3. And recently in A. Appiah. *In My Father's House*. New York : Oxford University Press, 1992.

2. Abimbola, Wande. "The Yoruba Concept of Human Personality". In *La Notion de Personne en Afrique Noire* (Colloques Internationaux de Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique). Paris : Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, #544, p.77. And in M. Akin Makinde. "An African Concept of Human Personality : The Yoruba Example". In *Ultimate Reality and Meaning*. Toronto, vol.7, No. 3, 1984, pp. 189-190.

3. Whiteley, C. H. *An Introduction to Metaphysics*. London : Methuen, 1950.

4. Abimbola. Wande, op. cit., p.78. For a detailed discussion on the Yoruban concept of the human soul, see M. Akin Makinde. "Immortality of the Soul and the Yoruba Theory of Seven Heavens (Orun Meje)." *Journal of Cultures and Ideas*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Dec., 1983, pp. 31-59. See also Richard C. Onwuanibe. "The Human Person and Immortality in IBO Metaphysics," Ed. Richard A. Wright. *African Philosophy*, pp. 183-197.

5. Abimbola. opt. cit. p. 78.

6. Abimbola. opt. cit. p. 77.

7. Abimbola. opt. cit.

8. See for instance Kwame Gyekne. "The Akan Concept of a Person," Ed. Wright. *African Philosophy*, 1983, pp. 199-212. In Gyekne's exposition, the three elements are *okra*, *sunsum*, and *honam* (or *nipadua* : body). It is interesting to note that in Akan thought, *okra*, according to Gyekne, is considered to be "that which constitutes the very inner self of the individual, the principle of life of that individual and the embodiment and transmitter of his *destiny* (fate)," pp. 200-201. The issue is also discussed in A. Appiah, above.

9. Plato. *The Timaeus*. Translated by Rev. H.G. Bury. London : William Heinemann Ltd., 1961.

10. See our note 4 above.
11. Abimbola. *Ifa : An Exposition of a Literary Corpus*. Ibadan : Oxford University Press, 1976, p. 113. See also *La Notion*, p.80. For a detailed and critical discussion on the Yoruba concepts of *ori* and human destiny, see M. Akin Makinde. "A Philosophical Analysis of the Yoruban Concepts of *Ori* and Human Destiny." *International Studies in Philosophy*, Vol. xvii, No. 1, 1985, pp. 53-69.
12. Ibid. Also in *La Notion*, pp. 79-80.
13. Abimbola. *Ifa*, p. 113; *La Notion*, pp. 79-80.
14. Abimbola. *La Notion*, p.80.
15. Abimbola. *Ifa*, p. 113.
16. Ibid.
17. Abimbola. *La Notion*, p. 85.
18. Ibid.
19. Makinde, M. Akin. "A Philosophical Analysis of the Yoruban Concepts of *Ori* and Human Destiny." *International Studies in Philosophy*. Vol. xvii, No. 1, 1985, pp. 58-60.
20. Literally *Ayanmo* means that which one has chosen in heaven, and that is destiny. While *Ayanmo* means destiny itself, *ori* is only the bearer of destiny. Also, while *Ayanmo* is freely chosen from the gate of heaven, *ori* is not, as I have argued that the so-called choice of *ori* is not a free choice.
21. Ryle, Gilbert. *Dilemmas*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1966, Chp. 2.
22. Abimbola : *Ifa*, p. 148.
23. See footnote 24.
24. Abimbola. *La Notion*, p. 83.
25. Makinde, M. Akin "A Philosophical Analysis of the Yoruban Concepts of *Ori* and Human Destiny." p. 64 ff. For a related discussion from an African perspective see M. Akin Makinde. "African Cultures and Moral Systems : A Philosophical Study" in *Second Order*, Vol. 1, No. 2, July 1988, pp. 1-27.
26. Abimbola. *La Notion*, p. 87.
27. Akiwowo, A. "Contributions to the Sociology of Knowledge from an African Oral Poetry." In *International Sociology*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 1986, pp. 343-358. For a critical and detailed discussion of Akiwowo's paper, see M. Akin Makinde. "Asuwada Principle : An Analysis of Akiwowo's Contributions to the Sociology of Knowledge from an African Perspective." In *International Sociology*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1988, pp. 61-76. Both articles are reprinted in Eds., Martin Albrow and Elizabeth King. *Globalization, Knowledge, and Society*. London: Sage Publications Ltd., 1990. For more on the subject, see Akiwowo. "Responses to Makinde/ Lawuyi and Taiwo." In *International Sociology*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1991,

pp. 243-251.

28. Akiwowo. *op. cit.*

29. Sorokin, P. A. *Contemporary Sociological Theories*. New York: Harper and Row, 1928, p. 195.

30. Abimbola. *La-Notion*, p. 77.

31. *Op. cit.*, p. 87.

32. *Ibid.*

33. Abimbola. See note 29. This is precisely why the twins and deformed persons were condemned, thrown away, or donated to *Orisanla* for his domestic and religious use in the past.

34. See Akiwowo. *Asuwada Eniyan, Ile-Ife : Annals of the Institute of Cultural Studies* (University of Ife), Vol. 1, 1986, pp. 113-123. See also, Akiwowo and M. Akin Makinde in note 26.

II

COMPARATIVE RELIGION AND CULTURE

RELIGION AND MODERNIZATION IN POSTMODERN PERSPECTIVE

Robert S. Ellwood

Postmodern has gotten to be a cliché in academia. At least among the cognoscenti in theology as in literary criticism, mention the word and it is as likely to evoke a smile or a joke as a serious discussion, though there are still those in whom it call forth either rage or true believership.

Yet this reaction is, I suggest, because like all significant new perceptions of Thomas Kuhnian paradigm shifts the idea of the postmodern has followed a predictable course, from outrageous heresy to acceptance by a new generation as the sort of thing that “everyone knows” and so “goes without saying.” For it is clear that we now live in a different world from that of a generation or so ago, and that this is as true in religion as anything else. If the former was, as it liked to call itself, the modern era, then what followed must be postmodern.

Let us take some examples. In his *Religion and Personal Autonomy*, Phillip E. Hammond has spoken of “the Third Disestablishment in America.” We might alternatively call it post-Sixties establishment of postmodern religion. The first disestablishment, in Hammond’s schema, was the constitutional separation of church and state in the Bill of Rights; the second, the dethroning of Anglo-Protestant hegemony in the upheavals of the 1960s. According to Hammond, a third disestablishment has taken place subsequently. It is based on increased personal autonomy in religion and corresponding decline in traditional forms of parish involvement, “and—what is culturally more relevant—the meaning of that involvement has been significantly altered.”²

Based on a sociological survey in 1988 of religion in four states (Massachusetts, North Carolina, Ohio, and California), Hammond found this new sense of personal autonomy in religion strikingly expressed in very “loose-bonding” views of personal relationships to religious institutions. No less than 88% agreed that “a person can be a good

Christian/Jew without attending church/synagogue,” and 76% that “an individual should arrive at his or her own religious beliefs independent of any church or synagogue.” It is not surprising that the percentage of persons who switch religions, or switch from a natal faith to none, is rising, up to 30% in California. Since the Sixties, then, religion has been decidedly a matter of personal autonomy, and undoubtedly less a question of denomination or family tradition, than before. Subjectivity is supreme, and believers show a readiness to switch religion and church affiliation for subjective reasons.

It is not to be supposed, however, that all this necessarily means religionists are becoming more liberal in the conventional sense of the word. It is true that, on the one hand, 43% agreed one can be a good Christian or Jew and still doubt the existence of God; that around a quarter believe in reincarnation, not an orthodox Judeo-Christian doctrine; and some 15% say they practice a meditation technique “like that taught by Transcendental Meditation, Zen, etc.” But over against this must be set the 40% who believe the Bible is the literal word of God, and the fact that reportedly conservative Protestant churches have been the chief beneficiaries of the church-switching.

Clearly something else is going on than the liberalizing or “conservatizing” of American religion in the sense those terms might have had a generation or two ago. The kind of “conservative” Protestant churches that are growing fastest are not so much those of the rural, “hard-shell” stereotype, but smoothly-run suburban institutions with “easy” music, upbeat and not highly judgmental preaching, and a great amount of emphasis on small groups and gifts of the spirit, together with personal physical and psychological healing phrased in biblical language. They are highly supportive of families in a stressful world, and come at people and problems less in terms of “God commands” than of “God loves and heals,” though they may inculcate some highly traditional moral values.

I would say that they are not so much liberal or conservative as postmodern. Some adherents may be computer programmers or airline pilots—easy manipulators of the wondrous technology that came ultimately out of the modern era—who have no problem setting those skills, and that world, alongside speaking in tongues or speaking with comparable technical expertise on biblical prophecy. From the “modern” perspective, that would represent an unconscionable lapse of rational consistency, above all in one of the technological elite. But the postmodernist has not only no commitment to rational consistency, but

apparently no concept with the least bit of rigor to it of what that might mean. She or he works instead out of radical personal autonomy, defined in effect as ability to name and practice truth—or rather truths—entirely in subjective terms, and these may in fact mean different names and practices in different areas of life. Thus contemporary postmodern religion can, for many people, be both liberal in its personal autonomy and “looseness” toward traditional religious institutions, and evangelical when—as is often the case—that style of faith best warms and heals the heart, while modern, rational concepts of objective truth have no more relevance to understanding that faith or heart than they do in understanding quantum theory or postmodern cosmology.

Andrew Greeley has provocatively spoken of a comparable phenomenon in post-Vatican II Roman Catholicism, what he calls a shift in “religious imagination.” Since Vatican II Catholics have tended to be selective and independent-minded in regard to doctrine and morals. Even if they continue to worship in the church it is increasingly on their own terms. With that has gone a change in how the Divine itself is understood. The selective Catholics say that they experience themselves as “close” to God and think of God primarily as “loving.” Allowing respondents to choose from a list of divine attributes covering a wide scale those which came closest to their own ideas and experiences, Greeley found that the images, pictures and stories of God post-Vatican II Catholics used were generally more benign, more gracious, and more affectionate than the judgmental and legalistic set that might have been picked before, and more significantly, that the more selective these Catholics were in their religious practice and belief, the more they chose the benign images. “The more Catholics imagine God as mother, lover, spouse and friend,” Greeley concluded, “the more likely they are to make their appeal to God over the heads of institutional church leaders.” This is a situation about which those same leaders can do little, Greeley warned, for if they try to go back to a fire and brimstone religion they will simply be rejected.³

This changing situation is by no means limited to the United States or even to the Christian world. In postwar and particularly post-1960s Japan, for example, religion has been characterized by the growth of “new religions,” *shinko shukyo*, which compared to the older faiths have been lay-oriented and client-centered, focusing on the desires of ordinary persons for healing and spiritual experience rather than on the maintenance of a Shinto or Buddhist “Great Tradition.” Very much like the new evangelicalism or Catholicism in the West, new religions such as Tenrikyo, Konkokyo, or the great Soka Gakkai movement in Nichiren

Buddhism have combined reassuring symbols of continuity with the past—in this case, basically Confucian moral values, familiar styles of Shinto or Buddhist worship and lavish temples—with enhanced opportunities for individual participation and experience. Worship may include hymns, chants, individual testimonials, and group counseling, and other opportunities are as modern as the marching bands and *min-on* or popular music events of Soka Gakkai. But it must be noted, and this is a point to which we shall return, that for all its performance flexibility Soka Gakkai, like most of the others, is not a “liberal” religion in the usual sense of the word, but stems from Nichiren Buddhism, traditionally one of the most militant and exclusivistic forms of that ancient faith.

A still later wave of new religions, often called *shin-shin shukyo* or “new new religions,” has proven even more “user-friendly,” in Ian Reader’s term.⁴ Religions like Mahikari, Agonshu, Shinnyeon, Byakko Shinkokai, or Gedatsu have followed even more the pattern of the so-called New Age movement in this country. Though there is a core organization and in some cases rather spectacular rites, these new religions make much more use of books, tapes, videos, “do-it-yourself” pattern of spiritual praxis tailored in individual needs. It is often centered in the latter.

We have become Robert J. Lifton’s “Protean Man,” whose lifestyle is “characterized by an interminable series of experiments and explorations—some shallow, some profound—each of which may be readily abandoned in favor of still new psychological quests,” or Orr and Nicholson’s “expansive man,” who views the self as process created out of a series of experiences, and is eclectic, drawing his experiences from things new and old with casual freedom.⁵ The best we can do is animate and enjoy each in its time, and not let them get in each other’s way. The spiritual histories of many Sixties, not to mention postmodern Seventies, people through a long series of political and religious experiments bears that out. I can recall talking with students in those days who, before they were twenty-one, had been into five or six radically different faiths, from Catholicism to Scientology or Witchcraft. Sometimes, with a true postmodern putting of experience over logical consistency, they were able to do all at once.

I do not present this material because I am so deluded as to think that such attitudes toward religion are entirely new, either in America or Japan or anywhere else. The protean style in American religion, whether under evangelical or New Age auspices, may actually be a reversion to

something older on these shores than the 1950s apotheosis of "mainline" Protestantism and Cardinal Spellman-style Roman Catholicism which for many observers seems to be a baseline. But immediate postwar decades are not always truly typical of a society, and betray their own anxiety on this score by an excessive insistence on "return to normalcy." In the last century Alexis de Tocqueville, in reporting that America's rampant religious pluralism is a concomitant and facilitator of its democracy, indicated also that "not only do the Americans practice their religion out of self-interest, but they often even place in this world the interest which they have in practicing it . . . [P]reachers in America are continually coming down to earth. Indeed they find it difficult to take their eyes off it. The better to touch their hearers, they are forever pointing out how religious beliefs favor freedom and public order, and it is often difficult to be sure when listening to them whether the main object of religion is to procure eternal felicity in the next world or prosperity in this."⁶

It can also be argued, and repeatedly has been, that the new religions of Japan represent little more than modern refurbishments of the shamanism, replete with healings and other miracles, which has been a fixture of Japanese religion since the mists of prehistory. The founders of the new religions were notable thaumaturges, but then so were Nichiren, Kobo daishi, the half-legendary shamaness-queen Jingo kogo, and the countless lesser *yamabushi* and *miko* over the centuries.

But there is a difference. Winston Davis, in his recent study, *Japanese Religion and Society*, has presented a chart of "Obligations, Motives, and Religious Institutions," in which he distinguishes between "motivated conduct ('in order to' motives)," "obligatory conduct ('because' motives)," and "mixed conduct in religion."⁷ The first, the "motivated," exemplified in ad hoc affiliations with holy men, fortune tellers, and functional deities, as well as the new religions, represent essentially the religion of personal needs and desire, while the second, the "obligatory," representing one's Shinto and Buddhist family shrine or temple, are more or less religious obligations one is born into. The "mixed" category is exemplified by confraternities (*ko*) and the "Older New Religions." Interestingly, as parallel examples in the West Davis cites "Sects; cults; evangelistic campaigns and moral crusades" as instancing "motivated conduct"; "traditional European churches and/or parishes" as obligatory conduct, and "'mainline' North American denominations" as "mixed."

The difference, as I see it, is that in the post-1945 world the "obligatory" category has shrunk dramatically in relation to the

“motivated” and even the “mixed” columns, leaving relatively little *but* religion stemming from the individualism, subjectivity, and meeting of personal needs, including needs for intense group coherence, that are the spiritual sources of postmodernism. This is true, I will contend, even in those contemporary religious forms that seem like reactionary returns to obligatory religion, religious nationalism and the oft-discussed resurgent fundamentalism in many faiths. These are not, I say, true traditionalism so much as postmodern simulations of tradition, really adhered to for postmodern reasons.

Thus Stewart Guthrie, in his study of religion in a Japanese community, has pointed to the marked postwar decline of the village shrine and temple and their rites, even as the new religion that was the focus of his study has maintained a precarious but steady foothold.⁸ It is well known that churchgoing in most of Europe, with its background of state churches and a parish system, has declined, often precipitously, in the same period. According to Gallup polls, in England, for example, it has fallen from about 40% in an average week in the 1930s to 10-15% today. In the United States, in contrast, attendance has remained rather constant at 40% after a high of 47% in the late fifties. There are many reasons for the different patterns of church attendance in the U.S. from Europe, but some are undoubtedly associated with the fact we apparently have little in the way of pure “obligatory” religiosity, which no longer sells, but rather “motivated” evangelism and the “mixed” conduct of our declining but still important “mainline” denominations.

But again, you will ask, what of religious fundamentalism and nationalism today? Just when we thought we had gone postmodern, we see around the world unpleasant religious activity which looks like a return to the past of the Crusades and nationalistic Shinto and much else—conflicts certainly based, or at least rationalized, in terms of religion in Sri Lanka, Northern Ireland, the Middle East, and the Ayodhya temple controversy in India. These cases show how complex the situation is—but I believe it does all fit together.

But first, an outline. I would like to present three stages in the evolution of religion relevant to our concerns: traditional, modern, and postmodern. Like all such, this schema is much too schematic. As Jonathon Smith reminds us, map is not territory. But sometimes a good roadmap can help you get from one town to another, even if it does not do justice to all the scenery and weather along the way.

The first stage is traditional religion. This religion is a society where it is relatively little challenged by outside or internal dissonance, and is

deeply interlinked with family and ethnic ties, and usually with the oldest and richest art, music, literature, and wisdom the culture knows. Yet because of the lack of challenge, traditional religion does not need to be rigorously organized, and so has organic, family-resemblance, *gemeinschaft* structures, which may on the surface appear to be localized, subjective, only half coherent, like Hinduism in village India, rather than the burgeoning intellectual and institutional apparatus of the great churches, denominations, and religious parties we see around today.

The second stage is modern religion. It appears as the religious counterpart I will not say merely response—to the emergence in the seventeenth century and after of alternative scientific and enlightenment ways of being in the world. William A. Beardslee, for example, in an essay entitled “Christ in the Postmodern Age : Reflections Inspired by Jean-Francois Lyotard,” states the modern age is that of Galileo, Descartes, Newton, and nineteenth century rationalism and scientism. Its single most pervasive factor was a deterministic model of reality (“Newtonian science”).⁹

Society was viewed in terms of corollaries to the paradigms of Newtonian science, that is, as fundamentally deterministic and so amenable to comparable methods of study—hence the discipline “social science”—though the question of exactly what determined social outcomes was even more intractable in the social than the natural sciences. Yet the hope, and its frequent disappointment, led alike to vision and despair, inspiring for example the solemn dreams and conspiratorial tenacity that was Marxism.

Hardly less important than the paradigm of Newtonian science—in my view, of at least equal importance for modernism—is the concept of history moving in a certain way, containing (at least in the telling) a Grand Narrative, as Lyotard would term it. That is to say, history is seen as inseparably interlocked with Progress and Universalism, with a progressive overall improvement in the human condition (this in turn inseparably interlocked with science), together with ability to survey, and at least implicitly evaluate, all human cultures and stories past and present. This vision naturally entails at least a lively hope of continuing future progress down the road to utopia, together with the implication that all cultures (and stories) not with the drive toward utopia are against it, and so to be discarded. For in the modern era, salvation is through progress, through the orderly, rational society (e.g. socialism) and the benefactions of problem-solving, labor-saving technology. For, in the paradoxical modern view, humanity has the freedom to save itself by

such means, and its simultaneous subjugation to the deterministic forces of social history means that it can and will. Needless to say, all this from first principles to final eschatological vision was more fully, consistently, and fervently promulgated in Marxism than anywhere else. It was shared in general terms, though with less scholastic precision, by socialism, scientism, and the idea of progress generally—advanced as much by capitalism as by its ideological rivals—and in those broader terms shaped modernist popular culture.

Perhaps, if I may be permitted an aside, the shift from modern to postmodern is connected with the changing place of books in the emerging postmodern world. Those of us who are teachers are well aware that few students today read like young people of a generation or two ago. There are too many other entertainment and information media in spheres in which books were then, if not exclusive custodian, at least king. Books in the modern age, the age of the ideals of universal truth, literacy, and education, were the key means of access to the knowledge that was power in that era. Reading was by far the pre-eminent way of acquiring that universal general knowledge required to become elite, as over against the homely particulars even a peasant might garner from folklore or raw observation. Ideally, the modern age wanted everyone to have access to universal knowledge, and sought to achieve this elevating and unifying goal by means of universal public education.

Yet that goal also meant more elites were required : highly-educated teachers who control while dispensing universal education; bureaucrats, probably parts of a unitary state, who administer it. However benign the intention, this system cannot help but determine the content and distribution of the education that makes for entry into the elite class even as it tries to make it universal—a conundrum that produced very sharp conflict at Berkeley and other campuses in the Sixties.

A more subtle issue is the hegemony of books, as over against other media, in the process. Books are particularly adept at putting things in terms of long, linear developed and qualified thoughts laden with abstract general terms. That capacity was very congenial to the modern notion of universal abstract, general truths, to which the privileged position of those initiated into universal truth, providing them with indispensable language-tools for surveying past and present, and regimenting the particulars under the rule of the general. The reign of books thus benefited those who had the mentality for the requisite kind of reading, subordinating others. Not a few became “experts” in various areas, essentially by virtue of their skill at relating the particulars of those spheres

to modernist general categories by means of words and grammar. In religion, the modern era was appropriately a golden age of theologians and their books, and of the great scriptural religions, even as postmodern religion tends toward shorter books and more subjective experience, and often seems more interested in using scriptures as talismans than as objects of rigorous modern scholarship.

The 1960s rebellions against experts, such as the moral revulsion against what experts said about Vietnam, are therefore significant in a very wide context. Much in the Sixties sought to topple the towers of modern privileged positions for books and elites by spiritually equalizing the distant and the past with the present, seeing ancient and modern, far and near with experiential immediacy, not distanced by abstractions or ideas of subsequent progress.

Now what more can be said of religion and modernism/postmodernism? First we must observe that religion, or more to the point the great institutional founder religions, are the ultimate forefathers of modernism. The founder religions, Confucianism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam and the Judaism out of which they branch, are religions of history and the written word. They are thus of a piece with the metanarratives of progress and of universal truth. For they presume that time can and will be a venue for the progressive spread of truth and right living, and that truth can be put into universally-valid verbal form.

This is not surprising, for the founder religions emerged in a time of the discovery of history, or rather that we live in historical time—what Karl Jaspers called the “Axial Age.”¹⁰ This was the discovery that the onrushing stream of time is irreversible; things change and do not change back. The realization was certainly related to the invention of writing, which made possible chronicle as well as myth. The founder religions were like counterfoils to Mircea Eliade’s “terror of history”—the fear of living in open-ended time in which anything could happen and whose end, if it had one, was impenetrable by ordinary means. These religions, in brief, made history meaningful by offering a central pivot—the coming of the founder with plenary revelation—the midst of its stream, a moment in which “the hopes and fears of all the years are met.”

The historical founder faiths made individual life meaningful by providing the model of an ideal spiritual person living in the midst of history, and also offering with new emphasis individual judgment and individual salvation—personal salvation, personal karma, personal devotional feeling and moral values held even against the world and to the point of martyrdom—they reinforced the notion of the self, now the

soul, as a separate independent entity with a true nature, one that would be weighed in the balance, as over against the protean psychology of the "modern" sort. (Even Buddhism, though theoretically denying separate selfhood, managed also to reinforce it with its emphasis on individual asceticism, karma, and responsibility.) They usually looked toward a far-off eschatological—or near-at-hand apocalyptic—end of history, replete with individual judgment. And they made the idea of truth meaningful by offering the written word, written scriptures containing universal truths, which one was supposed personally to read, know, and believe.

The great religions, then, came into the world as religions of historical meaning, personal life, and universal truth. They were born of history, unlike the timeless "cosmic religions" referring back to mythic time of earlier antiquity. Soon enough they became religions with a historical mission, to disseminate themselves and their paradigms of human life. Finally they became religions with a history, their own metanarratives legitimating themselves with numerous exemplary stories of martyrs, saints, and triumphs, painting their histories as all in all a tale of progress, and portraying their institutions as archetypes of unity and the unitary state.

With the advent of real modernism, the great religions tended to adapt a format parallel to its major institutions, the state, the educational system, the modern capitalist economic system. The century and a half leading up to 1960 were a golden age for modern religion, and in a real sense for denominations, and it is not accidental they were also the heyday of the "modern" mood. The New Religions of Japan, and such parallel movements in India as Radha Soami or the Ramakrishna Mission, has much in common beneath the surface with what denominations were in the United States and much of the British Commonwealth. Aided by great advances in transportation and communication, by publishing houses and educational foundations, denominations became religious parallels to the other major local, state, and national institutions of society: government, the educational establishment, the great corporations. The major denominations established public identities, national headquarters, schools and colleges, bureaucracies, and local branches comparable to those of a state, a supermarket or department store chain, or an educational system. They took their modern shape over more or less the same years as these bodies were taking theirs, and often quite deliberately in imitation of them. The Fifties "mainline" denomination, like Fifties Roman Catholicism in America, were the culmination of this trend.

By the time of the fundamentalist/modernist controversies of the early twentieth century, denominationalism was beginning to recede slightly in importance relative to other issues, although the full shape of the change was not to become evident until the watershed years of the 1960s. The important splits, such as those between liberals and evangelicals, or liturgicals and charismatics, were by then often as much intra-denominational as interdenominational, and more important major religious activities, such as participation in the civil rights or peace movements, were perceived as quite independent of denominations or even of official ecumenism based on them, and the same can be said of participation in the Gandhian independence movement in India.

In other words, religion was reverting to its ultimate bases, localism and culturalism. I have suggested elsewhere that this mid-century process can also be thought of as a reversion of religion to a folk religion, rather than a Great Tradition, style.¹¹

It is worth noting that, if denominationalism shifting into reverse does represent a large-scale and long-range trend, it will be one of major religious-historical importance. It will indicate a reversal of the dominant trend in most Great Religions over the past two hundred years, above all, as we have indicated, the last hundred and fifty up to 1960. But actually as we have seen the great founder religions like Christianity were the real precursors and paradigms of modernism. Over all the last two millennia their trend has been broadly toward augmenting the power of national or international religious structure—papal, royal, caliphal, denominational, whatever—to which the local is distinctly subordinate. This has meant not only hierarchical control of local appointments, but no less long-term pressures toward standardizing forms of worship, toward the imposition of universal creeds and confessions, and toward the homogenization of religious cultural and moral values, over against the local.

Even when such centralization has been formally denied, as in Congregationalism or Quakerism, the prestige of a general denominational, religious culture within a church, of the whole over the branches, has been apparent. Significantly, that wider culture has usually been defined preeminently in relation to the major elite of the society. Denominational leaders have characteristically been educated in elite universities and seminaries, in interaction with potential leaders of the other major institutions, government, business, education. The upshot is that, one way or another, a typical church was a local outpost for the dissemination of a great tradition, rather than primarily a place for the

independent creation or definition of local-level spirituality.

The concept of local religion as “branch” and derivative from something else wider, older, and truer is far from completely undermined, and perhaps can never be in a world in which the local is under so much unfriendly pressure from mass media, multi-national business, and heavy-handed governments. But one facet of the Sixties spirit seemed to want to make religion a refuge from homogenization rather than another arena for it. Local prayer groups, meditation groups, charismatic groups, religious social action groups, and house churches, not to mention new and independent religions, sprang up alongside the standard brands. Activists of the “Religious Left” and the “Religious Right,” often tangential to mainline denominations, go their own conspicuous ways. The “elite” leaders seem to be following more often than leading.

But if the great religions were the prototypes of modernism, they also early on began to sense the tremors of its dissolution. Like all human institutions but if possible even more so, a great religion is a house of words. They all depend on unifying language that resonates with the inner experience and institutional needs of its adherents. But words and sentences, like organisms, can become exhausted. By making the religion’s hierophany historical, works make it distanced in time. Though the faith may have a grand narrative telling how we got from then to now, what happened “then” is nonetheless only a mediated experience. In Paul Ricoeur’s phrase, the “immediacy of belief” is “irremediably lost”; the “primitive naivete” is forever gone, and we can at best only “aim at a second naivete in and through criticism.”¹² Indeed, it finally dawns upon the learned of the religion that words themselves fictionalize, the point made above about modern books and the universal knowledge ideal.

What the historical words of the metanarrative of a religion create is not the past but a separate reality, which for that reason may have great power, but is not the same as a literal past. The fact that this allure is constructed of an Indra’s net of words will sooner or later come through to those who approach the tradition mainly in terms of words. The coming of this observation is the faith’s own foredoomed nemesis; though its dark advent may wait centuries or millennia, it is embedded in the religion’s own operating premises from the beginning, like hidden canker eggs whose spawn will eventually devour their host. A great religion, born of the discovery of history and knowing human life as historical existence—witnessed to by narratives and institutions—likewise dies in history, the cause of death being the engorgement of too much historical

time and exposure to historical awareness. In such a way it is a parable of modernism itself. According to Jacques Derrida, all language is contaminated by the West's theology of presence, which forgot that words are only signs, having meaning only within a context; they are social facts, their meaning being what they mean for members of a community, but they do not necessarily mean their referent has an actual "presence" behind the words.¹³ However, theology itself, and one thinks the faith of innumerable people on various deep, pluralistic levels, is less and less so contaminated as postmodernism advances, and serious theology has been aware of the issue since Kant.

Now the question is, What do we mean by postmodernism, the third stage, as a movement beyond the modernism of the centralized religion as quasi-state or corporation, based on its written texts, and the notion that there is a religious, just as there is a scientific, unity of knowledge?

As a preliminary, I would like to lay out my own modernism-postmodernism chart.

Modern

Rationalistic science

Psychologies of the self as a single ego with a true nature or identity beneath its several roles

Technology

Ideal of Progress

Social justice ideal

The large unitary state, often ideological or based on a sense of national purpose, and often supported by a large standing army and draft

Postmodern

Alienation from objective knowledge; uncertainty principle; chaos theory

The self as plural, moving freely among a number of independent identities, as in Hillman's archetypal psychology

Ecology

Pessimism about future

Extreme pluralization of society into fragments with declining sense of common identity or goals

Break-up of empires; rise of societies rooted in nationalism or localism

An elite which is the vanguard of modern progress, and to which others are marginalized	Strong efforts to incorporate and equalize the marginal
The ideal of universal public education	That ideal under heavy pressure from pluralism and demography
Reading, books, public libraries	Multimedia : videos, computerization; visual and episodic rather than linear media
The ideal of universal public and modern, scientific medicine	Pluralism of healing methods and economic constraints
Liberal and conservative politics	New alignments
Large corporations and state economic planning based on consumerism and the assumption of growing affluence	Growing gulf between rich and poor; economics of technology + cheap labor
Belief in universal, general truths, usually capable or abstract or scientific statement	Skepticism; tendency toward relative or personal "truths"

Let us now advance the modernism/postmodernism argument by noting that a premier interpreter of the issue, Jean-Francois Lyotard, has insisted that a key definition of postmodernism is its "incredulity toward metanarratives," or grand, overarching stories by which the countless lesser stories are interpreted. Surely such incredulity would mark an hour of transition between two great ages of the spirit. He identified the two great "metanarratives" of modernism as, first, the emancipation of humanity by progress, both political and scientific; and, second, the unity of knowledge in a way amenable to rational, "scientific" abstraction and technological implementation.¹⁴

The modern university and all its works are founded on these metanarratives. On the other hand, knowledge, and experience, that does not fit them is excluded or marginalized. For the most part those orphan apertures are not even seen to be there. At the same time, the "modern"

observer is supposed to have a privileged position from which to view the cultures of the past or of less advanced corners of the globe. From this high conning-tower he can classify and explain their stumbling struggles toward the truth. As for non-story ideas and concepts, like those of the sciences, Lyotard notes that despite science's notorious "conflict with narratives" all ideas and concepts are really inseparable from the stories that are used to legitimate them, those of science as well as any others.

"Incredulity" toward the "metanarratives" which has sustained religion, as well as the reigning political and scientific paradigms, up through the 1950s, has been distinctly on the rise since then. It took many guises, and not seldom brought forth polarized articulations, from extreme "right" to extreme "left," from radical traditionalism to radical utopianism. At times Sixties' causes, for instance, seemed on the surface to be perpetuating myths of modernism, such as those of the Marxist left or the conservative anticommunist right. But it was increasingly with a difference, and those differences betrayed the old narratives building faster and faster toward critical mass, then to shatter and reveal the embryo of something new. The mood was therefore religious—revivalistic, apocalyptic, nostalgic for paradise.

Another aspect of modernism to postmodernism that must be examined is the changing ideal of the unity of knowledge, and the corresponding roles of knowledge-holding elites and of the university. Closely related to this is the modern ideal of the unitary, bureaucratic state. Despite its democratic ideal, modernism had a distinct modern elite, a technological and academic aristocracy, always highly titled and privileged, in its main areas of expression: the scientist, the executive, the intellectual, the doctor in medicine, the teacher in the public schools and the professor in the university, the Party as the vanguard of the proletariat in Marxism, the intelligentsia as vanguard of the Party. In religion, it is the professionals: bishops, priests, pastors trained at the most prestigious schools who had pre-eminence, and who tended to dress in a highly clerical way in accordance with their traditions, bearing conspicuous symbols of academic and ecclesiastical status.

All this is questioned by postmodernism, and a salient characteristic of religion in the postmodern era has been the breakdown of hierarchies and the opening up to religious leadership to numerous peoples previously marginalized: women, minorities both racial and sexual, indigenous peoples. The question is whether, now that everyone is more or less finally on board, the ship is going anywhere or is becalmed by the weight

of its own diversity and pluralism.

The triumph as an ideal was evident by around 1970, when the Sixties' causes and campaigns based on a dualistic, light versus darkness vision of the world, seemed suddenly to dissipate. Something else was in the air instead, what we have called postmodernism. But postmodernism means, in Jean Gebser's phrase, a "world without opposites."¹⁵ It may be, as John W. Murphy insists, that dualism spawned dehumanization and this prompted the move toward postmodernism.¹⁶ Certainly, in very practical terms, the Sixties' charge that the (modern) System dehumanized was a major postmodern wedge. The desire of the back-to-nature wing of the Sixties to live without opposites was a foundation of postmodern ecological criticism of exploitative models of the human relationship with nature. But at the same time, the lack of dualism—or to put it more bluntly, the lack of a clearly-defined enemy—has weakened postmodernism as a force; whatever it says becomes muffled amid the endless liquid ripples of private opinions in pluralistic puddles, without sharp edges, without opposites, and often not even verbal.

On its most profound level, the postmodern "world without opposites," but rather of many oblique facts, is internal. The modern tendency to see the world in terms of dualism and polarization was one side of a mutual objectification process, of which the other side was seeing the self as a single ego with a beginning, a single personal narrative history (such as that uncovered by psychoanalysis), and a single true nature—one's real self, "who I really am," beneath all the roles and acquired attitudes one carries around. This was an assumption underlying virtually all the modern psychologies and concepts of self, despite their kaleidoscope variety, from the classic "faculties" psychology and the Victorian notion of "character," to Freudianism and Jungianism. The world is polarized because the self is a single solid entity set over against the world of challenges and stimuli out there; some things out there are congruous with it and some are not. (Arnold Toynbee once remarked that American audiences to whom he spoke in Cold War days became glum when he mentioned the gulf between the communist powers Russia and China, as though they really yearned for a single monolithic enemy.)

But now "postmodern psychology" like that of James Hillman tells us we are in fact legion, different identities following each other, many polytheistic gods we consort with day after day, with none more "real" or "true" than any other. We become Robert J. Lifton's "Protean Man."

Now I am sure most of you are widely familiar with what is meant by modernization in the non-European/North American, largely ex-colonial

world. Robert N. Bellah, writing in respect to modernization in Asia (in 1965 when the concept was less questioned than today) spoke of it as "an especially rapid increase in progress," progress in turn meaning "an increase in the capacity of a social system to receive and process information from within and without the system and to respond appropriately to it." The implication is that the knowledge in question can only be received and processed in universal technical languages which presupposes a unity of language that takes precedence over the particulars of premodern traditions, and which therefore is able to look at them in a distanced way, being free to judge them from a more universal and hence superior position.

Modernising movements in the non-Western religions were therefore eager to associate themselves, and so the "best" in their traditions, with that perspective. Such persons as Swami Vivekananda and Soyen Shaku, or Swami Yogananda and Meiji reformers in Japan, were concerned to present their traditions as not only national, but also "scientific" and of some universal validity. It was part of the unity of knowledge privileged by the scientific approach, as well as a defining a nation over against others. These two objectives were not really compatible, and the clash between them was to lead to disaster in the end, as in Japan in the nationalistic and World War II era, and in India today wracked by something like the Ayodhya temple controversy. The latter is comprised, as far as I can tell, of a contrived modern metanarrative about Hinduism combined in about equal parts with a postmodern return of the repressed in the form of scepticism toward all the other modern metanarratives about progress and the benefits of scientific knowledge as over against religious, and of the benefits of a modern secular state over against one based on a highly rigorous vision of the *sanātandharma*.

For postmodern scepticism toward metanarratives has meant a return of the premodern repressed, not of tradition pure and simple, which however much desired can never be recovered once primal naivete is lost, but of simulations of tradition arranged as options alongside all the others. More than anything else, postmodernism rejects the idea of a privilege position for particular kinds of truth, namely those that are defined as rational, scientific, or universal. It wants a level playing field on which treasures old and new can be set up side by side, a free marketplace in which all the gods past and present can present themselves, and computer and horoscope shops or TV evangelists present themselves side by side.

On the world stage, of course, the decline of Marxism in 1989 and

after, and the collapse on the world empire which was based on it, has greatly accelerated this return of the repressed. Much that was outside the modern unities, including the new/old emphasis on religious regionalism and communalism (which are not quite the same thing as nationalism), is with us again.

But this brought with it very appalling results, killing and atrocities that are incompatible, not simply with the values of modernism, but with those of all religious traditions supposedly being recovered. The twentieth century has been a century of falls, of expulsions from Eden. The solemn utopian dreams of progressivism, scienticism, early nationalism, fascism, communism, aquarianism, and modernism, have all mingled with the dust. The century is not yet quite over, and it may be that before it departs postmodernism too will be discredited as little more than a reversion to tribalism. It will not be, however, if it can keep in mind that its real principle is not irrationalism but scepticism toward mindforged myths and chauvinistic dreams, and that it is also founded on faith as well as scepticism, faith in all that is truly human whether conforming to a premature unity of knowledge or not.

NOTES

1. Parts of this paper are adapted from my forthcoming book, *Xanadu and Beyond : The Sixties Spiritual Awakening and American Religion*, to be published by Rutgers University Press.

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3. Greeley, Andrew M. *American Catholics Since the Council : An Unauthorized Report*. Chicago : Thomas More Press, 1985, p. 199.

4. Reader, Ian. *Religion in Contemporary Japan*. Honolulu : University of Hawaii Press, 1991, Ch. 8, "Spirits, Satellites, and a User-Friendly Religion."

5. Lifton, Robert J. "Protean Man," in *The Religious Situation : 1969*, ed. Donald Cutler. Boston : Beacon Press, 1969, p. 816; John B. Orr and F. Patrick

6. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*. Trans. by George Lawrence. Garden City, NY : Anchor Books, 1969, p. 403. See Lisle Dalton, et al., "Bringing Tocqueville in: Remedying a Neglect in the Sociology of Religion," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 31, 4 (December 1992), p. 395-407.

7. Davis, Winston. *Japanese Religion and Society*, Albany : State

University of New York Press, 1992, p. 36.

8. Guthrie, Stewart. *A Japanese New Religion : Rissho Kosei-kai in a Mountain Hamlet*. Ann Arbor, MI : Center for Japanese Studies, 1988.

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10. See Jaspers, Karl. *The Origin and Goal of History*. trans. Michael Bullock. London : Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963.

11. Robert. Ellwood, *The History and Future of Faith*. New York : Crossroad, 1988.

12. Ricoeur, Paul. "The Symbol Gives Rise to Thought," in *Literature and Religion*, ed. Giles B. Gunn. New York : Harper & Row, 1971, p. 214.

13. See Ruf, Henry. "The Origin of the Debate over Onthotheology and Deconstructionism in the Texts of Wittgenstein and Derrida," in Henry Ruf, ed., *Religion, Ontotheology and Deconstructionism*. New York : Paragon House, 1989.

14. Lyotard, Jean-Francois. *The Postmodern Condition : A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1984, p. ix.

15. Gebser, Jean. *The Ever-Present Origin*. Athens : Ohio University Press, 1985, p. 481.

16. Murphy, John W. *Postmodern Soical Analysis and Criticism*. New York : Greenwood Press, 1989, p. 20.

**MODELS OF SCRIPTURE AND PARADIGMS
OF RELIGIOUS TRADITION :
THE CASE OF VEDA AND TORAH**

Barbara A. Holdrege

The differences between the Hindu and Jewish traditions have often been emphasized, so much so that these traditions have generally been characterized as representing opposite ends of the spectrum of world religions. Indeed, "Hinduism" and "Judaism" have been thought to have so little in common that few scholars have attempted substantive comparative analyses of these traditions.¹ "Polytheistic," iconocentric "Hinduism," with its panoply of deities enshrined in images, is generally held to be antithetical to "monotheistic," iconoclastic "Judaism," with its emphasis on the unity and transcendence of God and abhorrence of image-making practices. However, such characterizations represent gross oversimplifications that fail to take into account the rich diversity of perspectives within the traditions themselves. The categories "Hinduism" and "Judaism" are themselves problematic in this regard, for, like the category "religion," they represent abstract theoretical constructs that attempt to impose unity on a myriad of different religious systems.

Within the array of "Hinduisms" and "Judaisms," I would suggest that brahmanical "Hinduism" and rabbinic "Judaism," contrary to the stereotypical characterizations, represent two species of the same genus of religious tradition : as elite textual communities that have codified the norms of orthodoxy in the form of scriptural canons; as ethnocultural systems concerned with issues of family, ethnic and cultural integrity, blood lineages, and the intergenerational transmission of traditions; and as religions of orthopraxy characterized by hereditary priesthoods and sacrificial traditions, comprehensive legal systems, elaborate regulations concerning purity and impurity, and dietary laws. Indeed, I would argue that the comparative study of these traditions is of significance precisely because it provides the basis for developing an alternative model of religious tradition founded on categories other than the Christian-

based categories of interpretation that have tended to dominate the academic study of religion. The paradigm of religious tradition that has developed out of a Christian context gives precedence to such categories as belief, doctrine, and theology and delineates notions of tradition-identity that are rooted in the missionary character of "Christianities." The brahmanical and rabbinic traditions, on the other hand, provide an alternative paradigm of religious tradition, in which priority is given to issues of practice, observance, and law, and notions of tradition-identity are delineated primarily in terms of ethnic and cultural categories that reflect the predominantly nonmissionary character of these traditions.

Veda and Torah : Models of Scripture

As an entry point into these traditions, the present essay focuses on scripture as a constitutive category of the brahmanical and rabbinic traditions, with some consideration also of kabbalistic traditions that have absorbed and reinterpreted rabbinic conceptions of scripture. The manner in which the brahmanical and rabbinic traditions construct categories of scripture reflects the more fundamental categories of tradition-identity shared by these ethnic-based traditions. Each tradition defines itself in relation to a particular sacred language—Sanskrit, Hebrew—and to a particular corpus of sacred texts—Veda, Torah—that is held to be linguistically, ethnically, and culturally tied to a particular people—Aryans, Jews. The mechanisms through which the categories of Veda and Torah are circumscribed and subsequently expanded in the brahmanical and rabbinic traditions serve as a means of circumscribing the ethnic-cultural identity of their respective communities in relation to other peoples, of delineating and legitimating the hierarchical differentiation of functions within each community, of accommodating competing currents within the tradition, and of authorizing certain ritual and sociocultural practices.

In discussing the category of canon in the history of religions, Jonathan Z. Smith has suggested that "canon is best seen as one form of a basic cultural process of limitation and of overcoming that limitation through ingenuity."² He further suggests that the task of overcoming the limitation posed by a closed canon is "continually to extend the domain of the closed canon over everything that is known or everything that exists *without* altering the canon in the process."³ Both Veda and Torah would appear to conform to at least one aspect of Smith's model in that each

functions within its respective tradition as an encompassing, paradigmatic symbol that is simultaneously delimited and potentially unlimited. At the center of each canon is a fixed corpus of texts, whether oral or written, that has been meticulously preserved in strictly unaltered form : the Vedic *mantras* collected in the *Saṃhitās* and the *Sefer Torah* (Pentateuch). At the same time the domains of both Veda and Torah have been extended through a variety of strategies so that each functions as an open-ended, permeable category within which can be subsumed potentially all texts, teachings, and practices authorized by the religious elite.

One of the strategies by which Veda and Torah are extended beyond their textual boundaries is through identification with the Word, which is itself at times represented as an encompassing category that functions on every level of reality. This Word cannot be delimited to the written word, as the term “scripture” itself and its common equivalents—for example, “sacred writings” or “holy writ”—might suggest. Nor is it sufficient simply to expand the meaning of scripture to encompass its oral-aural dimensions as spoken word. The Word embodied in Veda and Torah also has a cosmological dimension, in which on one level it is represented as a cosmic reality that is a living aspect of the divine, while on another level it is depicted as the subtle plan of creation containing the elements of the divine language through which the creator brings forth the manifold forms of the universe.

The concept of the Word, as expressed in the theories of language developed by the brahmanical tradition and the rabbinic and kabbalistic traditions, encompasses not only the gross level of vocalized speech, but also the subtler levels of nonvocalized speech as expressed in the entire range of development of thought. The Word is conceived as encompassing both unspoken thought and spoken utterance and thus has two aspects : a cognitive dimension, which is the unspoken thought or idea in the mind that constitutes the conceptual content of the word; and a phonic dimension, which encompasses both the internally perceived sound of mental discourse and the vocalized speech through which thought finds expression in externally audible sound. When translated onto the cosmic level, as described in certain strands of the traditions, the distinction between unspoken thought and vocalized speech is understood as a distinction between knowledge and speech. The unspoken thought in the cosmic mind is knowledge, which is the cognitive content of the Word. The Word is spoken by means of speech, which is the vehicle for the expression of the Word.

Veda and Torah, as delineated in my extended study of brahmanical

conceptions of Veda and rabbinic and kabbalistic conceptions of Torah,⁴ are each represented in certain strands of their respective traditions as a multileveled cosmic reality that is correlated with different levels of the Word, in which the principles of knowledge and speech both come into play. Four types of formulations can be distinguished, in which Veda and Torah, respectively, are variously represented as (1) the totality of the Word, which is the essence of the ultimate reality; (2) knowledge, which is identified with the creator principle as the immediate source of creation; (3) divine language, which constitutes the archetypal plan or “blueprint”⁵ from which the creator structures the forms of creation; and (4) a concrete corpus of oral and/or written texts.

In my extended study I trace the history of interpretations of such representations of Veda and Torah through the core texts of each tradition’s formative development. The brahmanical phase of my analysis is concerned primarily with mythological speculations found in Vedic literature—*Samhitās* (ca. 1500–800 B.C.E.), *Brāhmaṇas* (ca. 900–650 B.C.E.), *Āraṇyakas*, and *Upaniṣads* (ca. 800–200 B.C.E.)—and in certain post-Vedic texts—*Manu-Smṛti* (ca. 200 B.C.E.–200 C.E.), *Mahābhārata* (ca. 400 B.C.E.–400 C.E.), and selected *Purāṇas* (ca. 300–1000 C.E.)—with some attention to the philosophical formulations of the *Darśanas*, in particular *Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā* and *Advaita Vedānta*.⁶ The Judaic portion of the analysis begins with a consideration of pre-rabbinic conceptions of primordial wisdom/Torah⁷ and then focuses primarily on certain aggadic speculations found in the various strata of rabbinic texts—*Mishnah* (ca. 220 C.E.), *Tannaitic Midrashim* (up to 400 C.E.),⁸ *classical Amoraic Midrashim* (ca. 400–640 C.E.),⁹ *Babylonian Talmud* (ca. 500–600 C.E.), and selected post-Talmudic *Midrashim* (ca. 640–1200 C.E.)¹⁰—and their subsequent reinterpretation in the *Zohar* and the theosophical *Kabbalah* of thirteenth-century Spain.¹¹ It is obviously not possible within the scope of the present essay to provide a differentiated, contextualized treatment of the various sources. Rather, my concern will be, first, to provide a schematic overview of the model of scripture that emerges from my study of Veda and Torah and, second, to discuss how this scriptural model reflects the more fundamental affinities shared by the brahmanical and rabbinic traditions as representatives of a distinctive paradigm of religious tradition. There are of course significant differences among these scriptural traditions, as I have discussed at length in my extended study; however, for the purpose of the present analysis I will be concerned primarily with their structural affinities.¹²

(1) Scripture as the Word : The Essence of the Ultimate Reality

Veda and Torah are represented in certain strands of their respective traditions as the Word in its totality, which is the essence of the ultimate reality. The Veda is at times described in Vedic and post-Vedic mythology as the Word, brahman, which is the essence of Brahman, the ultimate reality, and is particularly associated with the *saguna* ("with attributes") dimension of Brahman that expresses itself in creation. In this context the Veda is identified in certain post-Vedic texts with Śabdabrahman, Brahman embodied in the Word. The Torah is similarly identified with the Word (*dābār*) of God or Name (*šēm*) of God, an identification that is generally assumed but not expanded upon in rabbinic texts. The Torah as the Word of God or Name of God is described in certain kabbalistic texts as the total manifestation of God's essence that is revealed in and through creation and is at times directly identified with God himself.

(2) Scripture as Knowledge : The Creator Principle

Veda and Torah are not only identified, respectively, with the essence of the ultimate reality, but are also associated more specifically with that aspect of the divine which is responsible for bringing forth the phenomenal world. On this level, each is represented as the totality of knowledge or wisdom that serves as the immediate source of creation. The Veda is at times identified with the creator Prajāpati or Brahmā, the demiurge principle, who is extolled as the embodiment of knowledge and Veda incarnate. The Torah is personified in certain rabbinic texts as Ḥokmāh, primordial wisdom, which has existed from "the beginning" as God's architect or co-worker in creation. In kabbalistic texts the Torah as Ḥokmāh is hypostatized as the demiurge principle in the s^ep̄irōṭic pleroma, the realm of divine emanations.

(3) Scripture as Divine Language : The Blueprint of Creation

Veda and Torah are each at times depicted in their respective traditions as the subtle plan or blueprint of creation, its constituent sounds or letters constituting the primordial elements of the divine language from which the realm of forms is structured. The Vedic *mantras* are represented in certain Vedic and post-Vedic accounts as the primordial utterances through which the creator brings forth the universe. In post-Vedic texts this notion is articulated in the image of the Vedas as the archetypal plan

that the creator recites in order to manifest the names, forms, and functions of all beings. In the parallel conception found in certain rabbinic and kabbalistic texts, the divine architect consults his blueprint, the Torah, “looking into,” contemplating, and/or uttering its words in order to bring forth the phenomenal world.

(4) *Scripture as Concrete Text*

The primordial Word that serves as the source and blueprint of creation is represented as becoming embodied on earth in a concrete, bounded corpus of texts—the oral text of the Vedic *mantras* or the written text of the Sefer Torah. The ancient *ṛṣis* (“seers”) are represented in brahmanical texts as the crucial link in the process of instantiation, for it is they who are said to have originally “seen” and “heard” the impulses of divine speech reverberating forth from the Transcendent at the beginning of creation. They subsequently uttered forth on the gross level of speech that which they cognized on the subtle level, and in this way, *śruti*, “that which was heard” by the *ṛṣis*, was “recorded” through the vehicle of their speech and assumed a concrete form on earth as the recited texts of the *mantras*. The process through which the primordial Torah became embodied on earth in the form of a written text, the Sefer Torah, is represented in rabbinic and kabbalistic texts as occurring at the revelation at Mount Sinai, in which the prophet Moses, acting as a scribe, recorded the words of God verbatim as they were revealed to him.¹³

If Veda and Torah were limited to their textual significations as bounded texts—the Vedic *mantras* and the Sefer Torah—their domain would remain closed, for the texts of these scriptures are fixed, and not a sound or syllable, jot or tittle may be altered. However, because Veda and Torah are identified with the limitless Word, their domain becomes open-ended and permeable, capable of absorbing a variety of texts and teachings beyond the circumscribed compass of the core texts.

The domain of the Veda as the Word (brahman/Śabdabrahman) and transcendent knowledge is infinite, and while brahmanical authorities might maintain that the Word found its quintessential expression in the primordial sounds of the Vedic *mantras*, it is not believed to be limited to that expression. Potentially any text or teaching can claim to be included within the purview of Veda by assimilating itself to the Vedic *mantras* through a variety of strategies, including (1) claiming to form part of *śruti*, the original cognitions of the *ṛṣis*, in the case of the Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas, and Upaniṣads; (2) claiming the status of the “fifth Veda,” in

the case of the *Itihāsas* (epics) and *Purāṇas*; (3) establishing a genealogy that directly links the text's teachings to the Veda or to some form of divine revelation, in the case of the *Manu-Smṛti*; (4) claiming that the text's teachings derive from lost Vedic texts, a claim that could apply to potentially all *smṛti* texts;¹⁴ or (5) otherwise conforming to the model of the Veda. As Brian K. Smith has emphasized, such strategies, including a variety of other modes of assimilation, have been used not only by exponents of the brahmanical hierarchy but also by nonbrahmanical Hindu groups in order to invest their sacred texts with the transcendent authority of the Veda, which "functions as a touchstone for Hindu orthodoxy."¹⁵ Whether the Veda is revered or rejected, appropriated or subverted, it remains a symbol invested with authoritative power that must be contended with by all those who wish to position themselves in relation to the brahmanical hierarchy.¹⁶

The domain of the Torah as the Word of God is also potentially limitless, and while rabbinic sages might hold that the Word found its consummate expression in the *Sefer Torah*, it is not believed to be limited to that expression. The key to expanding the domain of Torah lies in expanding the scope of the revelation itself through claiming that the Word of God revealed to Moses at Mount Sinai included not only a written text but also the oral tradition of interpreting the written text. The authority of all subsequent texts and teachings is thus legitimated by establishing a connection between those texts or teachings and the *Sefer Torah*, either through (1) granting them a subsidiary status as part of the Written Torah, in the case of the books of the *Nevi'im* (Prophets) and *Ketuvim* (Writings); (2) allotting them a designated place as part of the Oral Torah, in the case of the teachings of the *Mishnah*, *Talmud*, and *Midrash*; (3) linking them to the revelation at Mount Sinai as part of the open-ended category of Oral Torah; or (4) otherwise aligning them with the model of the *Sefer Torah*. Through these and other strategies the Torah is transformed from a limited, bounded text—the *Sefer Torah*—into a limitless, encompassing symbol, "the single critical symbol of the Judaism of the dual Torah," as Jacob Neusner terms it, that represents the entire system of rabbinic Judaism.¹⁷

"Embodied Communities" and Paradigms of Religious Tradition

Are such representations of scripture as a multileveled cosmological principle unique to these traditions, or could we expect to find comparable conceptions in other religious traditions as part of what Wilfred Cantwell Smith has termed the "almost common human propensity to

scripturalize”)?¹⁸ I would suggest that although other traditions may have developed cosmological conceptions of scripture, the specific parallels highlighted in my study between brahmanical conceptions of Veda and rabbinic and kabbalistic conceptions of Torah are not necessarily representative of a more “universal” trend to cosmologize notions of language and text, but are rather reflective of the more fundamental structural affinities shared by these particular traditions. As suggested earlier, the brahmanical and rabbinic traditions provide an alternative paradigm of religious tradition to the Christian-based model that has tended to dominate our scholarly inquiries. The brahmanical and rabbinic traditions constitute what we might term “embodied communities” in that their notions of tradition-identity, in contrast to the universalizing tendencies of missionary traditions such as “Christianities,” are “embodied” in the particularities of ethnic-cultural categories defined in relation to a particular people (Aryans, Jews), a particular sacred language (Sanskrit, Hebrew), and a particular land (Āryāvarta, Israel).

The manner in which these traditions construct categories of language and canon is rooted in the embodied nature of these traditions. Indeed, one of the metaphors that is used to represent both Veda and Torah is that of the body. Veda as the Word is described in certain brahmanical texts as undergoing a series of successive embodiments, from subtle to gross, as the body of Brahman, the body of the creator principle, and the body of the cosmos, which in turn is reflected in the human body. The “corpus” of Vedic *mantras*, as the earthly manifestation of the cosmic blueprint, reflects and interconnects these various levels of reality. While the rabbinic tradition tends to emphasize the incorporeal nature of God, the Torah is nevertheless represented at times as an organic unity that is a living aspect of the divine and that serves as the blueprint that becomes instantiated in the structures of the cosmos and the human body. The body metaphor is extended in kabbalistic texts such as the Zohar, which correlates the “body” of Torah with the body of the divine anthropos, the cosmos-body, and the human body.

The Word embodied in texts—the Vedic *mantras* or the Sefer Torah—is further instantiated in the social “body” of the communities that preserve and transmit them. This process of embodiment occurs on a number of different levels: ethnic and linguistic identity, social structure, and practice.

(1) *Embodiment in Ethnic and Linguistic Identity*

Veda and Torah, respectively, become “incarnate” in a particular social

body—the Aryan community or the people of Israel—as the constitutive category that defines its ethnic and linguistic identity over against other peoples—the non-Aryans or the gentiles. The “Aryans” and the “people of Israel” are not of course strictly delineated, closed ethnic groups, as the brahmanical tradition has absorbed various non-Aryan groups within its fold in the course of its history, just as the Jewish community has admitted gentiles through conversion and has even undertaken proselytizing efforts in certain periods. Rather, these collective designations represent *idealized categories* in which tradition-identity is assigned first and foremost through birth into a community that defines itself in terms of blood descent.

The cosmological paradigms in which Veda and Torah are represented as the primordial Word that is the source and blueprint of creation would appear to present a claim to universal knowledge, and yet both traditions use a variety of strategies to circumscribe the Word and bind it linguistically, ethnically, and culturally to a specific people. The *ṛsis* to whom cognition of the Vedic *mantras* is ascribed are at times represented as semidivine beings who assist the creator in the cosmogonic process and who are the progenitors of the entire human race. This might imply that all of humanity inherited the Veda from their ancestors, the universal progenitors. At the same time, however, brahmanical texts are careful to localize the procreative powers of the *ṛsis* as “our fathers,” the forefathers of the Aryan people, and more specifically of the brahmanical lineages that have preserved the *ṛsis*’ cognitions.¹⁹ The Aryans, the inhabitants of Āryāvarta, are thus designated as the heirs of the cosmic blueprint, the Veda, and of the perfected (*samskṛta*) language, Sanskrit, the language of the gods and the language of nature in which the Vedic *mantras* are recorded.

The Torah is also at times represented as the potential inheritance of all nations, which the people of Israel alone proved worthy to receive. Certain rabbinic traditions maintain that God considered giving the Torah to Adam and thus by implication to the descendants of Adam, the entire human race. However, in the end Adam sinned and the nations of the world, as the children of Adam and the children of Noah, were vouchsafed only seven commandments. On the other hand, the patriarch Abraham, the forefather of Israel, is held to have been so meritorious that he observed all of the commandments of the Torah even before they were given at Mount Sinai. The descendants of Abraham—Isaac, Jacob, and the sons of Jacob—followed his example, and thus even before the Sinai revelation the Torah was destined to be the inheritance of the people of

Israel.²⁰ At the revelation at Mount Sinai God once again extended the opportunity to all nations to receive the Torah, but Israel alone accepted God's offer.²¹ Hence the people of Israel, the descendants of Abraham, were deemed to be the custodians of the primordial blueprint, the Torah, and of the divine language, Hebrew, the language from which the world was created and in which the Torah is inscribed.

Veda and Torah thus become in-corporated in the collective identity of a particular people and are "reproduced" in the bodies of their descendants through blood lineages.

(2) *Embodiment in Social Structure*

The process of embodiment also involves the sociocultural reproduction of a particular social structure, in which the social body is internally differentiated and legitimated with reference to the cosmic blueprint. The Word that manifests itself in the structures of the divine and of the cosmos and in a corpus of texts is also held to be embodied in the social structure of the community that constitutes itself in relation to those texts. The Aryan social order, the system of social classes (*varṇas*), is represented in certain brahmanical texts as reflecting the structure of the Veda, which in turn reflects the structures of the natural and divine orders.²² The laws of the Torah that delineate and regulate the Israelite social order are correlated in certain rabbinic texts with the laws that generate and regulate the cosmos, a notion that is extended in certain kabbalistic texts to include the laws that constitute the Godhead as well.²³ The social order is thus re-presented as a microcosmic reflection of the cosmic order and as divinely ordained from primordial times as the crystallized expression of the cosmic blueprint on the social plane.

Social status is primarily determined in the brahmanical and rabbinic traditions in relation to the authoritative symbol, and thus the "heads" of the body politic are the religious elite—the brahmin priests or the rabbis—who are themselves represented as the embodiments of Veda or Torah. They embody Veda and Torah, respectively, in their function, which is to preserve, teach, and enact the canonical texts, as well as in their lines of tradition, which are held to derive directly from the original recipients of the knowledge—the Vedic *ṛṣis* or Moses. The locus of canonical authority thus shifts from a circumscribed corpus of texts—the Vedic *mantras* and the Sefer Torah—to the religious elite that preserve, transmit, and embody the texts in their teachings and actions. The brahmin priests and the rabbinic sages become the representatives of Veda and Torah,

respectively, and they thus assume the authority to redefine the categories in accordance with the changing sociohistorical conditions of their communities. While preserving the boundaries of the core texts intact, they extend the domain of Veda and Torah beyond those boundaries in order to incorporate a host of other texts, teachings, and practices.

(3) *Embodiment in Practice*

Veda and Torah are symbols that are lived and actualized in their respective communities through practice. The sociocultural taxonomies of any community are inscribed in the bodies of its constituent members through practice, transforming the biological body into a socialized body that has internalized the symbolic schemes and values of the culture.²⁴ In the brahmanical and rabbinic traditions, which are religions of orthopraxy, practice assumes a paramount role as the primary vehicle through which social, cultural, and religious values are reproduced. Veda and Torah, as the encompassing symbols of their respective traditions, are inscribed through particular types of practices—primarily through recitation and sacrificial performances in the case of Veda and through study and observance of the commandments in the case of Torah. Moreover, the symbol systems associated with Veda and Torah serve to legitimate these practices as the means to activate the primordial blueprint and thereby to maintain the social, cosmic, and divine orders.²⁵

In the rabbinic tradition the core text, the *Sefer Torah*, is held to provide the authoritative framework for the community's practices in the form of the 613 commandments, or *mitzvot*, that regulate various aspects of religious, social, political, and economic life. The aggadic tradition that correlates the 248 positive commandments with the 248 members of the human body maintains that there is a specific part of the body that is to be activated in the performance of each commandment, and thus the Torah, as the plan reflecting the structure of the microcosm and the macrocosm, must literally be embodied by each individual Jew through action.²⁶ While the *Sefer Torah* is thus celebrated as the foundation for Jewish orthopraxy, the rabbis were nevertheless faced with the problem of establishing continuity between the ritual and sociocultural practices delineated in the biblical text and the changing religious, social, and political realities of the Jewish people in different periods and environments. It thus became necessary to adapt the category of Torah to accord with the ever-changing forms of the corporate community that it was intended to represent. Through constructing the category of Oral

Torah and linking it to the original revelation at Mount Sinai as the oral tradition of interpretation of the written text, the rabbis overcame the problem of discontinuity. The integrity of the blueprint was preserved, and at the same time its content was opened up and extended through endless acts of interpretation. The rabbis were thus able to ensure the cultural continuity of the Jewish community, as well as their own authoritative position in that community, through transforming Torah from a bounded text into an open-ended symbol.

In the case of the brahmanical tradition the problem of discontinuity posed by the core *śruti* texts, the Vedic Saṃhitās, was even greater than that posed by the Sefer Torah, for the Saṃhitās are primarily concerned with sacrificial rituals and do not provide a system of sociocultural practices. The *varṇa* system, for example, with the exception of a few references such as those found in the Puruṣa-Sūkta (R̥g-Veda X.90) and in Taittirīya Saṃhitā VII.1.1.4-6, is not delineated in the Saṃhitās. Although the Brāhmaṇas also focus primarily on ritual concerns, the essential functions and hierarchical interrelations of the social classes are articulated in their classificatory schemas, which correlate the structure of the *varṇa* system with the *structure* of the threefold Veda—R̥g, Yajur, and Sāma. By extending the domain of *śruti* to include the Brāhmaṇas along with the Saṃhitās, the brahmin priests invested the social system with Vedic authority on the basis of the *content* of the Veda as well.²⁷ In order to extend Vedic legitimation further beyond the ritual realm into the sociocultural domain, it became necessary to expand the purview of Veda to include not only *śruti* texts but also *smṛti* texts such as the Dharma-Śāstras in which the detailed duties and regulations of the *varṇāśrama-dharma* system are elaborated.

The manner in which the categories of Veda and Torah are constructed thus reflects the more fundamental categories that interconnect the brahmanical and rabbinic traditions as two species of the same genus of religious tradition: as ethnic-based communities that define their notions of tradition-identity in terms of ethnic, linguistic, and cultural categories; as textual communities that codify their symbol systems and practices in the form of scriptural canons; and as religions of orthopraxy that delineate their concern for “correct practice” in elaborate legal systems, sacrificial traditions, and purity codes. The essential feature that unites these various aspects is that of embodiment: embodiment in a particular ethnic community with a sacred language, social structure, and practices that are constituted in relation to the Word embodied in scripture.

In order to highlight further the distinctive nature of these embodied

communities, I would like to consider briefly two traditions that are missionary in orientation and that develop categories of tradition-identity that diverge from the ethnic-based model: "Christianities" and "Buddhisms." These traditions are of course extremely diverse, and thus I will focus my analysis primarily on the early formative period of each tradition, in which the newly emerging community was in the process of evolving its own self-definition in relation to already existing religious communities.

In Christian traditions the locus of authority shifts from the Word embodied in texts to the Word incarnate as a human being. God's central revelation for Christians is in the person of Jesus Christ himself and not in the New Testament, which is a record of the revelation.²⁸ It is Christ who is celebrated as the preexistent Word of God, the Logos principle through whom "all things were made," and it is the person of Christ, "the Word made flesh," the incarnate God, that constitutes the central symbol of Christian traditions.²⁹

The Word incarnate in Christ is also held to be embodied in the corporate community of Christians, who are represented as the "body of Christ." However, this conception contrasts sharply with the notions of embodiment associated with Veda and Torah, for the Christian community as the "body of Christ" is not constituted primarily by texts, by categories of ethnic, linguistic, and cultural identity, nor by practices. Rather, the "body of Christ" represents a spiritualized, denaturalized notion of body in which the Christian community is held to be bound together not by blood descent and not by texts and practices tied to the identity of a particular people or culture but rather by faith in Jesus Christ and the "life of the Spirit." This difference in emphasis appears to be rooted in the missionary orientation of the early Christian community, which, in opposition to the ethnic-based categories of the Jewish tradition that fostered it, established a new taxonomy that gave priority to Christ over Torah, faith over practice, and the Spirit over the physical body.

The foundations of this new taxonomy can be located in the writings of the apostle Paul, who, prior to the separation of the Christian church from the Jewish synagogue at the end of the first century C.E., embarked on an extended mission to the gentiles. Paul, as a former Pharisee who maintained that he had been specially commissioned by God to be the apostle to the gentiles,³⁰ was convinced that the gentiles had a legitimate place in God's plan of salvation, yet he was inevitably confronted with the question of their relationship to the Jewish people and to the Torah in particular. In opposition to the "Judaizers" among the Jewish Christians,

Paul arrived at the conviction that the gentiles could become a part of the people of God without having to pass through the law of Torah.³¹

The doctrine of justification by faith was the main argument developed by Paul in order to defend his conviction that gentiles *qua gentiles*, apart from the Torah of Israel, have a right to full citizenship in God's kingdom.³² The key components of Paul's argument involve establishing that (1) for the gentiles the "law of Christ," which is associated with freedom, righteousness, and the "Spirit of life," supersedes the law of Torah, which is associated with bondage, sin, and death;³³ (2) justification is by faith in Jesus Christ apart from works of the law;³⁴ (3) the true children of God are not the "children of the flesh," who are bound by the covenants of circumcision and Torah "according to the flesh," but rather the "children of the promise," who are united in the covenant "according to the Spirit" that was vouchsafed to Abraham on the basis of his faith.³⁵ In order to establish that all those who have faith in Christ—gentiles as well as Jews—are heirs to the promise to Abraham, Paul argues that the promise was made solely on the basis of Abraham's faith in God before he was circumcised and was extended to all nations through Abraham.³⁶

In the context of struggling with the dilemma posed by the gentile mission, Paul thus developed a conception of religious community that supplanted Jewish notions of embodiment—in Torah (text), flesh (ethnicity), and works (practice)—with a spiritualized notion of the "body of Christ," in which all members of the community, Jews and gentiles alike, are united by baptism into the "life of the Spirit" through faith in Christ.³⁷ Paul's theology provided the foundation for a new type of religious tradition, which, in contrast to its parent tradition, was to become characterized as a missionary religion, proclaiming a universal gospel that was open to all peoples and all nations, and as a religion of orthodoxy, in which faith in Jesus Christ, articulated in "correct belief" and elaborated in creeds, doctrines, and theology, was given precedence over "correct practice" and works of the law.

A parallel to the manner in which the early Christian community broke away from the embodied categories of the Jewish tradition can be seen in the manner in which the early Buddhist community disassociated itself from the categories of the brahmanical tradition. In both cases one of the key factors in the redefinition of categories was the missionary orientation of these new communities, which sought to extend their teachings beyond the boundaries of a single constituency. Just as the missionary efforts of the early Christian community resulted in the reinterpretation of the role of the Torah and the definition of a new "Israel"

in which Jews and gentiles were united through faith in Christ, so the missionizing activities of the early Buddhists were accompanied by a rejection of the authority of the Veda and the formation of a new type of community that was united through adherence to the Dhamma (Sanskrit Dharma, “doctrine, teaching”), irrespective of ethnic background, class, or sex.

The Buddha Śākyamuni (ca. 560-480 B.C.E.) and his immediate disciples are represented in the Suttas of the Pali canon as rejecting the authority of the Veda, along with the complex of categories in which it was embedded—textual traditions, brahmanical blood lineages, the *varṇa* system, and Vedic rituals. The early Buddhists spurned the “body”—maintaining activities of the brahmins, which were concerned with preservation of the purity of the physical body and of blood lineages, preservation of a corpus of texts in which the divine language was held to be embodied, maintenance of the social body and its hierarchical division of functions, and regeneration of the cosmos-body through periodic recitation of the Vedic *mantras* and performance of the sacrificial rituals. The Buddha’s followers gave priority instead to the Dhamma, the teachings of the Buddha, which were intended to uproot attachment to all forms of embodiment—to the physical body, to sacred texts, to family, clan, or social status, and to the forms of the material world of *samsāra* generally—in order to realize the supreme goal of human existence, *nibbāna* (Sanskrit *nirvāṇa*, literally, “blowing out”).

A new taxonomy was established by the early Buddhists in which (1) the Veda was superseded by the Dhamma as the authoritative symbol of the community;³⁸ (2) the authority of the brahmin priests, based on purity of descent and custodianship of the Vedic texts and rituals, was supplanted by the ideal of the *arahant* (Sanskrit *arhat*, literally, “worthy one”), whose authority rested on his or her attainment of *nibbāna* through direct experience, through “knowing” and “seeing,” of the truths of the Dhamma;³⁹ (3) the *varṇa* system, a hierarchy of social classes based on blood descent and householder values, was replaced by the *saṃgha*, an order of monks and nuns that was open to people of all classes and ethnic backgrounds and that was united by the Dhamma, the Vinaya (rules of discipline), and the quest for *nibbāna*.⁴⁰

The divergence of the early Buddhists from the brahmanical paradigm of Veda can be seen in the way in which they developed the category of canon. The *Tiṭṭaka* (“three baskets”), the Pali canon of the Theravāda school, which is generally held to be the earliest extant, complete canon, derives its authority from its claim to be *buddha-vacana*, the “word of

the Buddha," and the repository of the Dhamma.⁴¹ The Suttas, which form the second of the three *piṭakas*, authenticate their claim to have been "heard" from the Buddha through the opening phrase, *evam me sutam* (Sanskrit *evam mayā śrutam*), "Thus I have heard." However, the Suttas are not thereby ascribed a status comparable to that of *śruti*, "that which was heard" by the Vedic *ṛṣis*. The Suttas are not, like the Vedic *mantras*, represented as the record of the cosmic blueprint that contains the expressions of the primordial language through which the creation was brought forth, but rather they are revered as the record of the Dhamma that contains the words of the Buddha through which the message of enlightenment was proclaimed. Indeed, the very notions of a cosmic blueprint and of a primordial language are rejected, for according to the Dhamma the world is in continuous flux, an ever-changing flow of processes, and there are no stable patterns and structures of reality to be mapped and encoded in language. Even if the existence of a language of the gods were conceded, the words of the Buddha would be granted a higher, "supradivine" status, for the Buddha, as an enlightened human sage, is held by the Theravādins to have achieved a level of spiritual attainment that surpasses that of the gods.

The Theravādins ascribe to the Buddha a conventional view of language, in which language is valued for its communicative power and not for any intrinsic ontological status. The didactic content of the Dhamma, as a universal teaching intended to enlighten human beings and gods alike, took precedence over a single linguistic form. The Buddha is said to have eschewed the use of Sanskrit, the sacred language of the brahmanical elite, and instead encouraged his disciples to learn and spread the Dhamma in their own dialects, in languages that would be accessible to the general populace.⁴²

The symbol systems associated with Veda and Torah thus reflect the more fundamental categories that interconnect the brahmanical and rabbinic traditions and that set these embodied communities apart from missionary-oriented traditions such as "Christianities" and "Buddhisms." While the Christian-based model of religious tradition emphasizes a series of hierarchical dichotomies between such categories as sacred and profane, belief and practice, doctrine and law, and universalism and particularism, the brahmanical and rabbinic traditions construct other categories that bring to light a different set of relationships, such as those between religion and culture, ethnic identity and religious adherence, knowledge and practice, observance and nonobservance, and purity and impurity. The comparative study of these traditions thus challenges us

to reconsider the prevailing models in the academy and reconfigure our scholarly discourse to include alternative paradigms of religious tradition.

NOTES

1. Among recent studies, the collection of essays edited by Hananya Goodman, *Between Jerusalem and Benares : Comparative Studies in Judaism and Hinduism* (Albany : State University of New York Press, 1994), represents one of the first efforts by a group of scholars of Judaica and Indology to explore the affinities among these traditions. Goodman's introduction provides a brief survey of the remarkably few studies that have attempted to delineate connections among Hindu and Jewish traditions.

2. Smith, Jonathan Z. "Sacred Persistence : Toward a Redescription of Canon," chapter 3 of his *Imagining Religion : From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 52.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

4. See Holdrege, Barbara A. *Veda and Torah : Transcending the Textuality of Scripture* (Albany : State University of New York Press, 1994). For an overview of the results of my study, see "Veda and Torah : The Word Embodied in Scripture," in *Between Jerusalem and Benares*, pp. 103-179.

5. Even though the term "blueprint" is obviously a modern designation for which no literal equivalent can be found in Sanskrit or Hebrew, I have nevertheless chosen to use the term at times when discussing images of the Veda or Torah as the plan of creation in order to connote the plan's association with the architect of creation.

6. Muir, J. has collected together relevant passages from Vedic and post-Vedic texts regarding the origin and cosmological status of the Veda, although apart from brief introductory statements he does not attempt to analyze and interpret the significance of, and interrelationship among, these texts. See Muir, J. comp. and trans., *Original Sanskrit Texts on the Origin and History of the People of India, Their Religion and Institutions*, Vol. 3, *The Vedas : Opinions of Their Authors and of Later Indian Writers on Their Origin, Inspiration, and Authority*, 2d rev. ed. (1874; reprint, Amsterdam : Oriental Press, 1967).

7. My analysis of pre-rabbinic literature focuses on the wisdom hymn in Proverbs 8. 22-31, the wisdom books of the Apocrypha (Wisdom of Ben Sira, Baruch 3.9-4.4, and Wisdom of Solomon), and the Alexandrian Jewish philosophers Aristobulus and Philo.

8. My analyses have focused on those Tannaitic Midrashim for which we have complete manuscripts: M^qkîltâ' d^c-R. Ishmael, Sîprâ', Sîprê on Numbers, and Sîprê on Deuteronomy.

9. Classical Amoraic Midrashim include Genesis Rabbāh, Leviticus Rabbāh, P'siqṭā' d'-R. Kahana, Lamentations Rabbāh, Esther Rabbāh I, Song of Songs Rabbāh, and Ruth Rabbāh.

10. My analyses of post-Talmudic Midrashim have focused on P'siqṭā' Rabbā'ī (ca. 7th c. C.E.), Tanḥūmā' Y'lamn'dēnū Midrashim (ca. 9th c. C.E.), and Pirqē d'-R. Eliezer (ca. 8th c. C.E.).

11. In rabbinic texts speculations concerning the preexistent and cosmogonic status of the Torah are not systematically developed as part of any consistent cosmology, and therefore it is difficult to assess whether such notions reflect a genuine interest in cosmological speculation or whether they are simply literary metaphors adopted in homiletical praise of the Torah. In contrast to the rather fragmentary nature of the rabbinic material, in which aggadic speculations about the Torah are interspersed throughout the texts, in medieval kabbalistic texts such speculations are generally presented as part of a grand cosmological scheme. The conceptions found in seminal form in rabbinic texts are fully elaborated and cosmologized by certain kabbalists, going beyond metaphorical personification to clear hypostatization.

Kabbalistic conceptions of Torah and language have been discussed from a variety of perspectives by Gershom Scholem, Moshe Idel, and Elliot Wolfson. See in particular Scholem's groundbreaking essay "The Meaning of the Torah in Jewish Mysticism," chapter 2 of his *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York : Schocken Books, 1965), pp. 32–86, and his article "The Name of God and the Linguistic Theory of the Kabbala," *Diogenes*, no.79 (Fall 1972) : 59–80 (Part 1); no. 80 (Winter 1972) : 164–194 (Part 2). Among Idel's numerous studies, see his "T'pīsat ha-Tōrāh b'-Siṣrūt ha-Hēkālōt w' Gilgūlēhā ba-Qabbālāh," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*1(1981) : 23–84; *Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abraham Abulafia*, trans. Menahem Kallus (Albany : State University of New York Press, 1989). Among Wolfson's studies, see his "Female Imaging of the Torah : From Literary Metaphor to Religious Symbol," in *From Ancient Israel to Modern Judaism : Intellect in Quest of Understanding. Essays in Honor of Marvin Fox*, eds. Jacob Neusner, Ernest S. Frerichs, and Nahum M. Sarna, Vol. 2 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), pp. 271–307; "The Hermeneutics of Visionary Experience : Revelation and Interpretation in the Zohar," *Religion* 18 (Oct. 1988) : 311–345; "Letter Symbolism and Merkavah Imagery in the Zohar," in 'Alei Shefer : *Studies in the Literature of Jewish Thought*, ed. Moshe Ḥallamish (Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1990), pp. 195–236.

12. For documentation of relevant references from brahmanical texts and

from rabbinic and kabbalistic texts, see Holdrege, *Veda and Torah*, esp. chapters 1 and 2.

13. For a discussion of the phenomenology of Vedic cognition and of the Sinai revelation, see Holdrege, *Veda and Torah*, chapters 3 and 4, respectively.

14. Sheldon Pollock has argued that, according to the etymology derived from the Pūrva-Mīmāṃṣa school, *smṛti* is an open-ended category that encompasses any teachings or practices pertaining to *dharma* that have been “remembered” from lost Vedic texts. Understood in this way, Veda becomes a limitlessly expanding symbol that includes not only *śruti* but also *smṛti* texts. See Pollock’s “‘Tradition’ as ‘Revelation’: *Śruti*, *Smṛti*, and the Sanskrit Discourse of Power,” in *Lex et Litterae: Essays on Ancient Indian Law and Literature in Honour of Oscar Botto*, eds. Siegfried Lienhard and Irma Piovano (Turin: CESMEO, forthcoming); “From Discourse of Ritual to Discourse of Power in Sanskrit Culture,” in *Ritual and Power*, ed. Holdrege, Barbara A. *Journal of Ritual Studies* 4, no. 2 (Summer 1990): 322–328.

15. See Smith, Brian K. *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual, and Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 3–29, esp. 20–29.

16. As Heesterman, J. C. emphasizes, “The crux of the matter is that the Vedas hold the key to ultimate legitimation. Therefore, even if the Vedas are in no way related to the ways of human life and society, one is still forced to come to terms with them.” J. C. Heesterman, “Veda and Dharma,” in *The Concept of Duty in South Asia*, eds. Wendy Doniger O’Flaherty and J. Duncan M. Derrett (New Delhi: Vikas, 1978), pp. 92–93. Heesterman’s remark points to an observation often made by Indologists: the authoritative power of the Veda does not lie in the content of the Vedic Saṃhitās themselves, for their content is primarily concerned with sacrificial rituals and is not directly relevant to the teachings and practices of post-Vedic Hinduism.

17. See Neusner, Jacob. *The Ecology of Religion: From Writing to Religion in the Study of Judaism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), p. 240. For a brief discussion of the complex of meanings ascribed to the term Torah in various rabbinic texts, see *ibid.*, esp. pp. 240–249, 109–112, 120–123. For a more extended discussion, see Neusner’s *Torah: From Scroll to Symbol in Formative Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).

18. Smith, Wilfred Cantwell. “Scripture as Form and Concept: Their Emergence for the Western World,” in *Rethinking Scripture: Essays from a Comparative Perspective*, ed. Miriam Levering (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), p. 45.

19. For a discussion of brāhmanical representations of the nature and role of the *ṛsis*, see Holdrege, *Veda and Torah*, chapter 3.

20. For an analysis of relevant references, see *ibid.*, chapter 2.

21. See *ibid*, chapter 4.

22. See *ibid*, chapter 1.

23. See *ibid*, chapter 2.

24. See Bell, Catherine. "The Ritual Body and the Dynamics of Ritual Power," in *Ritual and Power*, ed. Holdrege, *Journal of Ritual Studies* 4, no. 2 (Summer 1990) : 299–313. Bell's essay draws on the insights of Pierre Bourdieu in *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1977), and Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish : The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York : Random House, Vintage Books, 1979). See also Bell's *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1992).

25. See Holdrege, *Veda and Torah*, chapters 5 and 6.

26. See Pes. K. 12.1; cf. Mak. 23b. For a discussion of this tradition, as well as of other traditions that illustrate the intimate relationship between the body and Torah in Jewish thought, see Paul Morris, "The Embodied Text : Covenant and Torah," *Religion* 20 (Jan. 1990) : 77–87. For recent works on the discourse of the body in Jewish traditions, see Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, ed., *People of the Body : Jews and Judaism from an Embodied Perspective* (Albany : State University of New York Press, 1992); Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel : Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1993).

27. See Smith, Brian K. "Canonical Authority and Social Classification : Veda and Varṇa in Ancient Indian Texts," *History of Religions* 32, no. 2 (Nov. 1992) : 103–125; *idem*, *Classifying the Universe : The Ancient Indian Varṇa System and the Origins of Caste* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1994), esp. chapters 2 and 9.

28. This point is emphasized by Wilfred Cantwell Smith in "Scripture as Form and Concept," p. 30; "Some Similarities and Some Differences Between Christianity and Islam," chapter 13 of his *On Understanding Islam : Selected Studies* (The Hague : Mouton, 1981), p. 239.

29. See John 1.1–3,14; cf. Col. 1.15–17.

30. Gal. 1.13–16; Gal. 2.7–9; Rom. 11.13; Rom. 15.15–16.

31. Krister Stendahl has emphasized that Paul's attitude towards the Torah can only be properly understood in the wider context of his mission to the gentiles. See his *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles and Other Essays* (Philadelphia : Fortress Press, 1976). A similar view is expressed by Lloyd Gaston in "Paul and the Torah," in *Antisemitism and the Foundations of Christianity*, ed. Alan Davies (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), pp. 48–71; reprinted in his *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver : University of British Columbia Press, 1987), pp. 15–34.

32. Most of the passages in Paul's letters regarding justification by faith

appear in the context of his concern with the larger issue of the relation between Jews and gentiles. See Rom. 3.28–30; Gal. 2.14–16; Rom. 1.16–17.

33. For Paul's extended arguments concerning the relationship of the gentiles to the Jewish people and the Torah, see Gal. 2–5 and Rom. 2–11. It is important to emphasize that although Paul did not expect gentile Christians to be bound by the law, there is no indication that he intended Jewish Christians to abandon the Torah. See Rom. 3.31.

34. Gal. 2.16; Rom. 3.28.

35. See Rom. 9.6–8; Gal. 4.21–31.

36. For Paul's arguments regarding the promise to Abraham, see Gal. 3–4 and Rom. 4, 9.

37. See 1 Cor. 12.12–13,27; cf. Rom. 12.4–5.

38. See the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta (D 16.2.24–26; 16.6.1), in which the Buddha is portrayed as declaring that after his death the Dhamma will be his followers' refuge and teacher.

39. See, for example, D 13, in which the Buddha is portrayed as deriding the brahmin priests, who teach "a path that they do not know and see" like a line of blind men (13.15), in contrast to an *arahant*, who has realized directly the truths of the Dhamma. See also D 4.

40. Although in certain passages of the Suttas the Buddha is represented as acknowledging the fourfold division of functions of the *varṇa* system, at the same time he argues that the nature and destiny of the members of the four classes are determined not by birth but by their actions. Hence a person from any of the four classes can abandon the householder duties and class distinctions of the *varṇa* system, join the *saṃgha*, and become an *arahant* who has realized the supreme goal of human existence. See, for example, D 27; M 2.147–154; Sn 136.

41. For a discussion of the formation of the Tipiṭaka, see Étienne Lamotte, *History of Indian Buddhism: From the Origins to the Śaka Era*, trans. Sara Webb-Boin under the supervision of Jean Dantinne (Louvain-la-Neuve : Université Catholique de Louvain, Institut Orientaliste, 1988), pp. 140–191. See also Lamotte's "La critique d'authenticité dans le bouddhisme," in *India Antiqua* (Leiden : E. J. Brill, 1947), pp. 213–222. Among more recent studies, see Steven Collins's illuminating essay on the social context in which the Pali canon emerged, "On the Very Idea of the Pali Canon," *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 15 (1990) : 89–126.

42. Moreover, in contrast to the brahmanical preoccupation with accurate preservation of the Vedic sounds with little regard for their discursive meaning, the Buddha is represented as chiding those disciples who focus solely on memorizing the Dhamma and do not understand the meaning of the texts that they recite. See, for example, M 1.133.

ON THE COMPLEMENTARY CORE PARADOXES OF EFFORT AND GRACE IN THERAVADA BUDDHISM AND CHRISTIANITY

Arthur Ledoux

I. Introduction

In his "Interpreting Across Boundaries,"¹ Prof. John E. Smith distinguishes three types of cross-cultural communication. There are, he says, *parallels* where direct comparisons can be made and mutual understanding arrived at relatively easily; there are *divergences* where there are differing views within the same subject matter and where mutual understanding is more difficult; and there are *collisions* where the idea of one tradition is either entirely absent from or summarily rejected by another tradition so that agreement seems impossible.²

This paper will focus on an apparent collision over a question of fundamental religious significance. Beginning with the widely shared view that, in Smith's words, "there is something wrong with us as we naturally stand," the poignant question arises "how may (we) be saved from the defect?"³ How can we come to salvation? The traditions of Theravada Buddhism and of Christianity seem to collide in their answers: Theravada Buddhism insists that it is individual effort that saves, while Christianity insists that it is God's grace that saves. I will suggest, however, that when one attends more closely to the sophisticated understanding each tradition has of its own doctrine, there is far more common ground between these two traditions on this question than may at first appear. Each tradition is led to a core paradox which it cannot resolve in its own doctrinal terms. Indeed the paradox each tradition winds up in is rooted in a paradox shared by all humans; each tradition's core paradox is in a way the *same* paradox approached from different and complementary angles. What one finds is more a shift of emphasis than an irreconcilable doctrinal conflict. This "collision" is really a divergence of emphasis in answering a shared question. Mutual understanding is eminently possible.

II. Setting the Problem : The Makings of a Collision?

From first to last the Buddha we find presented in the Pali scriptures emphasizes the need for individual effort. In his first sermon after attaining nirvana the Buddha includes right effort as integral to the Eight-fold Path to enlightenment⁴ and in his dying words he urges his followers : “be ye lamps unto yourselves. Rely on yourselves, and do not rely on external help.”⁵ Effort is one of the seven factors of enlightenment⁶ and the whole flavor of the *Dhammapada* is reflected in such sayings as these :

By arousing himself, by earnestness, by restraint and control, the wise man may make for himself an island which no flood can overwhelm. . . These wise people, meditative, steady, always exerting strong powers, attain to Nirvana, the highest happiness.⁷

Relying on help from any external source, whether it be other people or even the gods themselves, leaves one in bondage. We are urged to break such fetters and become self-reliant.⁸

It would seem that the teachings of Christianity could not be more different. Salvation is an unmerited gift of God’s grace accepted in faith. St. Paul, for example, has bitter experience of his own weakness; even his best efforts misfire : “I do not do the good I want but the evil that I do not want is what I do.”⁹ We must rely on God who, steadfastly abiding by his covenantal promises, has even sent his own Son to save us. Paul finds it a relief and a joy to be able to say to others that it is “by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God.”¹⁰ And when the early church met with Pelagianism, a doctrine that insisted on the efficacy of individual human effort, the church condemned it as heresy. The opposition between Theravada Buddhism and Christianity seems complete and the collision head-on.

But let us examine more deeply the understanding each tradition has of its own view.

III. Theravada Buddhism on Effort

Consider the seven factors of enlightenment described and urged by Buddhists. When Theravadins arouse their energy and make effort, they are striving to cultivate the most fundamental factor of enlightenment : mindfulness.¹¹ Through clear and profoundly steady attention to the fullness of present experience, the Buddhist strives for insight into the

nature of existence. What is waiting to be discovered by the practitioner at a certain point along the path are the three signs of being, i.e. the three qualities shared by every experience short of nirvana.

1) *Anicca* : Every conditioned experience is seen to be impermanent and transitory. So radically ephemeral is experience that the very notion of a solid “thing” or substance dissolves into a flow of process : there are no beings, only “becoming”. 2) *Dukkha* : Every conditioned experience is unsatisfactory because it is so thoroughly impermanent; there is literally nothing to cling to. 3) *Anatta* : Every conditioned experience is empty of self; since there are no things, there can be no such thing as a self. Under close inspection the substantial self I thought I was dissolves into an impermanent flow of mental and physical processes.¹²

But, then, who is making the effort to be mindful? No one is; effort is occurring, but there is no one ‘making’ it. The sense of effort being made is just another passing factor in the flow of experience. As difficult as it is for words to capture, the experience can be strong and clear: the mental and physical factors of “self” arise and pass away according to their own laws of cause and effect (karma); they arise and pass on their own and are not under the control of a self-conscious ego; indeed this self-conscious ego is just another aspect of the flow.

And so comes the crucial experience : seeing through the illusion of control, one senses each experience as fresh and spontaneous. Unclouded by desire or aversion, one sees ‘things’ exactly as they are, in their suchness. And here arises another factor of enlightenment : rapture and joy.¹³ “Simply to see things as they are, as they truly are in themselves, is joy enough.”¹⁴ By seeing directly the utter futility of clinging, one is able to let go and suffering begins to drop away. When this process has ripened to perfection, nirvana appears and salvation is complete.

In sum, what began as a rousing call to strenuous effort leads to an experience of the spontaneous arising and passing of all things; even the most ordinary experiences are felt freshly as if they were gifts evoking exclamations of gratitude and praise; “ The virtuous man delights in this world. . . Let us live happily, then, though we call nothing our own! We shall be like the bright gods, feeding on happiness.”¹⁵ What began as self-exertion leads to self-transcendence. Effort has led to an experience of grace.¹⁶

IV. Christianity on Faith and Grace

At the very center of Christian faith is the belief that Jesus is the savior

and that redemption is an undeserved gift : we “are justified freely by his grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus.”¹⁷ Our works have not earned salvation; it is faith that saves; “by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God; it is not from works.”¹⁸

Yet if we look more closely we see that faith is an act which must in some sense be in our power. Jesus begins his public ministry by demanding an active response of faith : “Repent and believe in the gospel.”¹⁹ What can be the point of encouraging faith²⁰ and criticizing lack of faith²¹ unless we can do the one and avoid the other? Where there is faith Jesus performs miracles²² and where there is none, Jesus refuses.²³ Indeed in one text Jesus is presented as being unable to perform miracles because of the people’s lack of faith.²⁴ Building on such biblical teachings²⁵, later Christian tradition develops the idea that faith is a theological virtue, i.e. it is a habit of action built up in part as the result of one’s own previous actions. Sustaining faith is a virtue for which one can be praised and losing faith is a vice for which one can be blamed,²⁶ indeed, lack of faith is a sin that leads to death and eternal damnation.²⁷ Human effort of the right kind is essential if salvation is to occur.²⁸ Effort is necessary for the experience of grace.

To say, then, that for Theravada Buddhism salvation depends exclusively on effort and that for Christianity salvation depends exclusively on grace is too simplistic. Each tradition acknowledges the need for what the other emphasizes : in Theravada Buddhism the right kind of effort leads to an experience of grace, while in Christianity grace requires the right kind of effort. The impression that the two traditions are in collision is softened considerably. We seem instead to have a divergence of emphasis.

Now if we push more deeply into each tradition we find that even this divergence of emphasis is reduced.

V. Theravada Buddhism on the Source of Effort

Theravada Buddhism emphasizes the need for effort, an effort that leads, as we have seen, to the experience of grace. But let us now ask what is the *source* of that effort. What we find is that *faith* plays a critical role in the making of effort.

The effort that leads to nirvana is almost overwhelmingly difficult; it requires us to pay patient attention to the fullness of experience in the present moment no matter how painful that might be and to sustain that quality of attention inexhaustibly for as long as we have conscious life.

In our meditation we must deal with the five hindrances of greed, hatred, restlessness, sleepiness, and doubt, and in every aspect of our lives we must deal with suffering, frustration, and disappointment (*dukkha*). It is a sense of the magnitude of the task that leads Theravada Buddhists to take the Three Refuges : the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha, i.e. they consciously recall and seek inspiration from the life story of the Buddha, the trustworthiness of the Buddha's teachings, and the personal support of others in the community who are on this same path. The Three Refuges provide faith in the efficacy of the path: the Buddha, a human like me, has already accomplished the goal; the Buddha has shown us how to do likewise; and there are friends around me who are right now making progress on the path. Indeed in the story of the Fourth Passing Sight we hear how the Buddha himself was inspired to have faith in the possibility of nirvana. The first three passing sights had vividly impressed the Buddha with the suffering of sickness, old age, and death, but it took the fourth sight, the meeting of a monk who had renounced the world of samsara, to give the Buddha the faith to begin his own quest.²⁹

And if we ask further what is the source of that faith, we would be in for a very long and wide-ranging story. We would have to talk about the importance of karma, i.e. of the results of our own innumerable earlier actions stretching back in the Buddhist view over many previous lives. And we would have to ponder the impact of innumerable environmental influences : just what conditions had to be met for the monk the Buddha saw on his fourth passing sight to be precisely where he was at that time? Just what conditions had to be met for a Buddhist to be born into a Buddhist family or to hear the dharma taught in a way that inspired him/her to practice it or to meet and be connected with particular sangha? Like everything else that exists, the attitude of faith in a Buddhist has arisen in dependence on innumerable other factors and conditions (*paticca samuppada* : dependent co-origination). The source of a person's faith thus stretches well beyond what that person could ever be conscious of, much less what that person could directly control. Indeed the arising of faith in a person would be just cause for awe and gratitude; it would be yet again an experience of grace. Thus we reach the striking conclusion that the strenuous effort Theravada Buddhism so emphasizes can be experienced as both arising from grace and leading to further experiences of grace.

VI. Christianity on the Source of Faith

Christianity, too, leads us in a striking direction when we inquire more

deeply into its teachings on faith. Salvation depends on an act of faith for which one is responsible. But if we ask what is the source of that faith, we find that here too it goes well beyond what the individual can control. In one passage Jesus says that the devil may come and take "away the word from their hearts that they may not believe and be saved."³⁰ In other passages Christianity affirms the dependence of all things on God: there is "one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."³¹ When we consider that human actions are among the things that God is over, in, and through, it is not surprising that some Christians have been moved to affirm a doctrine of predestination.³² The tension between effort and grace is most succinctly stated by Paul when he urges Christians to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For God is the one who, for his good purposes, works in you both to desire and to work."³³ There is *work* to do, effort to be made, and tremendous responsibility to be shouldered (thus the fear and trembling).

Yet it is God who is working in what we think of as "our" effort; indeed it is God who is working even in our desire to make the right kind of effort, and this includes, as we have seen, the essential act of faith: "No one can come to me unless the Father draw him."³⁴ The effort of opening in faith to God's grace is itself prompted by God's grace.

VII. The Core Paradox in Theravada Buddhism

In each tradition, then, we find a core paradox, an experience which eludes conceptualization and which therefore continually fascinates its followers.³⁵

In Theravada Buddhism fascination attends the process of meditation which is essential to developing all seven factors of enlightenment.³⁶ The basic practice in Buddhist meditation is *anapana sati* or mindfulness of breathing. The breath as an object of meditation lies precisely on the borderline of the voluntary and the involuntary. As fundamentally controlled by the autonomic nervous system breathing continues even when we are asleep or unconscious and is thus involuntary, yet we can within limits control our breathing by altering its speed up or down or even stopping it for a short time.³⁷ Mindfulness of breathing aims to observe the breath without controlling it and thus presents to us the paradox in a direct and concrete form. If one is too effortful in trying to observe the breath, forcing the mind to pay attention, then there arises an anxiety and bodily tightness that itself changes the quality of what one is observing: the breath may become more shallow or less full or mechanically regular.

Yet if one makes no effort at all and lets the mind wander, mindfulness of breathing as it really is will not develop either. The discipline is to find that mysterious middle path between effort and non-effort, between active, conscious, intentional work and passive, unconscious, sleepy drifting. One moves to watch the breath with calm and careful objectivity without any preconceptions as to how it should be going.

The experience of the meditation is thus that of a gentle steady effort which lets the mind become synchronized with the breathing, surrendering to it, until there arises that attention without tension which is the hallmark of mindfulness, a state of mind that is at once clearly awake and deeply relaxed. With training the skill comes of viewing all other aspects of experience with the same calm close attention.³⁸ One commentator notes that "(a)s one wills, and then relaxes into, each stage of practice the next stage is prepared. The final stage is attained not by strenuous willing at all, but by the now habitual relaxation."³⁹ The phrase "habitual relaxation" embodies the paradox under discussion : habits are the result of effort, yet relaxation is the absence of effort. The words are paradoxical, yet the experience is quite definite and accessible.

The value of developing mindfulness lies in cultivating the wisdom noted in Section III of this paper. Mindfulness brings insight into impermanence and the three signs of being, i.e. seeing all conditioned experiences as insubstantial, unsatisfactory, and selfless. This leads the practitioner to let go of all desires and actions whose aim is to assert or defend an independent self or ego. And from this non-attachment to self there arises quite naturally a sense of connection to all other beings and compassion for their suffering. Unbounded compassion is said to be one of the great virtues of the Buddha himself and is integral to the experience of nirvana and salvation. In sum, the paradoxical effortless effort of mindfulness undermines one's limited sense of self, transforms one into an exponent of universal compassion, and brings nirvana and salvation.

VIII. The Core Paradox in Christianity

In Christianity the paradox surrounding effort and faith leads to a fascination with the process of coming to faith, the process, that is, of conversion. As pointed out in the classic study by William James,⁴⁰ conversion often involves much effort : ". . . the regenerative change is usually gradual, and consists in the building up, piece by piece, of a new set of moral and spiritual habits."⁴¹ In the famous case of St. Augustine there were long years of effort that led up to and made possible the

climactic change. First there was the onerous intellectual effort of overcoming certain objections to Christianity such as the problem of evil. But even when with the help of St. Ambrose and the writings of the neo-Platonists Augustine was able to affirm without intellectual reservation the truth of Christianity, the conversion he desired was still not forthcoming. Then it became a moral struggle to convert his will, not just an intellectual struggle to convert his mind. Yet here too, in spite of agonizing efforts, he could not force his will to make the full and unreserved commitment he desired. He found that even his own will was not fully under his own control.⁴² It took what he understood to be a touch of grace, the final nudge from God in the form of a voice saying "Tolle, lege" to make it happen. He took up a book of St. Paul's epistles, read the first lines his eyes fell on, and finally experienced the full conversion he sought.⁴³

There is effort, yet there must also be surrender: "self-surrender has been and always must be regarded as the vital turning-point of the religious life."⁴⁴ As James puts it, "(s)omething must give way, a native hardness must break down and liquefy."⁴⁵ One must see one's own unaided efforts as futile or even sinful in order to truly give up proud self-reliance and commit one's life to God in utter humility. One must then find that mysterious middle path between too little effort for salvation on the assumption that God will do it all (a sin of presumption)⁴⁶ and too much effort on the assumption that I can do it all (a sin of pride).⁴⁷

The value of conversion and the act of faith lies in the transformation of self called *metanoia* : "be transformed by the renewal of your mind."⁴⁸ When one completely renounces self-centeredness, there arises a rapturous love of God and of all things created and willed by God, including oneself. In imitation of Jesus one moves allegorically through crucifixion to resurrection : by losing oneself, one finds oneself.⁴⁹ Unbounded love is one of the most striking qualities of the one who has gone through conversion, i.e. of the saint⁵⁰ and is one of the surest signs that one is saved. In sum, the paradoxically voluntary yet involuntary character of the act of faith undermines reliance on one's limited self, transforms one into an exponent of universal love, and brings salvation.

IX. Common Ground : The Mystery of Human Freedom

The parallels are striking. On the one hand, Theravada Buddhism encourages and guides the effort that leads to salvation, yet initiating and sustaining this effort is a faith which arises from factors well beyond one's

control and which leads to an experience of letting-go where all things are seen to arise as grace. The follower ultimately finds self-transcendence, self-transformation, and universal love. On the other hand, Christianity affirms both that faith is an unmerited grace that happens to a person because of God's action and that faith is a responsibility requiring the individual's action. And once again the follower ultimately finds self-transcendence, self-transformation, and universal love. So the question arises : how different are these traditions on this issue? Is the process of salvation active from the person's point of view or passive? There is a difference : Theravada Buddhism, in stressing individual effort, emphasizes the active element in salvation, while Christianity, in stressing faith, emphasizes the passive and receptive element in salvation. Yet on deeper examination both seem ambivalent, wanting to have it both ways.

And both traditions are right to want it both ways, for what these doctrines are reflecting is the mystery of human freedom that all must confront. We feel ourselves to be free in at least some of our actions, believing at those times that no matter what we did, we could have done otherwise. This belief is fundamental to the further belief that we are responsible for our actions and that without this, the whole domain of ethics would seem to be groundless. Yet we are conditioned by innumerable factors both genetically and environmentally, factors which the pursuit of physics, chemistry, biology, psychology, and sociology is every day rendering more impressive. It is the classic conundrum wrestled with by philosophers for centuries : we seem both free and determined yet this is a contradiction. To touch on but one 20th century analysis, we are each of us being-in-the-world in Heidegger's terms; 'thrown' into a world that is not of our making yet free to shoulder with authenticity the inevitable anxiety of our situation if we choose to.⁵¹

It is, of course, not the intention of this paper to resolve or even address this vast and fundamental question. The intent is simply to point out that the question is shared by the traditions of Theravada Buddhism and Christianity. Here we find common ground, remembering that "(W)e are first and foremost human beings and this is what makes possible our bridging of linguistic and cultural barriers."⁵² Both traditions have faced this common human condition and responded to it with great sophistication, acknowledging and trying to do justice to both sides of the paradox : we experience elements of both freedom and determinism, the voluntary and the involuntary, the active and the passive. Their attempts to resolve the question have taken them in different directions and landed each of them in a paradox. But, rooted in our common human condition,

these paradoxes complement each other, highlighting what the other understates. Despite initial appearances, then, these traditions are not in collision. What we find is a divergence where cross-cultural understanding is eminently possible.

NOTES

1. *Understanding the Chinese Mind; The Philosophical Roots*, ed. Robert E. Allison (Hong Kong : Oxford University Press, 1989), pp 26-47.
2. *Ibid*, pp. 29-30.
3. *Ibid*, p. 33.
4. *The Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha*, ed. E.A. Burt (New York : Mentor, 1982), p. 30).
5. *Ibid*, p. 49.
6. Goldstein, Joseph, and Kornfield, Jack. *Seeking the Heart of Wisdom : The Path of Insight Meditation* (Boston : Shambala, 1987), pp. 65-67.
7. Burt, ed. *The Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha*, p. 54 Cf. also Burt's comments on p. 52.
8. *Ibid*, p. 72 : "Him indeed I call a brahmana who, after leaving all bondage to men, has risen above all bondage to the gods, and is free from all and every bondage."
9. Romans 7 : 19
10. Ephesians 2 : 8
11. Goldstein, Joseph, and Kornfield, Jack. *Seeking the Heart of Wisdom*, pp. 62-67.
12. The tradition enumerates five kinds of processes : body, sensation, perception, impulses to action, and consciousness. These are the five *skandhas* (heaps or aggregates). Cf. John M. Koller, *Oriental Philosophies*, second edition (New York : MacMillan, 1985), pp. 162 165.
13. Goldstein, Joseph. and Kornfield, Jack. *Seeking the Heart of Wisdom*, pp. 69-70.
14. Smith, Huston. *The Religions of Man* (New York : Harper and Row, 1965), p. 151. The quote is from a follower of the Zen tradition which, of all the sects of Mahayana Buddhism, has returned most closely to the spirit of original Buddhism that the Theravadins themselves strive to maintain.
15. *The Dhammapada*, trans, Irving Babbitt (New York : New Directions Books, 1965) pp. 4,32 (# 16, 200). This is also strongly affirmed in Zen : "What is the most miraculous of all miracles? That I sit quietly by myself." "Drawing water, carrying firewood. This is supernatural power, this the marvelous activity." (in Huston Smith, *The World's Religions* (San Francisco : Harper, 1991), p. 138.

16. Cf. Thera, Nyanaponika. *The Vision of Dhamma* (York Beach, Maine : Samuel Weiser Inc., 1986), p. 74 : "By premeditated intentional effort spontaneity can be won." Cf. also John M. Koller, *Oriental Philosophies*, 2nd edition (New York : Charles Scribner's Sons, 1985), p. 224 : "Although the enlightenment at which Zen aims comes of itself, suddenly breaking through the veils of construction which hide the true self and reality, disciplined practice is required to clear the way."

17. Romans 3 : 24.

18. Ephesians 2 : 8-9, Cf. Galatians 2 : 16.

19. Mark 1 : 15.

20. You are now saved "provided that you persevere in the faith, firmly grounded, stable, and not shifting from the hope of the gospel." (Colossians 1 : 23). Cf. Mark 5 : 36.

21. How often Jesus laments : "o ye of little faith" (Matthew 6 : 30; Mark 4 : 40; Luke 8 : 25).

22. As can anyone : Matthew 17 : 20, 21 : 21; Mark 9 : 23; Luke 17 : 6.

23. Matthew 16 : 1-4.

24. Mark 6 : 5-6, But cf. Matthew 13 : 58.

25. Cf. I Corinthians 13 : 13.

26. Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Theologica* 2a2ae Qu. 2, Art. 9 on faith as meritorious and 2a2ae, Qu. 10, Arts. 1+3 on unbelief as a vice.

27. John 16 : 9; 8 : 21, 24; 3 : 18, 36; 5 : 24, 29.

28. Mark 16 : 15-16.

29. Smith, Huston. *The World's Religions*, p.84.

30. Luke 8 : 12.

31. Ephesians 4 : 6, Cf. Colossians 1 : 17 : "(Christ) is before all things and in him all things hold together".

32. Augustine. "On the Predestination of the Saints" in *Basic Writings of St. Augustine* (New York : Random House, 1948), Vol. 1, pp. 777-820 and John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, *The Library of Christian Classics* Vols. XX + XXI (Philadelphia : Westminster Press, 1950), 3.21.5, 7. Cf. also Acts 13 : 48 and Romans 8 : 28-30.

33. Philippians 2 : 12-13.

34. John 6 : 44. Cf. I Corinthians 2 : 4-5; I Thessalonians 1 : 4-5.

35. Perhaps the tradition that states the paradox at issue here most directly is Taoism. The way of life of someone who is in harmony with the Tao is *wei wu wei* : doing non-doing or action non-action. "Less and less do you need to force things, until finally you arrive at non-action/When nothing is done/nothing is left undone." *Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching*, trans, Stephen Mitchell (New York : Harper Collins, 1991), p.48.

36. Mindfulness, Effort, Investigation, Rapture, Concentration, Tranquility, and Equanimity.

37. The discipline of Pranayama in the Hindu tradition carries the training of the breath to quite extraordinary lengths.

38. Cf. the *Satipathana Sutra* on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness : mindfulness of the body, of feelings, of mind states, and of mind relations. Thich Nhat Hanh, *Transformation and Healing : Sutra on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1990).

39. Carrithers, Michael. *The Buddha* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 77.

40. *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York : New American Library, 1958), Lectures IX and X.

41. *Ibid*, p. 169.

42. Cf. Frankfurt, Harry. "The Faintest Passion". *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, Vol.66, No.3 (November 1992), p. 10 : Remember Hotspur's reply when Owen Glendower boasted can call spirits from the vasty deep. He said : Why, so can I, or so can any man; but will they come if you do call for them? (Shakespeare, *Henry IV, Part I*) The same goes for us. We do not control, by our voluntary command, the spirits within our own vasty deeps. We cannot have, simply for the asking, whatever will we want."

43. Augustine. *Confessions*, (London : Penguin, 1961), Book VIII, Chaps, 1,5,8-12.

44. James, William. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 172.

45. *Ibid*, p. 99.

46. Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Theologica* 2a2ae, Qu. 21 Expecting salvation without repentance for sin is a sin against hope in that it seems to hope for too much. The opposite vice is despair, hoping too little.

47. The deadliest of the Seven Deadly Sins, *Ibid*, 2a2ae, Qu. 162, Art. 6.

48. Romans 12 : 2

49. Matthew 16 : 25; Mark 8 : 35; Luke 9 : 24, 17 : 33, Cf. Colossians 3 : 9-10 and II Corinthians 5 : 17.

50. James, William. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 221-225.

51. Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York : Harper and Row, 1962), Cf. such passages as these : "only these are matters for Dasein's freedom, even if always within the limitations of its thrownness" (H 366) and "Anxiety brings Dasein face to face with its Being-free for the authenticity of its Being But this is the Being to which Dasein as Being-in-the-world had been delivered over" (H.188).

52. Allison, Robert E. *Understanding the Chinese Mind*, p.2.

EXPERIENCING THE WORLD A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF LĪLĀ AND SATORI

K.R. Sundararajan

I plan to explore here the Vaiṣṇava doctrine of play (*līlā*) and the Zen concept of *satori* and to formulate their worldviews. In the first section I propose to explicate the Vaiṣṇava concept of *līlā* the theory of “playful creation of the world.” For the purpose of this exposition I will focus mainly on the writings of Rāmānuja, the chief exponent of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta. I hope to show that the *līlā* doctrine has the potential for a theology of appreciation of manifold forms of creation, and thus it is more positive in terms of its attitude towards the world, in contrast to a worldview based on the Advaitin concept of *māyā*. While for an Advaitin, the access to the transcendent dimension is gained through the realization of the ultimate illusoriness of the world of plurality and multiplicity, for a Vaiṣṇava, the access to the transcendent is made possible by the realization that the world is created out of divine playfulness. In the second section, I hope to explicate the Zen attitude towards the world, especially from the point of view of one who has reached the state of enlightenment, (*satori*). As we shall see that the *satori* experience also leads to a state of positive appreciation of the world. In section three, I will attempt a comparison between *līlā* and *satori* in terms of their attitude and experience of the world of multiplicity and particularity.

Līlā in the Vaiṣṇava Tradition

The concept of *līlā* has a central place in the Vaiṣṇava tradition. It provides an explanation as to the way God creates, and thus offer a proper perspective to understand both the world and the purpose of human life. I would like to hold that the very goal of human life, from a Vaiṣṇava perspective, is to “regain” a *līlā perspective* on the world, a vision which has been lost under the conditions of *saṃsāra*.

In order to understand the concept of *līlā* properly it may be useful to situate it first in the context of Viśiṣṭādvaita notion of three eternal principles, *tattvas*, God (Brahman/Viṣṇu), individual self (*ātman*) and matter (*prakṛti*) in a relationship which Rāmānuja states as “Qualified Oneness” (*viśiṣṭādvaita*), with *Brahman* as the Supreme Principle upon which *ātman* and *prakṛti* are *totally dependent*. The individual self and matter exists for the sake of *Brahman* and outside of *Brahman* they do not have independent, substantial existence. Rāmānuja calls the relationship of these three principles as body-soul (*śarīra-śarīrī*), body constituted of *ātman* and *prakṛti* and the soul (*śarīrī*) by *Brahman*. In the above situation it is clear that the body (*śarīra*) cannot function without the sustaining power of the soul (*śarīrī*) which is the Supreme Self. *Brahman* is described as the supporter of the individual self, and it is this role that is highlighted in the Vaiṣṇava notion of the inner presence of the divine (*antaryāmi*) which I shall elaborate later. *Brahman* is the ground of all existence since God is both the efficient as well as the material cause (*upādadhāna kāraṇa*), like a spider and its web, or clay and clay pots. Whereas the dependent relationship of the individual self (*ātman*) to the Supreme Self (*Brahman/Viṣṇu*) is expressed in terms of *bhakti*, devotion, the dependent relationship of matter (*prakṛti*) to the Supreme is expressed in terms of *līlā* play.

Īlā understood as divine sport, explains the process of creation, its origination, maintenance and destruction. Here Rāmānuja’s dedicatory verses to Viṣṇu in the very beginning of *Śrī Bhāṣya* his commentary on Bādarāyana’s *Vedānta Sūtra*, is worth nothing.

May my mind be filled with devotion towards the Highest Brahman,
the abode of Lakshmi, who is luminously revealed in the Upanishads;
who in sport produces, sustains and reabsorbs the entire universe;
whose only aim is to foster the manifold classes of beings that
humbly worship Him.¹

Īlā underlines divine freedom and spontaneity in the act of creation. The nature of God is such that He is not compelled to create, but creation issues forth spontaneously. This freedom and spontaneity on the part of the Supreme is highlighted by Rāmānuja in his description of *Brahman* as one who is free from all imperfections and defiling qualities, whose actions are not regulated by the law of *karma* as in the case of human beings.

The motive which prompts Brahman—all whose wishes are fulfilled and who is perfect in himself to the creation of world comprising all kinds sentient and non-sentient beings dependent on his volition, is nothing else but sport, play. We see in ordinary life how some great king, ruling this earth with its seven dvipas, and possessing perfect strength, valour, and so on, has a game at balls, or the like, from no other motive than to amuse himself; hence there is objection to the view that sport only is the motive prompting Brahman to creation, sustentation, and destruction of this world which is easily fashioned by his mere will.²

Being a sportive action creation is not purposive, and it could be stated appropriately as “purposeless purpose.” According to S.R. Bhatt :

Thus the world is *līlā*, a purposeless purpose, which implies disinterestedness, joyousness, free will and superabundance of energy on the part of Brahman, and it must be distinguished from conscious volitional effort. The creation follows the mere will, or free choice, of Brahman. It is to preserve the supreme perfection of Brahman that the Sutakara has given *līlā* as the motive for creation.³

Rāmānuja is eager to maintain the theme of “purposeless creation” in order to avoid charges that *Brahman* is partial, “in so far as the world contains beings of high, middle and low station, gods, men, animals and immovable beings. . .” Rāmānuja maintains that though the act of creation itself was without hierarchy, due to the association with *karma* the created world has become hierarchical in the above fashion. This association with *karma* is the result of human choice and not a design in creation itself. Rāmānuja writes:

The heart of the whole sastra is this : The individual selves are essentially of the nature of pure knowledge, devoid of restriction and limitation. They get covered up by nescience in the shape of karma. The consequence is that the scope and breadth of their knowledge is curtailed in accordance with their karma. . . the first truth to be taught by the sastra is that the individual selves are not intrinsically divided into several kinds like gods, men, etc., and that they are fundamentally alike and are equal in having knowledge as their essential nature.⁴

Sruti and Smṛiti alike declare that the connexion of the individual souls with bodies of different kinds—divine, human, animal, and so on—depends on the karman of those souls. . . what causes the difference in nature and status between gods, men, and so on, is the power of the former deeds of the souls about to enter into a new creation . . .⁵

Playful creation is in fact an invitation to the *jīva* to share in the delight of the *līlā* world. Such a delight is experienced when the *jīva* undertakes a life dedicated to the service of the Lord. Hence the concept of *kainkarya*, service to the Lord, assumes a central place in the post-Rāmānuja Śrī Vaiṣṇavism of Southern India. *Kainkarya* becomes the proper way to respond to God and also to participate actively in the *līlā* world. Service to the Lord is the eternal birthright of the *jīva* according to Vedānta Desika, a post-Rāmānuja Vaiṣṇava theologian.

The *Jīva* is thus entitled, by his essential nature, to the service of his Master as his birth right . . . But sunk in the sleep of beginningless *Maya*, he has fallen into wilderness of matter (*prakṛti*), has had repeated births in quick succession, has lost the primary aim of existence, has found no comfort or consolation, has lost the splendour of his real nature . . .⁶

Now the world which has been created out of the sportive action of God, has become a binding *saṃsāric* world for those who would not participate in the spirit of *līlā*. Each one of us, instead, have created our own separate worlds thus becoming responsible to them directly and in that very process caught in the cycle of *karma*. Now the creation instead of being “purposeless” has become “purposive.” To the *karmic* world, God is not playful, but is “gracious”, “a merciful protector” entrusted with the task of “saving” those trapped in *saṃsārā*. Now God comes to possess the following auspicious qualities : *kāruṇya*, (compassion), *saṃśīlya*, (gracious condescension), *vātsalya*, (forgiving and protecting love), and *audārya*, (generosity). By these auspicious qualities, God takes the role of a moral governor maintaining the natural and social order, and also providing opportunities for the *jīvas* to gain freedom from the entanglement of *saṃsāra*.

It should be noted that from a strict Vaiṣṇava theological point of view, even for the act of drifting away from joyful participation in the *līlā* world, the *jīva* requires “consent” from God’s side. The relationship of total

(dependency on God, though is forgotten by the *jīva* in the *samsāric* state, still holds as a matter of fact. In the Vaiṣṇava tradition, free will and free choice, which perhaps determines the extent of one's individuality, are those granted by God and actively supported by God, for without God's support the *jīva* cannot be engaged in any action whatsoever. It is in this context that the manifestation of God in every *jīva* as its inner presence, *antaryāmi*, becomes important. It is this inner presence of God that enables one to engage in action. It is indeed the power source without which no action would be possible for the individual. Therefore, it may be true to say that

It is by the will of the Supreme Person that an individual soul is either in the state of bondage or release. He hides the true essentially blessed nature of the soul who has committed sins in his beginningless chain of *karman* . . . It is He, who as the inner soul, brings about even the spiritual relationship (by means of which an individual soul can attain release). Thus B (Brahman) is not only the object to be attained by worship, but is also the means of performing worship itself.

But this immanence of B. in the souls is not to be construed as to leave no room for freedom of action on their part. The souls resting in B. and furnished by it with bodies and sense-organs as well as with powers to use them, apply themselves of their own accord and in accordance with their own wishes, to work either good or evil. No action is indeed possible without the assent (*anumati*) of the Inner Soul; but in all actions there is the volitional effort (*prayatana*) made by the individual soul; and the Supreme Soul, by giving assent to it, carries out the action.⁷

It is the same *antaryāmi* presence that permits us to create our *karmic* world, that is also willing to save us from the same *karmic* world, once we decide to abandon it and surrender ourselves at the feet of God. In the Vaiṣṇava tradition, both *bhakti* and *prapatti*, express a state of abandonment of the *karmic* world. It is through devotion (*bhakti*) and self-surrender (*prapatti*) that one recaptures the consciousness of one's total dependency on God thus becoming God's willing instrument to participate joyfully in the *līlā* world. Though in Ramanuja's theology there is no concept of *jīvanmukta*, I believe that if we work out the implications of the *līlā* theory on the above lines, we could speak meaningfully of a person, who is "freed", but still active in the world, whose actions are not any more "binding." Here bondage or freedom is not based on whether we accept

the worthiness of the world or its unworthiness but on the attitude with which we engage ourselves in “worldly actions.” If we are engaged in action in the spirit of joyful participation in a world created out of divine play, our actions are free and not binding. Being engaged in actions with notions of “mine” “yours” and “ours” continue to extend our life in bondage.

In terms of the worldview that emerges in the context of the *līlā*, it may be necessary to see its implications for “purposeless creation” as well as for “purposeful creation” where the world has changed from a *līlā* world into a *karmic* world. For Vaisnavism, in the purposeful world the upholding of *dharma* as defining one’s code of moral behavior, is important. It is only by following the principles of *dharma* one could maintain some quality of life in this *karmic* world. The *Bhagavad Gita* is a standing testimony to the affirmation that our *dharma* whatever it be, must be fulfilled. However, *līlā*, as purposeless creation, may encourage one to transcend the *dharmic* order, as the *dharmic* order has only a provisional meaning and significance. But the metaphor of play suggests that we should continue to play and not abandon the play itself. This means that we should continue to fulfil our assigned role, but without any personal attachment. The spirit of *līlā* is shown in our *attitude* towards the external world. Instead of looking at it from a *karmic* perspective, we see it now from the angle of *divine sport*. Therefore, the one who has achieved a “sportive vision” captures divine spontaneity and joy and participates in the created world in the same spirit. He/she is not opposed to *dharma*, but is free from *karmic* consequence of his/her actions. Commenting on a verse from the *Ītā* where Kṛṣṇa suggests renunciation of all *dharma* in an act of total surrender to God (*Ītā* xviii.66), Rāmānuja is cautious to suggest renunciation of the fruits of *dharmic* actions, instead of renunciation of *dharma* itself.

Renouncing all *dharmas*. . . complete renunciation of the sense of agency, possessiveness in works, fruits and such other things, in the manner taught: (having done so) continuously think of Me as the agent, the object of worship, the goal of attainment and the means.⁸

Commenting on Rāmānuja’s interpretation of the above verse S.S. Raghavachar writes :

The renunciation enjoined is not giving up the practice of Dharma but the spiritual dissociation from the three-fold egoism; of sense

of authorship of deeds, the attachment to deeds as one's own and of hankering after the fruits for oneself.⁹

On this interpretation the renunciation of Dharma does not mean giving up anything. It just signifies that the aspirants if fully convinced of the impossibility of realizing the ideal of liberation through Dharma . . . The impossibility is realized owing to the aspirants' lack of requisite knowledge, incapacity for fruitful practice, impatience to await the full maturation of Bhakti and the non-fulfilment of other accessory conditions laid down in the Śāstras. When the seeker is fully and firmly established in this extremity of hopelessness the pathway of Prapatti is enjoined. He has to surrender himself to God wholly and place the burden of effectuating salvation in the hands of God entirely.¹⁰

While the *līlā* attitude towards involvement in the world shares in common with the *Gīā* notion of selfless action (*niṣkāma karma*) the spirit of renunciation of the fruits of action, instead of action itself, by stressing the theme of playful creation, the former encourages more an attitude of joyous and positive involvement with the world in contrast to the latter. Again unlike the *jīvanmukta* in the Advaita tradition, a Vaiṣṇava who has succeeded in gaining the *līlā* perspective of the world could interact with the world in the spirit of joy. The attitude of the *jīvanmukta* is generally of one who is *in the world* but not *of the world*. The *jīvanmukta* realizes the oneness of the self (*Ātman-Brahman*) and having realized this refuses to have a positive and appreciative relationship with the *māyā* world. Śaṅkara describes the life of a *jīvanmukta* in his commentary on the *Vedānta Sūtra* thus :

Quietly devoted to his duty, let the wise man pass through life unknown; let him step on the earth as if he were blind, unconscious, dead.¹¹

My point is that the Vaiṣṇava theology of *līlā* provides a more adequate basis for joyful participation in the world than the theological framework of Advaita, which has been characterized by a quest for the underlying substratum rather than appreciation of its manifestations. It is this attitude of appreciation of the created world that one could build up out of the theology of *līlā* I believe that a comparative study with the Zen notion of *satori* becomes possible.

Satori in the Zen Tradition

Suzuki describes the essence of Zen as “acquiring a new viewpoint on life and things generally,” He adds, “This acquiring of a new point of view in our dealings with life is popularly called by the Japanese students ‘satori’ (*Wu* in Chinese).”¹² It is intuitive way of looking at things in contradiction to the analytical or logical understanding of it. “Practically, it means unfolding a new world hitherto unperceived in the confusion of a dualistically trained mind.”¹³ Like the *līlā* perspective it is a new way of looking at things, without grasping and clinging. It is not, however, a vision of the detached onlooker; here, instead of subject-object duality that characterizes our day-to-day experience, there is some kind of dynamic involvement between the subject and object in the *satori* state. According to Suzuki :

The seeing is not reflected on an object as if the seer had nothing to do with it. The seeing, on the contrary, brings the seer and the object seen together, not in mere identification but in *becoming conscious of itself, or rather in its working. The seeing is an active deed.* . . .¹⁴

The Zen aesthetic appreciation of the world is the outcome of such dynamism.

Senses in this world—such as bright green in the mountains, ripples in the water, shadows of cloud in the pond, haze and glimmer in the grass, the attire of flowers in the moonlight, the posture of willows in the wind. are there and not there, real and not real at the same time. Such scenes are most pleasant to the eye, and enlightening to the mind. They are truly scenes of wonder.¹⁵

Suzuki explains these aspects of being “there and not there”, “real and not real at the same time” by referring to a famous Zen Master who remarked : “When I began to study Zen, mountains were mountains; when I thought I understood Zen, mountains were not mountains; but when I came to the full knowledge of Zen, mountains were again mountains.”

When the mountains are seen as not standing against me, when they are dissolved into the oneness of things, they are not mountains,

they cease to exist as objects of Nature. When they are seen standing against me, as separate from me, as something unfriendly to me, they are not mountains either. The mountains are really mountains when they are assimilated into my being and I am absorbed in them. . . Nature becomes part of my being as soon as it is recognized as Nature, as *pour-soi*. It can never remain something strange and altogether unrelated to me. I am in nature and Nature is in me. Not mere participation in each other, but a fundamental identity between the two. Hence the mountains are mountains and rivers are rivers; they are before me. The reason I can see mountains as mountains and waters as waters is because I am in them and they are in me; that is *tat tvam asi*. If not for this identity, there would be no Nature as *pour-soi*. . . the identity does not imply annihilation of one at the cost of other. The mountains do not vanish, they stand Facing the many remains conscious of itself.¹⁶

It is this dimension of oneness and suchness which is brought out in the following statement of Zen master : “If I scoop the water, the moon is in my hands; If I pluck a flower, fragrant is in my robe.”

If I scoop the water, I myself am the water and reflect the moon. If I pick up a flower, I am the flower myself and the whole of my body emits fragrance. In this way a Zen man lives in the world. No possible discriminations are here to disturb him. He is completely free, vastly limitless. Hakuin says : “How boundless and free is the sky of Samadhi!”¹⁷

In Zen, the state of enlightenment, *satori*, enables one to appreciate every moment and every manifestation of emptiness; such manifestation is indeed “suchness.” Hence, by stressing on “emptiness” we could speak of unitive consciousness; at the same time by stressing on “suchness” one could be appreciative of the manifold manifestation of “emptiness” in the forms of “suchness.” Even the distinction between cause and effect disappears in such a situation. For instance, commenting on Hakuin statement, “The gate of oneness of cause and effect is opened”, Abbot Shibayama writes :

Cause comes first in time, and then effect follows. Once you cut off the complications of discriminating consciousness . . . you transcend the dualism of before-and-after, long-and-short, and are master of

time. Such a person is no longer restricted by time, but creates it and utilizes it as his own.

Once Joshu made a famous statement on time for his monks : "You are being utilized by the twenty-four hours. As for me, I am utilizing the twenty-four hours." He will never be enslaved by time; he is the master of time and makes free use of it. This absolute freedom is possible for those who live in the oneness of cause and effect.¹⁸

The following episode between the Zen master Baso (Ma-tsu) and his disciple Hyakujo (Pai-chang) illustrate the transcendence of time consciousness :

Hyakujo (Pai-chang) went out one day attending his master Baso (Ma-tsu), when they saw a flock of wild geese flying. Baso asked : "What are they?" "They are wild geese, sir." "Whither are they flying?" "They have flown away."

Baso, abruptly taking hold of Hyakujo's nose, gave it a twist. Overcome with pain, Hyakujo cried out : "Oh! Oh!" Said Baso, "You say they have flown away, but all the same they have been here from the very first."¹⁹

The following poem of Abbot Shibayama, "A Flower does not talk", shows how a moment or an object could reflect the whole of existence :

Silently a flower blooms,
In silence it falls away;
Yet here now, at this moment, at this place,
the whole of the flower, the whole of the world is blooming.
This is the talk of the flower, the truth of the blossom;
The glory of eternal life is fully shining here.²⁰

It is interesting to see Reiun Shigon attained *satori* when he saw the peach flowers in blossom. The following poem of his reflects his experience :

Some thirty years I sought an expert swordsman
How many times leaves fell, how many time branches burst into
bud!

But from the instant I saw the peach flowers blossoming
From that moment to this I have had no doubts.²¹

Though the *satori* experience establishes a lively contact with the world, interestingly enough the Zen discipline involves a process of withdrawal from the world into monasteries and the practice of rigorous physical and mental disciplines in order to achieve a state of “no mind/empty mind.” It is this state of “empty mind” that enables one to appreciate the “fullness” of life and of the world. Yuan-Wu, a Zen master, comments on the Zen discipline thus :

Stop all your hankering; let the mildew grow on your lips; make yourself like a perfect piece of immaculate silk; let your own thought be eternity; let yourself be like dead ashes, cold and lifeless; again let yourself like an old censer in a deserted village shrine.

Putting simple faith in this, discipline yourself accordingly; let your body and mind be tuned into an inanimate object of nature like a piece of stone or wood; when a state of perfect motionlessness and unawareness is observed, all signs of life will depart, and also every trace of limitation will vanish. Not a single idea will disturb your consciousness when lo! all of a sudden you will come to realize a light abounding in full gladness; it is like receiving a treasure in poverty. The four elements and five aggregates are no more felt as burdens; so light, so easy, so free you are. Your very existence has been delivered from all limitations; you have become open, light and transparent . . . Here is manifested the unsophisticated self which is the original face of your being; here is shown bare the most beautiful landscape of your birth place. There is but one straight passage open and unobstructed through and through. This is so when you surrender all—your body, your life, and all that belongs to your inner self. This is where you gain peace, ease, non-doing and inexpressible delight.²²

Mumon’s comments on the famous “Mu Koan” of Joshu tells us something about one’s journey towards *satori* and the *satori* consciousness. Even the patriarchs, masters are only impediments in this journey.

To realize Zen one has to pass through the barrier of the patriarchs. Enlightenment always comes after the road to thinking is blocked.

If you do not pass the barrier of the patriarchs or your thinking is not blocked, whatever you think, whatever you do, is like a tangling ghost.

What is Mu? . . . Do not believe that it is the common negative symbol meaning nothing. It is no nothingness, the opposite of existence. If you really want to pass this barrier, you should feel like drinking a hot iron bar that you can neither swallow or spit out. Then your previous lesser knowledge disappears. As a fruit ripening in season, your objectivity and subjectivity naturally become one. It is like a dumb man who has had a dream. He knows about it but he cannot tell. When he enters this condition his ego-shell is crushed and he can shake the heaven and move the earth. He is like a great warrior with a sharp sword. If the Buddha stands in his way, he will cut him down; if a patriarch offers him any obstacle, he will kill him; and he will be free in his way of birth and death.²³

Īlīlā and Satori—A Comparative Study

Both *līlā* and *satori* portray a situation where one's relationship with the world is new, different from the relationship in the state of *samsāra*. In both cases, one gives up "I-ness" and "mine-ness" which is responsible and also expressive of the state of *samsāra*. In both cases, one comes to see the world from an "unitive perspective", a Vaishnava looking at the essentially divine play (*līlā*) and the Zen Buddhist in terms of emptiness (*sūntyata*). For both, however, the experience of particularities is also important. For the Zen Buddhist "suchness" (*tathata*) is experiencing "emptiness" in its manifold expressions. Similarly for a Vaishnava, in order to fully participate in the divine play, an appreciation of creation in its multiplicity is essential. Again in both traditions, gaining a *līlā* perspective of the world or a *satori* vision of the world, result in a state of freedom when one is freed from the conventional ways of looking at the world and dealing with it.

I have stated earlier that the way in which one who has gained a *līlā* perspective of the world interacts with the world is different from the way *jīvanmukta* in the Advaita tradition interacts with the world. Where as the *jīvanmukta* displays the spirit of detachment from the *māyā* world, a Vaishnava with a *līlā* vision interacts with the world in the spirit of joy. However, in regard to the extent of freedom. I believe, that a *satori* perspective is different from a *līlā* perspective. In a society dominated by

Confucian ideals of conformity and propriety (*li*), Zen Buddhism, at least in its Rinzai form expresses the spirit of freedom from all kinds of bondage, seen in the laughing Buddhas, illogical koans, and also in unexemplary behavior of some of the Zen masters. Where as a Vaishnava could look for such convention breaking behavior in the stories of adolescent Krishna, in his relation with the gopis, he/she is also “awed” by the exemplary model-setting behavior of the God incarnate, Rama. For the Vaishnava tradition, the “model” person is not one who breaks away from all social and moral conventions; but one who sets up a model of exemplary behavior adhering to the established principles and rules of *dharmā*. For instance, even the institution of mendicancy (*sannyasa*), which symbolizes from some point of view rejection of *dharmic* values, could only be assumed by a Vaishnava after fulfilling one’s responsibilities as a householder (*grahastha*). We could understand the reluctance of a Vaishnava to override the *dharmic* system, since the tradition sees the *dharmic* order also as divinely ordained, though ordained in the context of *karmic* bondage. Therefore, we could at best suggest that there is a possibility of tension in the Vaishnava spirituality between the freedom of the play and the observance of *dharmic* rules and regulations; certainly the tension is not explicit. In the Zen tradition the lack of a theistic orientation perhaps gives greater freedom to its practitioner; but definitely in terms of Zen spirituality one could speak of some kind of tension between withdrawal needed to practice Zen discipline, the authority exercised over the practitioner by the Zen master, and the eventual freedom one experiences by gaining a *satori* vision of things, which requires breaking the barriers of the masters themselves, i.e., to kill the Buddha himself.

I believe that Nagarjuna’s equation of *samsāra* and nirvana provides the basis for the Zen appreciation of multiplicity as manifold expressions of emptiness. The lack of such an equation indeed seem to characterize the Hindu tradition. The Vedantic tradition has rather emphasized the differences between *samsāra* and *moksa*. And, it is for this reason that a *jīvanmukta* distances himself from the world. It is this disinterestedness in plurality and multiplicity ingrained in Vedantic spirituality that accounts even for the failure of Vaishnava theologians to develop a theology of joyful appreciation of multiplicity and variety witnessed in divine creation. The *līlā* doctrine, in my view, when fully developed should enable a Vaishnava theologian to recapture and relive the early Vedic spirituality, where every aspect of creation has been glorified. It should in the same process also enrich the Vaishnava formulation of what constitutes the state of *moksa*, where one is freed from the binding and “purposeful”

orientation to the world. Then, perhaps, a Vaishnava theologian would be able to sing along with St. Francis of Assisi the song of "Brother Sun and Sister Moon" or join a Zen Buddhist in writing a poem extolling the "thusness" of the moon!

NOTES

1. I.I. 1. Thibaut. *The Vedanta Sutras with the Commentary by Rāmānuja*. Delhi : Motilal Benarsidass. 1977 Reprint. p. 2.
2. II.I. 33. Thibaut. p. 477.
3. Bhatt, S.R. *Studies in Rāmānuja Vedānta*. New Delhi : Heritage Publishers. 1975. p. 99.
4. *Vedarth-sangraha of Sri Rāmānujācārya*. S.S. Raghavachar. Trans. (1978). Mysore : Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama. pp. 79–80.
5. II.I. 34. Thibaut. p. 478.
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MONIST (EKATVA) AND PLURALIST (ANEKĀNTA) DISCOURSE IN INDIAN TRADITIONS

Christopher Key Chapple

In this chapter, two accounts of reality will be considered. The first, monism, appears first in the Ṛg Veda and the Upanisads and suggests that all particularity stems from and will be subsumed within an underlying all pervasive principle known as Brahman. The world of appearances provides an illusion that shrouds this truth. The second, pluralism, appears in seminal form in the Ṛg Veda and asserts an individualist perspective. This position accepts the reality of the world, and states that each person will approach and interact with the world in his or her unique fashion. In addition to comparing and contrasting theories of monism and pluralism, their implications for the religious life of India today will also be discussed.

Monism

The Ṛg Veda mentions the concept of oneness in a few places. In one verse, it proclaims “To what is one, sages give many a title : they call it Agni, Yama, Mātariśvan” (I:164:46). This verse links the powers of gods associated with diverse realms (fire and death) and a mystic (Mātariśvan), hinting that each of these share a common source. Oneness is mentioned also in the Valakhilya section of Book Eight of the Ṛg Veda :

Kindled in many a spot, still One is Agni (fire);
Sūrya (the sun) is One, thought high over all he shines.
Illumining this All, still One is Usas (dawn).
The One has developed into All. ¹

This verse, echoed numerous times in variant forms throughout the nondualist tradition, expands the metaphor of oneness to include all forms of manifestation.

The Great Sentences (mahāvākya) of the Upanisads expand the base foundation upon which the monist traditions such as Advaita Vedānta are later constructed. In the Chandogya Upanisad, Uddalaka proclaims to his son Svetaketu that “In the beginning, this world was just Being (sat), one only, without a second” (6:2:1). The Aitareya Upanisad describes the self (ātman) as inseparable from consciousness, and consciousness as inseparable from the ultimate reality or Brahman. In a beautiful passage subtitled “the Pantheistic Self” by translator Robert Ernest Hume, the Aitareya describes the Self as what allows one to see, hear, smell, speak, and taste, as “that which is heart and mind, consciousness, perception, discrimination, intelligence, wisdom, insight, steadfastness, thought, thoughtfulness, impulse, memory, conception, purpose, life, desire, and will.” It also identifies this self with the gods Brahma, Indra, and Prajāpati, as well as the gross elements, and all living breathing things, including “horses, cows, persons, and elephants.”² This text, in asserting that the self dwells in all things, expands the concept of identity to universal proportions.

The second verse of the Māṇḍūkya Upanisad further simplifies this argument, stating that “everything here is Brahman, this self is Brahman.” Similarly, the Chāndogya Upanisad states that “the unspeaking, the unconcerned—this is the Soul of mine within the heart, this is Brahman. Into him I shall enter on departing from here” (III:14:4). This identity of the interior soul with what in Christian tradition might be referred to as godhead, leads to the bold statement that “Whoever thus knows ‘I am Brahma!’ becomes this All” in the Brhadāranyaka Upanisad (I:4:10). This aspect of monism allows the knower of truth within himself or herself to proclaim knowledge of the universe itself.

The final great sentence of the Upanisads turns this interior insight into an ontological statement regarding the nature of things. At their core, all things are said according to this tradition to not be different from oneself. Uddalaka instructs his son Svetaketu :

That which is the finest essence—
 this whole world has that as its soul.
 That is reality (*satya*). That is Atman (soul).
 You are that (*tat tvam asi*), Svetaketu (VI:8:7).

In this form of monism, nothing at its core can be seen as different from oneself. Whatever exists is Brahman, including oneself. By discovering one’s true nature, one connects with all things.

This perception of a unified reality culminated in the eighth century of the common era, when Śankara formalized and widely popularized Advaita (Nondualist) philosophy, and wedded it to the religious practices of a new order of monks that he founded. In his commentaries on the Upaniṣads, the Brahma Sūtras, the Bhagavad Gīta and numerous other texts, Śankara formulated a philosophy that emphasized key monistic concepts. This movement revolutionized and rejuvenated Brahmanical traditions in India. In the years following Śankara, Advaita Vedānta became India's best known philosophy.

Despite Śankara's many trenchant critiques of Sāṃkhya, Jainism, Buddhism, and other non-monistic systems, later Advaita texts chose not to criticize the views of others, but to subordinate them by enfolded their teachings within the conceptual umbrella of monism. Perhaps the best known of these post-Śankara Hindu Vedānta texts is the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, a text that probably reached its present form in the tenth or eleventh century. The following passage from the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* begins with a key monistic statement from the Upaniṣads, and then uses this as a hermetical device to describe and interpret other religious views:

Once the realization that 'I am the self of all' has arisen, one does not again fall into error or sorrow. It is this self alone which is variously described as the void, nature, Maya, Brahman, consciousness, Siva, Puruṣa, etc. That alone is ever real; there is nothing else.³

The pre-eminent status accorded to this realization subsumes all other possible conceptualizations of the absolute. Despite glaring differences in their respective theologies, and despite a long textual tradition of disputation and debate over the nature of self, the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* proclaims:

This is seen as the Puruṣa of Sāṃkhya philosophers, the Brahman of Vedāntins, the Vijñāptimātra (mind-only) of the Yogācāra Buddhists, and the Sūnya (emptiness) of the Sūnyavadins.

In order to reconcile these very different systems, the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* blankets them with a monism that disallows any possible dissent.

The quest and thirst for universal truth seems endless and insatiable. Kabir and Guru Nanak, inspired in part by the enticing entry of Islamic monotheism into India, forged a synthesis of Islam and Hinduism that garnered wide appeal, giving birth to Sikhism, a new mode of universalist

discourse within India. While continuing to emphasize the cultivation of interior spirituality and prayer, Sikhism grounded itself in a theology of difference, with God remaining transcendent rather than immanent. Shortly thereafter, the Mughal emperor Akbar attempted to synthesize all the world's religions, including Hinduism, various forms of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism into an empire-wide public form of worship.

Whereas Akbar was born a Muslim and came to embrace other forms of faith, Ram Mohan Roy, the great eighteenth century synthesizer and translator, was born into a prominent Hindu family but developed a deep respect for Islamic monotheism. Though his father at first disowned him for dabbling in non-Brahmanical traditions, Ram Mohan Roy paved the way for the Neo-Hindu movement in Calcutta. This movement, inspired both by Advaita Vedānta and Universalist ideas preached by British missionaries, sought to universalize all religions, citing the Vedic adage that there are many paths to the same city. The Brahma Samaj, founded by the Tagore family and other intellectuals in Calcutta, emphasized the unity of all faiths. Beginning with the World Parliament of Religions in 1893, the Hindu religion became a commodity for export, and Swami Vivekananda lectured throughout North America and Europe for a number of years. His message stayed true to the precepts of Advaita Vedānta :

The theory of the Vedānta...comes to this, that you and I and everything in the universe are that Absolute, not parts, but the whole. You are the whole of the Absolute and so are all others, because the idea of part cannot come into it. These divisions, these limitations, are only apparent, not in the thing itself. ⁴

Vivekananda asserts that this sense of oneness is the fulfillment of human existence, a cure for the ills of life :

As manifested beings we appear to be separate, but our reality is one, and the less we think of ourselves as separate from that one, the better for us. The more we think of ourselves as separate from the Whole, the more miserable we become. ⁵

He also uses Vedānta as a tool for interpreting and in some ways subordinating other Indic religious traditions:

The Vedānta, then, practically forms the scriptures of the Hindus, and all systems of philosophy that are orthodox have to take it as

their foundation. Even the Buddhists and the Jains, when it suits their purpose, will quote a passage from the Vedānta as authority.⁶

Despite disagreements between the various theological positions, Swami Vivekananda claims that the Advaita philosophy provides a method to harmonize all schools of Indian thought. These Neo-Vedantin ideas, coupled with Gandhian idealism and voluntarism, shaped philosophical and religious discourse within India for nearly a century.

Pluralist Traditions of India

Whereas the Vedānta and related traditions emphasize the all pervasiveness of Brahman and tend to absorb all differences into their monistic view, other traditions of India assert the importance of distinctions, and advocate ascent to a state of pure individuality and isolationism (*kaivalyam* or *kevala*). These traditions, like Vedānta, proclaim the supremacy of consciousness, but acknowledge that the path to and experience of this consciousness will be unique to each individual.

Perhaps the earliest hint of this individual based approach to consciousness is found in the Ṛg Veda : "Two birds sit on the same tree. One eats sweet berry, while the other merely looks on." This bifurcated analysis of perceptual processes led to the development of the Sāṃkhya school of thought. In the Sāṃkhya Kārika, Isvarakṛṣṇa presents the following argument in support of the notion that each individual stands unique :

The plurality of spirits (*puruṣ*) certainly follows from the distributive nature of the incidence of birth and death and of the endowment of the instruments of cognition and action, from bodies engaging in action, not all at the same time, and also from difference in the proportion of the three constituents (*guṇa*).⁷

In other words, people are born and die at different times, their bodies all differ from one another, they are involved in different activities at different times, and each person has his or her own distinct personality. Therefore, one single experience of consciousness cannot be shared by persons so diverse. Each person holds a private perspective on reality. Knowledge and wisdom arise depending upon the distinct circumstances of each individual. In a further critique of the monistic argument, it has been stated that if there is only one consciousness, then the awakening of

only one person would be enough to awaken the entire world.

The Yoga tradition expresses a commitment to a realist position by asking “How can an object be dependent on one mind? What would become of it when not cognized by that mind?”⁸ It describes the culmination of spirituality as isolation or *kaivalyam*, a distancing of oneself from materiality and change (*prakṛti*) and retreat into one’s own true self, distinct from the affairs of all others.

The Jaina tradition, particularly as articulated in the *Tattvārtha Sūtra* of *Umāsvāti* (ca. 100 C.E.), likewise promotes a pluralist theory of consciousness. In asserting the individuality of each soul, *Umasvati* notes that “The categories and their attributes are understood in detail in terms of definition, possession, cause, location, duration, and varieties.”⁹ *Umasvati* goes on to catalogue in great detail the variations of karma that define the status of each soul, and lists techniques by which individuals may strive to purge themselves of harmful karmic residues. *Umasvati*’s simple exhortations underscore the lonely quest of the Jaina renouncer, who sets out to grapple with and disperse the various forms of karma :

- 9.2. Inflow (of karma) is inhibited by guarding careful movement, morality, reflection, conquering hardships, and enlightened conduct.
- 9.3. Austerities wear off karma as well as inhibiting it.
- 9.18. The five stages of conduct are : initiation, ordination, purification through service, self restraint with subtle flickering greed, and perfect conduct.

These sample verses give a sense of the individual commitment required within this voluntarist tradition. Eventually, perhaps in some future birth, the many practices of the Jaina renunciators ideally culminate in liberation from all karma :

- 10.3. The elimination of all types of karma is liberation.
- 10.5. When all karmic bondage is eliminated, the soul soars upwards to the border of cosmic space.

This attainment places one in a place of omniscience, an unending state of energy, consciousness, and bliss.

The primary Jaina method to reduce and eventually eliminate karma is the observance of nonviolence (*ahimsā*). By adopting the outlook and orthopraxy mandated by nonviolent theory, Jainas strive to minimize and,

for the advanced monks and nuns, gradually eliminate all possible occasions for violence in their lives. The practices of nonviolence include vegetarianism, sweeping one's path to remove insects, covering one's mouth to avoid inhaling insects and microorganisms, and periodic fasting to avoid harm even to plant life forms.

Perhaps as an extension of this nonviolent outlook¹⁰ and perhaps as a means of responding to currents within other Indic religious traditions, Jainism developed a provisional truth theory that validates partial truths in non-Jaina systems of thought without compromising central Jaina teachings. Haribhadra, an eighth century convert from Brahmanism to Jainism, wrote numerous texts that proclaim a commonality among religious traditions in India that hold liberation (moksa) as the final goal.¹¹ He also affirms the Jaina position on the plurality of souls. In the *Yogadrstisamuccaya*, he writes that "People differ in various ways due to their desires, and enjoy various fruits according to differences in their intellectual dispositions, and so forth."¹² He presents several arguments against the monist position, writing that if the monistic position is followed through to its logical conclusion, then karmic reality would have no ontological status. Haribhadra argues that if this were the case, then karma would hold no consequence. He muses that "all worldly existence would be deemed eternal; how could there be the possibility of liberation?" (*Yogadrstisamuccaya* 201). Haribhadra abides by the Jaina position that affirms the reality of the world and the distinct nature of each individual soul. Both perspectives stem from a pluralist view.

The philosophy of plurality (*anekānta* or not-oneness) in Jainism contrasts with the monistic theories of the Vedāntins, the dualists ideas of the Sāmkhya, and the no-self teachings of the Buddhists. The *Syādvādamañjari*, a thirteenth century text written by Mallisena, summarizes each of these traditions and then offers careful criticisms that assert the completeness of Jaina theory in opposition to the other modes of thought. Vedānta is dismissed as eternalistic, as giving too little thought to the reality of suffering. Samkhya is dismissed as contradictory, due to paradoxical descriptions of liberation. Buddhism is criticized as being nihilistic, due to its theory of no-self. From this analysis, it might be gleaned that although Mallisena is interested in learning about and discussing views that differ from the Jaina position, he is not willing to yield or concede any points to them. Despite Kapadia's suggestion that the many-sidedness doctrine of the Jainas stems from nonviolence, it does not indicate a willingness to depart or retreat from one's own position.

Discourse and Dialogue

We have thus far examined two vectors within Indic thought that deal with the broad issue of the one and the many. The monist traditions found in the Upaniṣads and Advaita Vedānta assert the fundamental unity of all things from the perspective of the absolute or Brahman. The pluralist positions of Sāṃkhya, Yoga, and Jainism maintain that the world in all its multiplicity is real and that each human consciousness holds a unique perspective. This latter position, however, is not a form of relativism, because each of these traditions includes state of pure consciousness that transcends the many changes of nature or prakṛti in Sāṃkhya and Yoga and the many constellations of karma in Jaina tradition, which are also referred to as prakṛti. Both the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* and Haribhadra in the *Yogaśrīṣamuccaya* use this common absolute (Brahman in Vedānta, *puruṣa/ātman* in Sāṃkhya and Yoga, and *jīva* in Jainism) as a foundation for dialogue and rapprochement. Both the monists and pluralists are capable of conversing with one another when the topic centers on soteriology. When dealing with the ontological status of the world, which range from debates on illusionism, the nature of karma, the efficacy of knowledge, and role of devotion, little common ground remains.

Can advocates of monism and pluralism effectively dialogue with one another? Does either of these approaches offer useful resources for cross cultural and interreligious communication? The historical record in response to these questions is mixed. On the one hand, a monist might prove to be a congenial conversation partner and demonstrate qualities of openness, interest, and even friendliness toward the views of others. However, it might also be the case that because of the absolutist nature of the monistic view that the underlying assumption of any discourse or dialogue would be that the monist's perspective by nature already includes and subsumes the other's view, as indicated by Swami Vivekananda's remarks quoted above. In such a situation, effective communication would be limited.

A pluralist might more authentically listen, tolerate, and even explore the views of others. One who adheres to Sāṃkhya, Yoga, or Jainism would not seek to define the other's position in his or her own terms and would not expect to share common spiritual contours even with co-religionists. The difficulty with this approach may lie with a privatization of discourse that makes commonality or community or even polity difficult to achieve. Within the context of these renouncer traditions, these values are not given

much emphasis. In many ways, the religious mendicants of India embody their philosophy of individuality, difference, and otherness in their peripatetic lifestyle and, in some cases, their sheer oddness.

However, if we move from the concrete examples of India's homeless sadhus and munis to the model of dialogue provided by the pluralist view, I think that some wisdom may be gleaned from an individualist, pluralist perspective. Rather than assuming that one shares another's experience, there might be an interest in hearing the story of another. Furthermore, each of these traditions share a common goal : the alleviation of suffering (*duhkha*). For the Jainas, this is to be accomplished by the diminishment of karma; for the adherents of Sāṃkhya, through the loosening of self identity; for the Yogis, through purification and meditation. Each pursues his or her own path, yet may find common ground in their practice, which could serve as a foundation for discourse and dialogue.

India has had a long and complex religious history. It has experimented with the processes of syncretism, dialogue, conversion, and conflict as long as any civilization on the planet. Within the ambit of Indian discourse, the monists, the monotheists, and various combinations of the two have formed the majority population of India for millenia. The unified, absolutist view offered by Advaita-oriented Brahmanism, as well as monotheistic Islam and Sikhism, has dominated India's religious landscape discourse. Despite the mass appeal of these important and vital traditions, the pluralist perspective, which upholds individual differences and underscore the unavoidability of human suffering, nonetheless has retained an active voice and presence in the subcontinent, in the lives of the many wandering sadhus and yogis, and in the numerous communities of Jaina monks and nuns.

As the world becomes simultaneously more united through technology yet more fragmented as groups continue to assert their own unique identity and voice, both models, monist and pluralist, in tandem can serve as resources in the process of cross-cultural communication. The one-world, holistic view espoused by contemporary theorists and advertizers accords well with the monistic vector within Indian thought. The quest for identity, the emphasis on cultural uniqueness, the drive to retain local customs and modes of discourse accords well with the pluralist view of reality. Both perspectives can be useful for the new global order, provided that they are allowed to complement one another, rather than being seen as competitors.

NOTES

1. Rg Veda VIII, Valakhilya section, Hymn X, verse 2. Translation adapted from *The Hymns of the Rgveda*, translated by Ralph T.H. Griffith (Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass, 1973), p. 470.
2. *Aitareya Upanisad*, 5th Khanda. See Robert Ernest Hume *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads* (London : Oxford University Press, 1921), pp. 300–301.
3. Venkatesananda, Swami. translator. *The Concise Yogavasistha* (Albany : State University of New York Press, 1984), p. 178.
4. Vivekananda, Swami. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta : Advaita Ashram, 1989), I : 419.
5. *Ibid*, II : 334.
6. *Ibid*, I : 358.
7. *Sāṃkhya Kārika* 18, translated in *A Source Book in Indian Philosophy*, edited by Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 432.
8. *Yoga Sūtra* IV : 16, Christopher Chapple and Yogi Anand Viraj, translators (Delhi : Sri Satguru Publications, 1990).
9. *Tattvārtha Sūtra*, 1 : 7, as translated in Nathmal Tatia, *That Which Is* (San Francisco : Harper Collins, 1994), p. 8.
10. Kapadia, H.R. in his introduction to his edited version of *Haribhadra Sūri's Anekāntajayapātākā* (Baroda, Oriental Institute, 1947) states that "the Jaina principle of respect for life (ahimsa) is the origin of respect for the opinion of others (*anekāntavāda*)," p. cxiv.
11. See Dundas, Paul. *The Jains* (London : Routledge, 1992), pp. 113–115 and 196–197 and Phyllis Granoff, "The Jain Biographies of Haribhadra : An Enquiry into the Logic of the Legends," *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, (Vol. 17, 1989), pp. 105–128.
12. *Yogaśrīṣamuccaya*, verse 120. Translation by the author based on the edition published by the Jaina Grantha Prasaka Sabha, 1940.

RELIGIOUS NARRATIVE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN LATIN AMERICA

Carlos R. Piar

Recent events in the Communist block countries of Eastern Europe and in some countries in Latin America have brought into question the ideological appeal of socialism. The Soviet Union has broken up into a commonwealth of republics, Germany is now one nation (with the West being the ideological victor), Nicaraguans voted out the Sandinistas, the FMLN in El Salvador has abandoned violent means and is seeking to enter the political mainstream, and some analysts predict that Castro's regime in Cuba will not last two more years. What do these events mean for the future of Latin American Liberation Theology as a narrative for social change? Can it remain a viable theology since its preferred ideology, socialism, has been historically discredited?

The future viability of liberation theology is also called into question by the political transformations that have been occurring in Latin America since the mid-eighties. The military dictatorships that existed in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Peru, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, and Uruguay during the 70's and early 80's have given way to limited or constitutional democracies. Notwithstanding the setbacks to democracy that have occurred in Haiti (with the coup of President Eusebio Aristide) and in Peru (with President Alberto Fujimori's repeal of the constitution), the overall political changes in Latin America have been positive and heartening.

Clearly, Latin American liberation theology faces a plausibility crisis. A theology that arose during the 1970's, when the ideology of the National Security state legitimated repression all over Latin America, when the principal parties in the Cold War (the U.S. and the U.S.S.R.) were fighting their ideological battles in Latin American politics, now finds itself, because of the changes that have occurred in Latin America and around the world, with a rhetoric that sounds hollow and a political agenda that most are skeptical, if not cynical, about.

Another threat to the continuing viability of liberation theology (which is predominantly Catholic in constituency) as a narrative for social change, is the growth of Protestantism in Latin America. Catholics are converting to Protestantism (especially to the Pentecostal and Baptist denominations) at the rate of 400 per hour, or three million a year according to some estimates. Guatemala, for instance, is already 25 percent Protestant and is expected to be 50 percent by the end of this century. Brazil is about 10 percent Protestant. The rate of Protestant growth has been so great as to cause alarm among the Catholic hierarchy.¹ The greater part of these conversions to Protestantism are occurring primarily among the poor, those whom liberation theologians want to consciencitize to their oppression. The more Fundamentalist Protestantism grows among the ranks of the poor, therefore, the more liberation theologians lose their audience.

Ironically, once the poor convert to evangelical Protestantism they often adopt a rightist ideology—pro-American, anti-communist, and supportive of the status quo (whatever it might be). Although such “conversions” to the right can be easily attributed to the simplistic equation of Christianity and Americanism made by North American missionaries and evangelists which poor Latin Americans just as naively accept, it might be fairer to see the rightist turn as the result of a misdirected and untutored, but fundamentally correct, intuition that the logic of Protestantism, with its emphasis on the individual, rationality, and democratic structures empowers the believer to achieve a more integral liberation. Liberation theologian Leonardo Boff has, in some sense, admitted as much when he writes :

Paul Tillich coined the phrase [“the Protestant Principle”] to express the basic intuition of Luther: he rebelled in the name of the gospel against the overwhelming power of the clergy, against the usurpation by the dominant of the rightful place of the dominated, against the historic that presented itself as divine.

The Protestant spirit unmask the religious and political idols and refuses simply to legitimize the status quo. Everything must be changed in the process of conversion. That means there must be total freedom from every type of oppression : enlarged space for the free action of God and for the human being to be fully human.²

The unsophisticated Latin American, then, often makes the following

equation : Protestantism equals Democracy equals North America. Catholicism, rightly or not, is seen as anti-democratic, not only because of its own hierarchical structure but also because of its historic allegiance with repressive totalitarian regimes. This is precisely what liberation theologians are trying to remedy; they want to change the Church's image and make it an ally of the people and not of the state. Yet ironically, the Marxist rhetoric used by many progressive priests engenders fears of *atheistic* totalitarianism in many of the people. Since religion to Latin Americans is more precious than life, it is in the minds of many better to have a tyrant that is tolerant of religion, than to support a movement that, once it gets into power, (they fear) will programmatically do away with religion (a la the Soviet Union) as it seeks to establish economic equality. For the faithful some tyrannies are better than others.

A more serious threat to the continuing viability of Latin American liberation theology is the opposition of the Vatican itself. As early as 1979, when the Latin American bishops met at Puebla, Mexico, the Vatican attempted to control the spread of liberation theology among the Latin American clergy and the faithful. Through the instrument of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith led by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the Vatican censured liberation theology in its "Instructions," silenced Leonardo Boff, investigated Gustavo Gutierrez and Jon Sobrino, and threatened Pedro Casaldaliga. The appointment of conservative priests to influential ecclesiastical positions, stultified the advance of liberation theology. Conservative and moderate priests now sit in the positions of power in Latin America, curtailing the influence of liberation theologians and their theology. Without the support of the Vatican, liberation theology's light can only be a glimmer in the darkness.³

Can liberation theology survive as a viable theology into the 21st century? Can it remain viable in a postmodern world?

To answer this question it is important for us to recognize that liberation theology is: 1) a rhetorical narrative seeking the acceptance of the socialist analysis and socialist solutions to the political and economic problems of Latin America, and 2) a new theological paradigm that through religious narratives (like the Exodus and Jesus stories) seeks to empower people to realize their hopes and aspirations for a better tomorrow.

I would argue that so long as liberation theology remains the former—a rhetorical narrative seeking the acceptance of socialist analysis and socialist solutions—it is bound to fail and become a *passee* theology for it will be too closely linked to a discredited ideology. But if liberation theologians focus on developing the theology as a new paradigm for

empowering the people to improve their lives as individuals and communities then it will remain a vital and influential theology. In order for liberation theology to remain viable it must address the issues faced by a postmodern world: globalization and pluralism, nihilism and anomie, the “decentering of the subject”,⁴ and the inadequacy of rational-empirical approaches to reality. Liberation theologians must focus on developing a new kind of spirituality; they must concern themselves with developing the spiritual values and mental attitudes necessary to effect an integral liberation of each member of society.

Liberation theologians *are* attempting to fashion a new paradigm for doing theology while at the same time providing the oppressed of Latin America with a postmodern narrative that will mobilize them to act for the creation of a more human society. But there is a notable weakness in their attempts to construct this new paradigm, namely that liberation theologians cling to the very same modernist assumptions that have brought about the crisis of modernity: subjectivity of truth, relativity of values, autonomy, and technologism, to name a few. Because of their inability (or unwillingness) to move beyond these assumptions, their narrative has failed to be convincing and enter the mainstream of Latin American culture. Instead we find that many Latin Americans are turning to the premodern discourse articulated by evangelicals and pentecostals⁵—what Hans Glebe-Moller has called the Theological Code—which for the most part is not a discourse that promotes political transformation, but which resonates with the personalism and enthusiasm (i.e., pietism) characteristic of the piety of the oppressed.

Both narratives, the liberationist and the fundamentalist-charismatic, are inadequate to deal with the problems of Latin America, so a different narrative will need to be proclaimed, one that articulates what is best from each of them and will also address the needs of a postmodern world. What shape might that narrative take?

The disenchantment with modernity which the world is experiencing has given rise to a variety of postmodern narratives, each suggesting ways of living in the world. The deconstructionist narrative⁶ calls for abandoning closure, for telling stories without endings. Lives must be lived without illusions since closures are “untenable fictions.” From such a perspective, Walt Disney’s *Bambi*, the Young Prince, is just as likely to end up as venison stew as he is to end up King of the Forest. Similarly, the christological narrative that follows from this narrative would be one that eliminates hope, that projects nothing, that anticipates nothing. In this view, Jesus’ resurrection is wishful thinking. The stories he told and his

own life story are subversive stories, they subvert our world, shatter expectations, but there are no ultimate vindications, no moralizing about the structure of reality.

Some might suggest this as a way of being human in Latin America, but such a narrative springs from existential anomie, which others judge as the despair of the bourgeois. In Latin America, the despair is real material despair—the despair of the dehumanized—hence the nihilistic mode of living advocated by this deconstructionist narrative can only lead to resignation and ultimately to real objective misery and death, objective annihilation. The deconstructionist postmodernist story, therefore, may not suit Latin America, not only because of its possible consequences, but also because deconstruction has not yet demonstrated any resonance with pre-modern culture, such as that which predominates in most of Latin America.

The liberation narrative, on the other hand, has closure; the story seeks to inspire hope and illusions. Their narrative is postmodern in that it seeks to deprivatize faith and turn it into a valuable factor of social transformation. Yet liberation theologians cling to modernist assumptions and values that clearly make their narrative, first of all, incomprehensible to the vast majorities of oppressed Latin Americans who themselves hold a premodern worldview and, secondly, inadequate to confront the postmodern condition into which the world at large has entered. Some of these modernist assumptions are the subjectivity of truth, the relativity of values, pragmatism, and autonomy. The implicit acceptance of these philosophical presuppositions lead liberation theologians to apply historical-critical assumptions and ideological criticism to biblical narratives and theological reflections (past and present). Moreover, their acceptance results in calls for a contextualized and autochthonous theology: "We must have our own christology, our own truth, relevant to our needs." In some liberationist circles, however, this has resulted in an ironic solipsism where the truth originating from the oppressed is the only truth, their interpretations of the Gospels, for instance, and of society are the only valid interpretations; and these are valid merely because they are suited to the needs of the oppressed, i.e., because of their functionality. Such a particularistic viewpoint, such a regionalistic narrative, might inspire a Guatemalan or Salvadoran Christian suffering oppression to subversive action, but it does not provide him/her, or any other Christian from any other culture or nation, with a narrative in which to live as a human being, as a member of the world-community. Liberation theological discourse, therefore, does not contribute very much to the construction of

a postmodern theology which would, in turn, contribute to the construction of a postmodern world.

Another modernist assumption held by liberation theologians is that science—social science and particularly Marxist social science—is capable of giving the one true account of the Latin American reality (=scientism). Postmodernity has belied such an assumption. Rather, we are confronted by a plurality of views and interpretations—whether in religion or sociology—each with their claims to validity. Liberation theologians, however, while not blind to this pluralism, for the most part refuse to come to terms with it and articulate a synthetic discourse, whether in their theological narrative or their social analysis. Instead, they proclaim an anti-thetic discourse, or what Segundo himself calls an anti-christology. It could be said, then, that *a fortiori* and like the deconstructionists, liberationists proclaim an anti-theology; they consciously opt for one discourse among the many, one that shocks and challenges the audience to act for their own material well-being in the here-and-now; one that presents humanity as the Ultimate Reality.

By employing these modernist assumptions and values in the construction of their theological narrative, liberation theologians continue the modern preoccupation with bureaucratic rationalization. In their christology, liberation theologians make Jesus into the legitimator of a technocratic way of being human, one concerned with the most effective way of loving, i.e., achieving liberation. Technocrats are concerned with means and results. The emphasis which liberation theologians put on praxis puts a premium on efficacy.⁷ Consequently, liberation theologians have problems in constructing a convincing story of Jesus, for the story derived from the Gospels and articulated in popular piety (or even the story of the historical Jesus), does not cohere with the story they articulate and want the oppressed to believe, that of a technocratic Jesus, a Jesus concerned with means and efficacy, i.e., praxis.

What would be a better theological narrative? James Breech makes the argument that Jesus' own stories, as well as his own life as narrated by the Synoptic Gospels, aim to show a distinctive way of living: the "personal mode."

The earliest Christians used their own culturally received concept of the resurrection appearances to reflect their conviction that Jesus' mode of being human could not be judged by its results, that death did not hold the key to the meaning of his mode of being human.⁸

A more coherent story would affirm this personal mode of living, one that puts a premium on unconditional love and faithfulness rather than efficacy. Determining efficacy implies calculating (claiming to foreknow) results or consequences. The personal mode of living, however, implies a commitment to the other without taking account of results or consequences, without attempting to predict how the other will respond. Such is love⁹ it is an uncalculated risk. Love does not always conquer all—Judas Iscariot being a case in point. In fact, if “love” is bent on the “conquest” of the other, it is not true Love at all.

Does the acceptance of this narrative, this proposed mode of being human, by the oppressed mean that they must accept oppression? Not at all. It means that one is to act without consideration of results; one does what is right and just for the other, not because of some ultimate goal in view (such as the Kingdom of God, or ultimate vindication in history or beyond history) but because it is the right thing to do. Hence this narrative suggests a deontological Christian ethic, whereas the liberationist narrative argues a teleological ethic that verges on utilitarianism.¹⁰ A deontological ethic appears to be more coherent and faithful to the biblical sources.

A postmodern liberation narrative, therefore, would provide the basis for a deontological ethic—one that presents the individual in relationship to the cosmos and as responsible for the various spheres within that cosmos. A postmodern liberation narrative will be one that maintains the distinctiveness of Jesus Christ’s life and work while bringing his particularity to bear on every sphere of human experience. Such a theology and christology will seek to address, not only the historical, political, and economic, but also the personal, cultural, and ecological dimensions of human life. Only through such a narrative can liberation theologians foster the sort of spirituality that would effect an integral salvation, a wholistic liberation. Only so can liberation theology remain viable well into the future.

Liberation theologians have given the world a vision of what theology should be—practical and liberating—and for that vision, we are grateful. The vision, however, needs to be sharpened, and for that a discourse will have to be articulated that will enable “reasonable men {*sic*} of different interests, experiences, and vocabulary . . . [to] disagree about some questions . . .” and yet move them to “search for meeting places where they can stand together and explore their differences about the choices life presents.”¹¹ Such a discourse is still awaited.

NOTES

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2. Boff, Leonardo. "Luther, the Reformation, and Liberation." In *Faith Born in the Struggle for Life: A Rereading of Protestant Faith in Latin America Today*, Ed. Dow Kirkpatrick. p. 195-212. Grand Rapids : William B. Eerdmans, 1988. pp. 210-211.
3. Lernoux, pp. 51-53.
4. Cox, Harvey. *Religion in the Secular City : Toward a Postmodern Theology*. New York : Simon and Schuster, 1984. p. 217.
5. I would hypothesize that this turn to Protestantism by Latin Americans is actually a transition not from modernity to postmodernity, but from a premodern worldview to a modern one, for evangelicalism (priesthood of all believers), and the separation of religion and politics. What this cultural situation means for liberation theology is that its narrative discourse is "ahead of its time" or addressed to those artistic and intellectual elites who are in tune with the modern worldview but who are estranged from the popular religiosity of their compatriots. While being "ahead of its time" may commend a discourse to the larger culture on pragmatic grounds, oftentimes, the discourse is, in fact, impracticable or incomprehensible, for the society has not gone through the necessary changes to make sense of it or put it within a larger context of meaning (one need only recall such fiascos as the League of Nations, Esperanto, and the French decimal calendar [1792]). The liberation theologians seem oblivious to the psycho-social dynamics operating within Latin American culture : they articulate a postmodern narrative based on modernist assumptions to a people who live within a premodern narrative or who are barely making the transition to a modern narrative. Can they hope their discourse to be heard?
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III

COMPARATIVE ETHICS

THE BENEFIT OF PUNISHMENT

Unto Tähtinen

1. Punishment—ever a moral problem

Punishment is one of the perennial problems of social ethics. The question, why and on what grounds we should punish offenders, has been vigorously debated for centuries and the discussion has still not calmed down, rather the contrary. However, while this may be the case in Great Britain and North America, in Germany and Scandinavia punishment belongs to criminal policy rather than to ethics, and contemporary moral philosophers hardly discuss the problem. At all events, the problem seems to be an interdisciplinary problem.

The criminal justice system is sometimes said to be “multipurposive”, different purposes being pursued for different crimes and at different levels of the punitive system. It seems to me that the theories of punishment, as generally understood, demonstrate a type of multipurposiveness and are an example of eclecticism. In these theories different moral codes are more or less—usually less—successfully harmonized with each other.

It is seldom that anyone approves of just one theory of punishment. Every theory may be taken to its logical conclusions, to the extreme point. As a rule—on intuitive grounds—some positive points are to be found in each theory as well as some negative points. An eclectic system emerges when more than one theory is simultaneously accepted. One task of a moral philosophy is to overcome this eclecticism.

Some philosophers, in trying to avoid resorting to eclecticism, have defended on theory alone. But these efforts have resulted in one-sided and often crude ideas, e.g. retribution, as the sole theory, rules out social benefit and, perhaps, also punishes the individual’s own moral uplift.

2. Punitive injury as a generally unsuccessful method of punishment

If we ask what is the good of punishment, we may view the problem

from two basic angles. First and foremost we can ask what the aim or purpose of punishment is. There are four main theories and each expresses a particular aim or intention. They are retribution, deterrence, reformation and direct prevention. These theories aim at justice, securing social welfare, the individual's social training and the prevention of further harm. They express the values of punishment as good goals to be achieved or, at least, aspired to.

However, there is an additional angle which should be noted, one that is often neglected by moral philosophers. We may ask what the effects of punishment are, that is, we may have to face the actual results of punishment as well. The retributive theory may be challenged by the fact of unrecorded crime. Is it morally right to punish severely a few symbolic offenders, when the vast majority of offenders are not even accused of any crime? It seems that those who are actually punished are not punished merely because they have committed a crime, but also because they happen to be poor, less educated or because they have some other unfortunate and distinguishing features.

According to a widely held view, deterrence is based on the fear of being hurt. Anselm von Feuerbach says that the belief or knowledge that evil will follow a criminal offence induces a psychological compulsion to leave the offence undone.¹

One may doubt the moral justification of inflicting injury on a person in order to benefit society as a whole. One may also doubt the actual usefulness of this injury. Is it efficient in deterring potential offenders from committing crimes? In securing a stable and well-ordered society is it more efficient than any possible alternative method? The last two questions can be asked within the normative assumptions of the deterrent theory.

The generally held belief that it is the injury itself that deters can be challenged. If it did so, it would probably deter the better, the more injurious the punishment was. However, Beccaria has already pointed out that certainty of punishment, even if it is moderate in severity, will make a stronger impression than the fear of a more terrible but less certain punishment.² It is not the seriousness of punishment or the punitive violence which deters, it is the chance of getting caught. Speedy and inescapable detection is more of a deterrent than a severe sentence which is rarely handed out. Yet, as studies on unrecorded criminality show, only a few percent of all actual criminal acts are ever recorded and prosecuted. So an offender may reasonably well calculate his chances of remaining undetected.

It is sometimes admitted that we know very few facts regarding the general prevention of crime. Johannes Andenaes puts forward the view that an attempt should be made to assess the accuracy of the assumptions that lawmakers, courts and law enforcement agencies make about general prevention. However, this is a badly neglected field of research, and policy decisions often amount to sheer guess-work.³

We may ask whether it is punitive violence as such which deters or whether some social mechanism, alternative to punitive violence, deters even better. These are, however, problems which are not generally given much consideration. In a situation like this, we may have to appeal more directly to our general moral theory and the rightness of the original intention. If the benefit of inflicting a hurt is uncertain, the primary moral question regarding the intention is reinforced.

We may thus criticize each theory in the light of the results of its actual application. How far are those results good or profitable and how far disappointing?

Without going into details here, I may simply generalize by saying that the benefits accruing from punishment seem to be poor. Crime rates are increasing. The fitness of the present-day penal system as it exists in practically all the countries of the world may be doubted. Punishment as punitive violence does not seem to reduce the amount of crime as a whole, rather the contrary is true.

3. The definition of "punishment"

What is meant by the term "punishment"? What is the fundamental definition of punishment?

There is an old Roman formula : *Malum passionis propter malum actionis*. Punishment is the infliction of evil in return for evil-doing. Thomas Hobbes wrote that "A punishment is an Evil inflicted by public Authority, on him that hath done, or omitted that which is judged by the same Authority to be a Transgression of the Law; to the end that the will of man may thereby the better be disposed to obedience."⁴ Bentham expressly said that all punishment itself is evil, all punishment is mischief.⁵ Kant seems to have thought that punishment is physical evil accruing from moral evil.⁶

I have referred above to some sample definitions of punishment or to the essential parts of definitions, by way of example. According to them, punishment is an evil to the man who is punished. This notion is by no means solely characteristic of some classical ideas. It is little short of

being a commonplace even among contemporary scholars.

A.C. Ewing describes punishment in the first place as a kind of negative wage. This means that a man who is punished is given something he does not want.⁷ Ewing's statement indicates that punishment is a psychological evil, something actually undesirable.

Some contemporary analysts have written articles about the meaning of "punishment." They have mainly tried to salvage the notion of retribution by pointing out that every type of punishment implies at least this one theory. They agree that the term "punishment" implies causing suffering or some form of harm, directly or indirectly, by deprivation. Anthony Flew proposes as one element of the meaning of the term "punishment" that it must be an evil to the man who is punished.⁸ J.D. Mabbott agrees that most punishments are not direct afflictions of suffering but are deprivations of some good.⁹ K.G. Armstrong, describing a modified retributive theory, is prepared to fix some sort of "upper limit" to penalties and then looks at other factors, reformatory or deterrent, such as how much and what sort of pain shall be inflicted.¹⁰ As Armstrong defines them, it becomes obvious that the common element in all three theories of punishment, retributive, deterrent and reformatory, is "infliction of pain on a person." The essential content of each theory is the same, but the motive for inflicting this pain varies according to each theory.

The above mentioned analysts, and many others as well, seem to agree that punishment is a method, direct or indirect, of causing pain, suffering, something unpleasant or undesired, that is, a hedonistic or psychological evil.

In orthodox Indian terminology, there is one term which covers both these evils. Punishment means the deprivation of *kama*, which is the psycho-hedonistic value, the lowest of the four traditional Hindu values. *Kama* implies expression and fulfillment of natural desires and, in addition, the experience of pleasure from this. As a value, it is common both to men and animals, i.e. to any sentient creature. In this sense, punishment is injury or violence against the most primary value.

4. The limitation of the definition

Now, if punishment is defined as an evil to the man who is punished, it follows logically that it cannot, at the same time, be good for him. Good, I think, at the minimum, excludes the corresponding evil. To define punishment as an evil is a limitation of the definition, since it would mean that if punishment was good for the man who was punished, it would be

morally wrong.

The Governor of New York's Special Committee on Criminal Offenders stated expressly in 1968 that punishment is characterized by an intention to make the sanction unpleasant for the offender. Rehabilitation and preventive force do not serve this purpose and unless the offender feels a substantial adverse impact, the sanction is not punishment.¹¹

If we define punishment as something evil, we can put the question : is it morally right to reform an offender? Even if punishment is felt to be somewhat unpleasant, would it even then be morally justified to reform or resocialize him?

Ewing is of the opinion that the reformatory effects of a training received in prison do not come from the punishment itself but from the non-punitive methods, the application of which the punishment renders possible.¹² Yet, it is not clear what the justification for this treatment might be. Should we subject an offender both to punishment and some other compulsory treatment, the latter not even being part of "punishment"?

If punishment is defined as a type of evil, we may have to ask why it is tacitly understood in terms of psychological or hedonistic evil. Why not any other evil? Let us consider the actual consequences of punishment. Punishment has often resulted in making a man jobless, poor, socially rejected and morally worse. These other evils have not, as a rule, been part of the explicit intention of the punisher, yet, the factual consequences seem to indicate that the deliberate infliction of one type of evil—the most primary evil—cannot be separated from other evil consequences. At its face value, punishment appears to be pain, but in reality, evil has many faces, primary and secondary. These consequences seem to indicate that the infliction of a primary evil also functions as a vehicle for other secondary evils, economic, social and moral.

Thus, the definition of punishment, as historically and generally given, rules out reformation both logically and practically. It seems, in practice, to be most difficult to achieve both evil and good by the same means. If punishment must be hitting back or causing terror, the desire that it should be a suitable vehicle for moral uplift, is inappropriate, to say the least. Nay, it is a conceptual fraud.

5. The ancient Indian idea of punishment

I have tried to explain above what is meant and implied by the Western term "punishment". Now let me refer briefly to the ancient Indian concept.

In India the word *danda* meant originally a stick for driving the cattle.

The concept of punishment was developed from it. The term *danda* means, besides, physical violence, war and punitive policy or justice. It seems symptomatic that war and punishment should have this terminological affinity.

Types of punishment used included public censure, defaming or shaming, fining, confiscating of property, destruction of property, fettering, beating, banishment, branding the face with a red-hot iron, cutting off limbs, killing and forced enrollment in the army.

In Ancient India the theories of punishment did not form any separate study and the corresponding problems were presented in a wider context. I would say that ideas can be traced which refer to two theories (as they are nowadays understood) : retribution and protection.¹³

A king ought to punish those who deserve to be punished because of their own sinful action or their failure to perform their own specific duty. On the other hand, a king should not punish one who does not himself deserve to be punished.

The above ideas indicate a clear retributive motive for punishment. Retribution justifies the occasion of punishment but not clearly the gravity of punishment or the pain to be inflicted. Nor does it as such include any political motive for inflicting punishment on anyone. The gravity of punishment ought to be weighed in a very thorough manner, taking all the relevant factors into account, and not merely the crime committed as a single act. The capacity of the criminal to undergo the hardships, his age, his education, possibly even the fact that he may have been even the only earning member of a family, were taken account of.

If one reason for punishment is that an individual deserves to be punished, then a second and political reason for punishment is required as well, namely, protection. A king has to protect his subjects against external as well as internal enemies. If he neglects to inflict punishment on those liable to punishment, the stronger people will destroy the weaker ones as big fishes eat the smaller ones. In the absence of protection, sin is begotten.

Certain types of punishment, such as killing, amputation, imprisonment, fettering and banishment, are directly preventive. The aim is to make the offender harmless in the future. In Ancient India the wicked man himself was suppressed and put down.

Deterrence as a motive for obedience to the law was also recognized by the Indians. Manu justifies deterrence on the basis of human psychology. It is difficult, he says, to find a pure man.¹⁴ He admits that almost every man has moral weaknesses but can be disciplined by the

fear of the rod.

However, deterrence was understood even to involve a more general theory of behavior. Some people do not commit sin for the fear of punishment inflicted by the king; others for fear of the Lord of Death, and fear of the next world. Some do not commit sin for fear of social disapproval.¹⁵ Thus, deterrence was partly a metaphysical and partly a social idea. It was by no means the primary aim of punishment. Deterrence was a secondary effect of more primary measures and as such it can be considered to be supplementary function of punishment, not a theory of its own. Thus in Ancient India punishment was considered as a hurt. Punishment as such was probably not considered to have much reformatory value.

6. Expiation in Ancient India

In Ancient India reformation was separate from punishment and was dealt with under the topic *prāyaścitta*, that is, expiation of sin. We may note that the conceptual distinction between crime and sin was flexible.

Expiation is primarily a mental or psychological process. It is said that *prāyaścitta* is taking a vow and accordingly doing something, by a sinner or a person who has publicly confessed his sin and whose mind has been disturbed and abnormal, with the aim to the vow or promise, the abnormality of mind caused by sin is cut and destroyed.

The methods of purification include pilgrimage, sacrifice, controlling one's breathing, bathing, fasting, penance, study, good actions, concentration on god, etc.

The strongest motive to perform expiation was social. A sinner was considered unfit for communion, he was an "outcast" and unworthy to perform any religious rite. Expiation was the method to "socialize" a wrong-doer again by removing the defilement of his sin.

7. Two alternatives to punitive hurt

I have tried to explain above the meaning of "punishment" both in Indian and Western traditions. In both of them punishment is understood to be a type of hurt, I may call it "punitive violence."

A question can be posed : is it a moral duty to commit evil in certain cases? Do we have a moral obligation to hurt or to be violent? If so, it seems to be in conflict with some general moral obligations, such as those of benevolence, non-violence or good-will. The burden of proof lies on

the justification of exception.

We may have to consider some possible alternatives, for instance, whether it is possible (a) to define punishment non-violently. Or if "punishment" has to mean something evil, whether it would be possible (b) to replace it by something else.

8. Abolition of punishment

Some religiously motivated people like Leo Tolstoy have expressed doubts as to whether society should punish at all. Only a few scholars have ever even put the same question. According to Paul Bockelmann, a German legal writer, it follows from the evil nature of punishment that the consequences of punishment can never be purely good, they are always at the same time evil. The problem of criminal policy is not merely which theory of punishment is the right one, but whether it is right to punish at all.¹⁶ To define punishment as something evil is begging the question as to whether it can be morally justified to punish at all and whether we should declare any acts or omissions "criminal."

Mahatma Gandhi rejected punishment even if it seemed to be so-called "reformatory" punishment inside the gaol, at least during the latter part of his life. Yet Gandhi stressed that one who has committed an offence must plead guilty and suffer the consequences. Confession of error is like a broom that sweeps away dirt. A full realization of one's mistake is also the highest form of expiation.¹⁷ The ancient Indian method of *prayāścitta* is also Gandhi's method of fighting against criminal violence, yet, it ought to be applied in a new way to contemporary circumstances.¹⁸

Thus, to the question "should we punish at all?", we may note that in ancient India there was a social institution of expiation, which was largely non-violent in nature and often used instead of royal punishment. The dividing line between sin and crime was flexible. We may say that in the case of minor crimes, expiation was used alone, but even in more serious crimes, it could possibly have reduced or modified hurtful punishment.

Thus, hurtful punishment does not seem to be a necessity to save an orderly society, it can by choice be replaced by another non-violent institution or an alternative to punitive hurt can be offered.

9. A non-violent definition of punishment

Then, what about defining punishment non-violently? Some social workers—not any well-known moral philosopher as far as I know—have

conceived of punishment as being without the necessity of inflicting evil. Max Grunhut says that punishment, by definition, is a reaction on the part of someone in authority to a wrongful act committed with a guilty mind.¹⁹ To describe punishment as a reaction or a measure to be applied to a man responsible for a crime, sounds rather value-free or neutral, but it is not a neutral concept. The norm "to be applied" and the concepts of "responsible man" as well as that of "crime" are not neutral. However, to speak of punishment as a measure is to avoid a reference to evil. This type of definition permits us to consider reformation conceptually.

When posing the question "what is the benefit of punishment?", I think the first problem is to define punishment so that it allows benefit. This includes the victim of the measure. If we think that punishment must be an evil to him, it rules out logically and, I think also practically, any successful effort to benefit him. But if we define punishment non-violently, then reformation is morally permitted. To define punishment non-violently may also be politically more possible than abolishing punishment altogether and resorting to a completely new vocabulary.

If reformation, or we may say, social integration is made morally permissible and practically fruitful, it may have positive effects for general prevention. There will be fewer habitual offenders and general safety will be thereby increased.

A practical problem is that people, even moral philosophers, still have faith in violence, in the necessity and usefulness of punitive hurt. The utilitarians count and calculate the positive deterrent effects, but readily forget the brutalizing effects of punitive hurt. Through its legislation and function society sets an example to its citizens. If society itself adopts more humanistic methods, it has a slow but steady positive influence on its citizens. In addition, it also seems to reduce the crime rate. Who can show it does not?

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FA : LAWS OR STANDARDS

Chad Hansen

I first encountered the puzzle in my introductory *Inductive Method* class in Classical Chinese. My professor presented the view I have come to associate with Creel. *Fa* (laws) really means *to emulate or standards*.¹ Since that was the interpretive theory I was taught, I came to regard it as orthodoxy. I note that Creel's published defense² tries to convey the same impression. Nearly everyone agrees. Creel cites numerous authorities including Forke, Franke, Granet, and Haenisch. Hu Shih, he observes, even denied the existence of a legalist school. Waley and Fung agree that *fa* (standards) is correct.

The puzzle is that in that same class we all proceeded to translate it as *laws*. We accepted one interpretative theory and a conflicting translation practice simultaneously. I discovered my experience was common. Creel himself frequently translates *fa* as *laws*. We can hardly find a translation in which it is consistently rendered *standards* and yet we can hardly find someone who does not express reservations about *law*. Creel's actual position is that the term means *standards* most of the time but means *law* in a certain number of cases.

I imagined briefly that Schwartz might give the orthodoxy a real opponent. He good-naturedly teases Creel for his protective attitude toward his favorite legalist. But Schwartz falls right in line. He starts his chapter by accepting the orthodoxy that *law* is "often highly misleading." Then he, like Creel, embarks on a study of the word's "many semantic extensions." He supports the *standards* analysis for Confucius and Mozi and Mencius. Creel and Schwartz seem to agree that in *The Hanfeizi fa* (law) means *law* and all the teasing is about Shen Buhai. When each gets to Hanfeizi, at least, they both translate *fa* as *law*. Since they seem to think they disagree, I shall take what they agree on to be the accepted orthodoxy. *Fa* has two different meanings—*standards* for most (especially

early) philosophers but *law* for legalists and especially Shang Yang and Hanfeizi.⁴

Similarly, Roger Ames⁵ takes his problem to be explaining how a term meaning *standards* can come to mean *laws*. The orthodoxy is taken for granted. I confess to not being able to find the explanation or the argument for the claim of meaning shift. I find that Ames, like Schwartz and Creel, translates the character as *standards* until he gets to conventionally recognized legalists, and then he translates the term as *laws*. His argument, like mine, can hardly be more than "that's what I was taught." The translation practice rests on the hypothesis of meaning shift. The hypothesis leans on the comfortable familiarity of the translation practice.

The puzzles are many. How can a word come to mean such very different things?⁶ Why would a group of philosophers use it to mean something so different from its ordinary meaning without themselves noticing that they were doing so and defending their strange usage?⁷ Why have so many scholars vehemently insisted it means standards not law? And why, then, does *law* survive as a translation and our perception of the *fa-jia* as Legalists?

The orthodoxy has it that:

(A) There is an exclusive choice between *fa* and *li* (ritual).

(B) The official doctrine became Confucian, but political practice in China continued to be legalist.

Now, if Legalists do advocate *law*, and if the Legalists' system survived, why is China trying now to institute the rule of *law*? What is the difference between what the *fa-jia* initiated in Qin China which survived and what the West practices and China is newly introducing? What is the difference between our conception of the rule of *law* and the *fa-jia* conception of the rule of *fa*?

A Proposed Analysis

In general I am suspicious of the ubiquitous dogma of Sinology that characters change meaning or have lots of meanings.

My suspicion is that those who assert the dogma are confusing meaning and belief. They treat the meaning of a term as changing when it is used in two conflicting theories. The problem is this. Confusing meaning and belief in this way masks philosophical disagreement. It makes all dispute seem pointless. Two theories really disagree only if the terms mean the same thing.⁸

I am especially suspicious, therefore, where Confucian historians *create*

anti-Confucian schools retrospectively. The Han historians, in a sense, invented both Daoism (Dao-jia) and Legalism (Fa-jia). They identified a group of philosophers with a key theoretical term. Then the Confucians make their opponent's critical arguments irrelevant to the Confucian doctrines by the hypothesis of meaning shift. Confucian opponents mean different things by their key terms than good Confucians mean.⁹ So their arguments never reach their target. We should be skeptical enough to check independently if the anti-Confucian arguments do undermine Confucianism. If they do, then we can start to understand why Confucian historians would claim that their critics' arguments equivocate—that they change the meaning of key terms.¹⁰

I suspect, further, that our unstated professional credo concerning meaning and translation contributes to our confusion. We operate as if settling on a translation is giving a theory of meaning. Our paradigm question is "which word is best to use in translating this Chinese term?" We assume translation comes first. Interpretation is a kind of vague *talking around* what was said in our translation. The interpretation talks about the relation of this passage to others in that work or in the tradition. But the translation must most accurately render the sense of this sentence more or less in isolation. So it doesn't bother us to say *fa* means is one thing for this philosopher or in this passage and another for that. It should bother us.

This assumption, together with the persistence of habits of our training (what we were taught in Chinese classes or told by those who precede us in scholarship) explains why we continue to translate *fa* as law. (Besides that it rhymes.) We are thus led to confuse a concept with the different beliefs expressed using the concept. We describe changing beliefs or theories on a topic as changing the meaning of a term. We rest confident with the consequence that Chinese words have lots more meanings than English terms because many different translations seem called for accurate presentations of competing theories. When a term has a general denotation and one philosopher concentrates on a narrow range of examples, we assume the word has changed meaning for him.¹¹

I shall argue as follows: *Fa* are standards for the interpretation of words used in guiding discourse. The words guide behavior as the key structural units in social codes. Most punishment in China was meted out for "being an X" where X is a term like *unfilial*. The standards for application of that term determine punishment and reward.

But the meaning of *fa* is more complex than mere standards, they should be objective, public, reliably projectible standards. Therefore one kind

of code—one that is clear, public openly promulgated—falls in its range. This is not because *fa* means *law*, but because laws have more clarity and precision than traditional or intuitive or moral codes. It is the code as a whole that is a *fa*, not the separate sentences.

What happened in ancient China is that—Hanfeizi splits with Xunzi (the Confucians) on the appropriateness of the use of *li* (ritual) and *i* (morality). That disagreement affects their respective theories of the range of suitable *fa* (standards). They are equally committed to punishment. They are equally committed to *fa*. But their *fa* are standards of interpretation of different codes and they disagree about which *fa* give the kind of clear guidance people need to utilize a social control code.

We are tempted to translate *fa* as *law* in *The Hanfeizi* because: (a) He contrasts *fa* and *li*. This looks superficially like our contrast between *law* and morality. (b) He uses arguments for *fa* which remind us of our traditional Western justifications of the rule of law.

The Concept of *Law* v. the Concept of *Fa* Law and Punishment

The Western theories of law emerge from long tradition of controversy about the definition of law. Natural law and positive law schools of thought disagree, but their definitions share some key features. Laws are universal propositions (sentences). Scientific laws are a special case: universal descriptive sentences. They state invariable causal event regularities. Legal universal *prescriptive* sentences may be sub-divided into either moral, prudential or Penal laws. The theory of law concerns only the penal—those connected with punishment.

The Western question has been, “what is the distinguishing characteristic of penal law that sets it apart from other prescriptive universal statements?” Austin’s classical assumption is that it is a command backed by the threat of a specific retributive punishment for a violation. That identifying description is controversial in two ways. While many laws do have punishments attached, some do not (laws creating marital status, laws selecting holidays, laws that repeal other laws and so forth.) But in almost all theories, the conceptual link to punishment in the normal case is characteristic of human or penal law. It is this link that makes us associate the Western debate with the debate in ancient China.

Confucius’ famous argument in *The Analects* is directed against punishment. Clearly, at even this early point in Chinese thought there are perfectly convenient terms for this kind of institution—institutions of regularized bureaucratic punishment. There is the famous *xing*—cutting

(punishment) or shape. Confucius usually focuses on *zheng*—rectify with a *beating* radical. We find the issue raised in discussion of *zhi* or institutions, *ling* orders or commands. So one of the arguments we *cannot* give is the legalists needed a word to express what they were talking about so they borrowed *fa*. If we are referring to official systems of coercion by a public code and punishment Classical Philosophical discourse had all the terms it needed to make the point.

Confucius argued against this style of coercive government and their implicit analysis of the role of government. Punishment gets social conformity at the cost of giving up on educating and developing the natural human inclinations of spontaneous social conformity—shame. Educational techniques achieve the same end gradually but more effectively. Education leads to a stable, long run solution because it relies on and supports these social instincts. Official coercion using laws and punishment relies on, exercises, and strengthens self interest.¹² In the long run it is self-defeating. You will eventually have libraries filled with laws, an army of lawyers, jails overflowing and still less secure streets. Eventually even your political leaders will say, “What I did may have been immoral, but it was not illegal!”

The Law and Interpretation

The argument based on motivation ties into another argument. Confucius makes it less explicitly but it is a strong undercurrent in many of his aphorisms. Confucius repeatedly disparages the rise of litigiousness, glibness, cleverness especially among people governed by promulgated, public codes. Public, explicit codes pull in their wake this worry. Any formalized code can be subject to interpretive dispute. Their interpretive ambiguity generally takes this form. The rule governing Y does not apply to me because this is a case of X not Y. Apply the rule governing X to me instead.

The combination of promoting selfishness and glibness means legal institutions pack a double whammy against natural social mechanisms of control. The first objection is to punishment’s tendency to induce and exercise selfish heart-mind processing. Confucians’ second objection attacks the publicity of legal codes, their general accessibility and the resulting invitation to the population to quibble about which term in the code applies to them.

We suppose the paradigm outcome is illustrated by the traditional story of Dengxi.¹³ Dengxi confused *shi-fei* (this-not this) in his clever legalistic

arguments designed to get accused people off. The Confucian argument sometimes has overtones of defense of their special interests.¹⁴ Clear, public, promulgated rules of behavior deprive the *noble* class of its role as authoritative scholar interpreters of the ancient texts—the transmitted *dao*.

This second argument, however, yields an embarrassment for Confucianism. The *li* (ritual) are also a fixed code even though not on tripods. We call it a positive morality as we call law positive law. The *li* obviously gave rise to disputes among Confucians about correct performance, degree of allowed deviation, exigencies, rectification of names etc. The only saving grace is that the controversy is confined within the ranks of the *Ru*.

Let us call these two concerns about law the motivational concern and the interpretive concern. The interpretive concern is what requires the rectification of names so both *li* or punishments can give reliable guidance to people. This, according to the famous passage, would be the first measure of a Confucius finally placed in office (13:3).

The interpretive concern was the engine that drove Confucianism toward an innatist or intuition driven version—the Mencian orthodoxy. Once we have formulated the concern that a code might be interpreted into performance in different ways, we have to rely on something independent of the code to fix which of the interpretive performances is correct. An authoritative performance intuition can settle interpretive disputes about whose performance correctly follows the code. But if one has an authoritative performance intuition, the code itself seems unnecessary except perhaps as a temporary learning crutch. Like Wittgenstein's ladder, once we have ascended we see its meaninglessness and toss it away. Like Confucius at 70, we can eventually follow spontaneous reactions of our heart-mind. Mencius' solution to the interpretive problem carries the seeds of Mad-Chanism.

The Rule of Law and the Rule of Man

A parallel to this interpretive concern is central to the Western concept of law as well. Law is not merely a code with punishment attached. Law, this analysis contends, is essentially an authoritative decision procedure for social decisions of all sorts. The key decision is the interpretation of the law. Punishment is common but not essential to something's being a law. Authoritative interpretation of the guiding code is the mark of a legal system.

Here the contract of positive law and morality emerges. Morality does not have an authoritative decision procedure. There is no fixed code; there are no performative moral authorities.¹⁵ Morality *proper* contrasts with the accepted morality of a group. The general acceptance does not make mores moral. Advocacy by socially acclaimed sages does not make conventions right. This view of morality is central to Western moral individualism. Each individual deserves fundamental respect as a co-equal source of the moral law.

We then appeal to ethical individualism to justify the ideal of the rule of law. The powers *WILL* punish people who displease them. The human thirst for vengeance is a fact about human nature and about power. Law is a protection to individuals, to rational agents, because it makes the punishment predictable. Rational agents can plan courses of action that insulate them from official coercion. With legal institutions, people will know how to act so as to avoid coercive force. That ideal, of course, is only approximated in our actual law systems.

Still there is a meaningful contrast with *rule of man* where the law is not specifically, clearly spelled out. Under rule of man, the authority decides on the basis of his moral intuition about what kind of person you are. That makes life more difficult for blacks, deviants, non-standard people and women. We regard any hint of this as criticism and evidence of how our rule of law ideal has broken down. The neutrality of law has to do with the notion of an objective, universally accessible method of interpretation. Our ideal demands explicit, non-vague rules and strict interpretation. Morality demands, in other words, that law be distinct from morality. It is morally important that its guidance be clearly stated even if morally wrong.

Confucius' claim does attack punishment, but he doesn't develop the interpretive argument in this Western direction. He doesn't use the term *fa* (standard) for doing it—hardly at all, in fact. The two occurrences in *The Analects* do not seem to tie into his view of either the motivational or the interpretive issue.

Fa in The Mozi

Fa is an important concept, however, in Mohism. Mozi uses it centrally in his historical pragmatic linguistic theory. The Later Mohists use it in their semantic theories. *Fa* (standards) clearly plays a central role in the interpretive issue. Mozi applies it to the interpretation of morality, not to law and punishment. The traditional code is not necessarily right. We

can propose an intelligible substitute only if we have a standard to test the proposed code. Mozi's standard for the code is *li-hai*(benefit-harm). This gives us clear access to real morality. "The natural will is like a compass to a wheelwright or a square to a carpenter."

Sentences and Guiding Terms

Ancient Chinese linguistic analysis, however, is easily distorted when we apply our familiar conceptual scheme of rules, sentences and truth in interpreting it. Confucius was talking about a scheme of guidance. We would naturally segment that guiding discourse into units that we would call rules (prescriptive sententials or laws). Our tradition thinks the natural units of discourse (complete thoughts) are marked by periods. But Confucius never characterized the *li* as rules, as oughts, as prescriptive sentences. Whenever he (or his forgers) got down close to describing the formal structure of guidance schemes, they found *ming* (names). So the interpretive question was put in terms of rectification of names.

The sages assigned names to social ranks (Rulers name people to those ranks) and that name guides proper *li* behavior. We behave properly toward each other only if we properly classify each other's name-rank-status for the application of *li*. The whole code fits the names into a scheme as we should fit into the social scheme. But the idea of breaking that scheme into units where we put periods was not part of their philosophical grammar.

Mozi engages the debate at the name level. A *dao* is a scheme of names designed to guide behavior. The standard case is the social role name. But ritual objects, real objects, action classifications, all guide behavior as well. Moral disagreement occurs when we apply names differently in guidance. The key to the disagreement, therefore, is *bian* (discrimination). We differ in what we say is *shi* (this : right) and *fei* (not this : wrong) using any term. The use of a name to mark a distinction is the basis of moral guidance.

Mozi proposes *li-hai* (benefit-harm) as the standard to guide prescriptive language. It guides both the application and ordering of names into *dao*. So he talks of the *dao* of *yu-wu* (having-lacking) in his theory of spirits and fate. We have misinterpreted this into a belief in spirits and skepticism about fate. Mozi puts his point very carefully in terms of the proper social standards for using the *yu-wu* (having-lacking) distinction.

Mozi's theory includes three *fa* (standards) of language. They are standards for the application of terms.¹⁶ He repeatedly likens *fa* to

measurement gauges—the plumb line, compass, measuring stick. That is the core theoretical role of *fa* at that time. This use of *fa* is widely attested. Ricketts, for example, identifies the same use in the doctrines attributed to Confucius' closest legalist contemporary, Guanzi. The foot rule, marking line, compass and square, beam and weight, peck bushel and grain leveler are *fa* (standards of measurement).¹⁷ Guanzi could, therefore, consistently advocate both *li* and *fa*. Confucius needn't have been critical of Guanzi for this attitude and wasn't. *Fa* could easily be complementary to a traditional guiding scheme of names.

Standards and Moral Skepticism

But Mozi rejected the *li*. He did so, however, not on the grounds of their vagueness but on moral grounds. Traditional codes may be morally wrong. To determine if they are moral, we must have a standard. Given his philosophical grammar, the standard will be the standard of language—the *dao* of terms. That standard is altruistic utility—the *li-hai* (benefit-harm) distinction. The *li* (ritual) was not moral. It was wasteful to the society and harmful to people in general.

Mozi's position has a famous philosophical weakness. Any attempt at moral reform proposes a hypothesis about what is *shi* and *fei*. Because it is a reform, it yields a different pattern of *shi-fei* than our acquired traditional attitudes. A traditionalist regards that as evidence that the reform proposal is wrong. The reformer's arguments seem to take his criterion for granted and, therefore, beg the question. The traditional scheme includes thick moral concepts that we apply or project onto the world with remarkable social consistency. We don't have strict rules for their application, but native speakers typically have no trouble applying them in guidance.

The reformer cannot rely on that scheme of shared intuitions. His proposal must be more easily projectible to give any guidance at all. Mozi thus presents his proposal as analogous to measurement with a gauge. Ordinary people can apply the standard without needing an educated intuition. The gauge guarantees that the standard will be applied in a constant way in guiding behavior. Ordinary people can't be expected to perform *li* (ritual) correctly, but they can measure a board accurately. The utility standard is easily projectible. It has a measurement-like quality. They need only their eyes and ears.

We require such projectibility of any moral reform merely to be able to assess it. If we depart from accepted standards, our reform standard

yields different outcomes than the community's. The test of the standards tends to be that it yields moral outcomes. Still, as Zhuang-zi delights in pointing out, we seem to find no neutral ground for assessing the moral reform proposal. Those who accept the utility standard think the outputs of utilitarian morality are obviously immoral.

Given that the reform is less well entrenched in our acquired moral intuitions, the best we can ask of the moral reform is clarity, simplicity and easy projectibility. Mozi's second standard of language is its popular applicability—it should be accessible to people who have merely the use of their eyes and ears. We cannot rely on rules which require a college education to apply.

The Theoretical Role of Fa

This was the original role of *fa* (standards) in Mozi's thought. It is closely connected with the use Ricketts found in Guanzi. Creel puts it as well as anyone. The legalist bureaucratic focus is "concerned with almost mathematical rigor, to describe the way in which a rule can maintain his position and cause his state to prosper by means of administrative technique and applied psychology . . . he does not advocate the use of either naked power or harsh punishments. . . he must make particulars manageable by grouping them in classes, and dealing with them as categories. . . And he must deal with everything and every person by means of completely impersonal technique, with utter objectivity."¹⁸

This measuring device for the use of an instruction set is linked to the verbal form of *fa*—to model, to emulate. The contrast with *fa* is private reasoning, subjective intuition, scholarly cliques and their partisan intuitions of interpretation.¹⁹ *Fa* thus is not merely standards, but public, projectible, objective, constant, reliable standards. Early legalists thus clearly separated from justification of *fa* from institutions of punishment. Punishment is necessary for motivation. Standards are necessary for clarity and reliability of all forms of social guidance.²⁰ They are two separate aspects of social control.

Quite clearly, however, what we call laws—publicly promulgated, clear, specific general rules with authoritative published interpretations are a subset of such standards. It happens that we (Westerners) call them laws mainly when they are tied to official punishment. If they are tied to rewards, like promotion, tenure, or salary, we call them standards of tenure. If they are tied to state imprisonment or execution, they are laws. A look at legalists' theory from Guanzi and Shangyang to Hanfeizi makes

perfectly clear that all of them thought of *fa* as important in reward, advancement, appointment, job evaluation just as much as in guiding punishment.

Hanfeizi's Ethical Theory

But in *The Hanfeizi* we get something that seems familiar to our positive theories of law—a specific and strongly stated antagonism to *li* (ritual) and *i* (morality). We can understand this best as a reaction to his Confucian mentor—Xunzi. Xunzi reacted to Zhuang-zi's anarchistic, non-cognitivist relativism by insisting that the *fa* (standard) of interpretation of *li* (ritual) had to be conventional. It was the product of *si* (thinking) not nature. The final standard can only be the scholar inheritor of an educational tradition—the judgement of the *Gentleman*. The sage kings started the tradition and, Xunzi insists, it makes no sense to say a word is used correctly outside of a tradition of usage.

Zhuang-zi had shown that appeals to intuition are circular and self-justifying. Anyone's interpretation will seem intuitively correct for him and those who share his perspective and wrong for those who do not. This wrecks Mencius' attempt to defend Confucianism against Mozi by appealing to a natural moral instinct that is expressed in traditional Confucian norms. Since even the fool has a ruling heart-mind that shoots out *shi* and *fei*, you need to appeal to something other than instinct to justify the claim that we ought to train the fool to think like a sage.

For Xunzi, therefore, the historical conventionality of the *li* (ritual) becomes a positive strength. The transmission is the only plausible account of real authority. So for Xunzi, the *fa* (standard) is the trained intuition of a traditional scholar.

Hanfeizi, himself a ruling noble, could hardly fail to notice that this is a plea for the almost absolute authority of a scholar elite. His political theory is that the authority belongs to the king. The king is an institutional reformer. He thus has to reject any rival codes or guides to behavior—especially those that transfer interpretive authority from the rule to his Advisors.

A consequence of Hanfeizi's theory that rejects *li* (ritual) and *i* (morality) is that the only *fa* (standards) he accepts are promulgated general orders from the ruler. This is not because *fa* has changed meaning. It has not come to refer to sentential prescriptions backed up by punishment. He simply opposes treating an elite's intuition as a *fa* and opposes any code of conduct that required that. His radically anti-

traditional theory insists on placing power solely in the king's hands. He draws solace from the Daoist point that the standards of morality cannot be fixed without begging the question. Thus focus of morality leads to relativism, skepticism and disorder. Best to dispense with such talk and stick to clear, public, standards of behavior.

The point of my analysis is that standards have always included laws as a subset. The essential link to our Western justification of the rule of law is predictability. The rule of man depends on intuition for its standards and those intuitions differ just as our moral outlooks do.

How to Reduce Punishment and Pacify

The legalists do consistently take the view that *fa* (standards), produce more reliability and therefore pacify people. They allege repeatedly that *fa* (standards) will reduce punishments and eliminate the need for pardons. This ought to have tipped us off. If *fa* literally means penal laws, then punishment only comes with *fa*. It could hardly be reduced by them. But clear objective standards, easily applied and widely known will reduce punishments because people can accurately gauge what will bring the wrath of the powerful of their heads.

Why would draconian punishments pacify people? Is that too just a big lie? No. The point is that measurable, publicly accessible standards, objective and applied equally and impartially give us the power to avoid the coercive force of the state. People are pacified by the regularity and predictability of the system. If we pick an elite cadre of professors of ethics and let them dish out punishment whenever they think we are *bad* whatever that might come to. None of us who are not of the same class, type, prejudices and attitudes as those professors are very sage. We have to curry favor with that class rather than follow clear guideposts.

So *fa* means measurable, generally accessible, standards for application of terms of behavior guidance. Clearly legal code fall within their scope. So laws can be called *fa*. That doesn't mean *fa* has changed its meaning. It means that some philosophers or others will use this general term in theoretical contexts where the emphasis falls on different parts of that range. But they do not think in English and translate different English words into Chinese when they do philosophy. They use Chinese terms and concepts to express their disagreements with each other. Our problems as translators cannot be flipped to explain their process of thought.

Schwartz, in fact, is amazingly prescient about what he calls the *fundamental issue* dividing these two schools (albeit one that betrays

his own fondness for vanguard elite). Legalism stands for “a vision of society in which “objective” mechanisms of “behavioral” control become automatic instruments for achieving well-defined socio-political goals.” This is correct, but it shows that retributive legal constructs are not essential to the meaning of *fa*. The issue is between reliable standards guiding human behavior versus the intuition of the scholarly elite.

Schwartz identifies Shang Yang as the source of Hanfeizi’s concept of *fa* and there clearly states that it is not law but a program of social institutional change.²¹ Penal law, he argues correctly, is a sub-class of *fa*. However, he then relies on his translation (*fa* as law) to drag in the quite different issue of punishment. He takes the theory of human motivation underlying the application of punishment to be part of the meaning of *fa* in general. That theory of motivation is indeed shared by Shangyang, Xunzi and Hanfeizi. *Fa* (standards), however, deals only with the projectible, measurable, non-intuitive nature of standards used in whatever part of the social guiding mechanism. *Fa* are thus important in penal mechanisms. They do give us some protection against arbitrary imposition of them. But the justification of punishment mechanisms is not the justification of *fa*. Conversely, the justification of *fa* does not depend on the justification of punishment.

A Concluding Translations

Now translation offers no special problem. Where Schwartz translates Hanfeizi as saying “people’s nature is such that they delight in disorder and do not cherish the law.” He could capture more nuance and accuracy by “delight in disorder and do not cherish objective, constant socially shared impartial measurable standards of behavior.” It is a long winded translation, but perfectly intelligible as a translation. It does not require us to change the meaning of the term. People are naturally inclined to private interpretation and the public, shared standards have to be motivated. The theory of motivation uses the threat of punishment. This doesn’t change our understanding of Hanfeizi much but makes much clearer the nature of his argument against the Confucian conventions and against using the Gentleman as the interpretive standard. And it keeps the meaning of *fa* consistent with those whose social theories he rejects.

NOTES

1. Especially in Creel, 1970, p. 92.

2. Creel, 1970, p. 92.

3. Schwartz, Benjamin. *The World of Thought in Ancient China*. Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 1985, p. 321.

4. The orthodox position is, therefore, not so different from Creel's. Creel treats *fa* as having two different meanings. He says it has a different meaning on the same page of some philosophers.

5. Ames, Roger. *The Art of Rulership : A Study of Ancient Chinese Political Thought*. Honolulu : University of Hawaii Press, 1983.

6. Strangely, this bothered me more at first than the equally puzzling but non-controversial claim that *dao* both means to *speak* and *the unspeakable*.

7. Obviously the same question applies to *dao*.

8. Consider the assertion that *nature* means something different from Xunzi and Mencius, that *i* (morality) is definitionally the opposite of *li* (utility) for Confucians while the Mohists define *i* as *li*.

9. Notice that in each case, the orthodoxy makes the rival school adopt a meaning that is inconsistent with the verbal use of the term. *Dao* (v) means *speak* but Daoists use *Dao* (n) to mean *the unspeakable absolute*. *Fa* (v) means *to model* or *imitate* but Legalists use it to mean *law*.

10. Mozi is not immune to this treatment. Confucians typically claim that the meaning of *i* (morality) is captured by its opposition to *li* (utility). So Mozi's moral theory is a contradiction in terms!

11. Consider the commonplace observation that *fen* (divide) means *social divisions* when used by Xunzi.

12. There is an interesting coincidence that these two, essentially pro-Confucian treatments depart from the Confucian orthodoxy in insisting that Confucius was not really opposed to punishment. Both argue that Confucius thought punishment was at least permissible. Schwartz has Confucius saying punishment is indispensable albeit not the only indispensable technique of social control. Strangely, Schwartz does not directly address Confucius's arguments about reliance on penal law and punishment until he gets to the chapter on Legalism where he presents them in quite accurate detail. If he had rehearsed those reasons in the context of his Confucius chapter, it would have made those statements of tolerance of punishment seem quite bizarre. Ames quotes many of the passages (p. 168-176) but argues that this merely shows a preference for education over punishment. But since we know Confucius is practical, he must realize that punishment is *necessary* as a last resort. The problem is that, as a practical man, I doubt that punishment is necessary. Ames may think it is. But, while I find Ames and Schwartz giving *their* arguments for why we must tolerate punishment, I can't find Confucius giving such arguments. All his arguments are against it. If I credit him with practical wisdom, I will say he has argued

correctly and that is the end of the matter. Ames and Schwartz credit him with great practical insight—like theirs. I credit him with practical insight like mine. But the bottom line is that the only arguments we find that clearly address the matter fall on my side. What encourages Ames is that there are mentions of punishment *without any argument*. Ames takes that as an argument for tolerance. But that is, at best, an argument for existence, not permissibility. Obviously Confucius is aware of the existence of a practice of punishment and he has the term in his vocabulary. To warp that into an argument about its indispensable necessity in the face of a fistful of arguments against it is the height of arbitrary dogma in interpretation.

13. Hsiao, Kung-chuan. *A History of Chinese Political Thought, Volume I: From The Beginnings to the Sixth Century A.D.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979. p. 368.

14. See Schwartz p. 327.

15. There is no one, including God who makes something morally right by saying “It is right.” Moral laws, like scientific laws, are hypotheses tested by reason, subject to rational revision when they lead to unacceptable consequences.

16. See Hansen, 1985.

17. Ricketts, Alan W. *Guanzi: Political, Economic, and Philosophical Essays from Early China*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985, p. 128.

18. Creel. 1970, p. 128.

19. Ricketts. 1985, p. 236.

20. Ricketts. 1985, p. 241.

21. Schwartz. 1985, p. 331–33.

FOUR ASPECTS OF BUDDHIST ETHICS UNFAMILIAR IN THE WEST

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Western ethics and the ethics of Theravada Buddhism, which we shall simply refer to as “Buddhist ethics” throughout this paper, seem much alike : killing, lying, stealing, and sexual misconduct are deemed unethical in each. But this ecumenical surface masks dimensions of Buddhist ethics that are not part of the way philosophers in the West currently understand ethics. In what follows I shall focus on four aspects of Buddhist ethics unfamiliar to contemporary Western philosophers : (1) Buddhist ethics emphasizes inner investigation, which is a sharp contrast with the emphasis in Western ethics on external actions; (2) judgments in Buddhist ethics are not universalizable, whereas contemporary Western philosophers typically argue that universalizability is essential feature of ethics; (3) praise and blame are not an essential part of Buddhist ethics; and (4) in Buddhist ethics there is an epistemological and prudential answer to the question “Why be moral?”

1. From External Actions to Inward Investigation

The legalistic and rule-oriented framework of much of western ethics underscores its emphasis on external action. We might expect a similar emphasis in Buddhist ethics on external actions, at least when we examine the five precepts :

I undertake the training to refrain from destroying living creatures.

I undertake the training to refrain from taking what is not given.

I undertake the training to refrain from sexual misconduct.

I undertake the training to refrain from incorrect speech.

I undertake the training to refrain from intoxicants that lead to carelessness.

These five precepts are the substance of Right Action. Right Action is one component of the Eightfold Path. The Eightfold Path is the fourth of the Four Noble Truths, which are an essential part of Buddha's basic teachings. The five precepts appear to be similar to any five rules in the West that prohibit killing, lying, theft, sexual misconduct, and the use of intoxicants.

Although Buddhist ethics begins with a recognizable focus on external actions in the five precepts, it very quickly takes an inward turn. Following the five precepts involves undertaking a training. The point of this training and the corresponding restraints is to become liberated from greed, anger and delusion. One does not do this simply by external actions. "Not nakedness, not plaited hair, not dirt, not fasting, or lying on the earth; not rubbing with dust, not sitting motionless, can purify a mortal who has not overcome desires,"¹ for it is acknowledged within Buddhism that "whatsoever there is of evil, connected with evil, belonging to evil—all issue from the mind. [Likewise,] whatsoever there is of good, connected with good, belonging to good—all issue from the mind."² His translation adds that "all issue from the mind" is, literally, "mind precedes them all" (*manopubbangama*).³ Although this is the heart of Buddhist ethics, Buddha recognized that ethics would have a twofold character: one that focused on the external but did not lead to liberation, and another that intimately involved mindfulness and did lead to liberation.

Now, I, monks, say that right action is twofold. There is, monks, the right action that has cankers, is on the side of merit, that ripens unto cleaving (to new birth).⁴

By contrast, "There is, monks, the right action that is ariyan, cankerless, supermundane, a component of the Way."⁵ What is unique about cankerless right action is that it involves, along with the rest of the Eightfold Path, mindfulness:

Mindful, he gets rid of wrong action; mindful, entering on right action, he abides in it. That is his right mindfulness. Thus these three things circle round and follow after right action, that is to say: right view, right endeavour, right mindfulness.⁶

Buddhist ethics, insofar as it leads to liberation, requires more than just restraining action: it requires that one be mindful. "Be not thoughtless, guard your thoughts,"⁷ is always the focus. This intimate connection between mindfulness and the precepts requires not only restraint, but

restraint in order to provide a context for an inner investigation that brings into play mindfulness in its most rigorous senses : the investigation in immediate awareness of body, of feelings, of perception, of violation, and of consciousness, with an emphasis always placed on “deeds of mind.”⁸ This inner investigation is not an intellectual exercise but instead a focus of bare attention of these phenomena to which we have direct access.

The interplay between the precepts and mindfulness also involves reflection. Anyone “who will purify a deed of body, will purify a deed of speech, will purify a deed of mind, will do so (only) after repeated reflection.”⁹ This reflection involves both what is familiar to contemporary western philosophers, and what is not.

What is familiar in this reflection involves trying to understand, by examining how acts affect oneself, how they are likely to affect others. Even in the focus on external actions, we are encouraged to develop an awareness of how things would be for oneself if the situation were reversed. Buddha illustrates the sense of reflection familiar to us in the following passage :

In this matter. . . the disciple thus reflects : Here am I, fond of my life, not wanting to die, fond of pleasure and averse from pain. Suppose someone should rob me of my life (fond of life as I am and not wanting to die, fond of pleasure and averse from pain), it would not be a thing pleasing or delightful to me. If I, in my turn, should rob of his life one fond of his life, not wanting to die, one fond of pleasure and averse from pain, it would not be a thing pleasing or delightful to him. For a state that is not pleasant or delightful to me must be so to him also : and a state that is not pleasing or delightful to me—how could I inflict that upon another?¹⁰

Similar thought experiments are provided for theft, sexual misconduct, and a number of varieties of wrong speech. In short, we are like those with whom we interact, our acts will affect them in the same way as similar acts would affect us, and so, becoming aware of this, we should act accordingly. There is a strong resemblance between this and the familiar Golden Rule : Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

But there is also an unfamiliar aspect to reflection within Buddhist ethics :

And how... do these unskilled, moral habits originate? Their

origination is spoken of too. It should be answered that the origination is in the mind. Which mind? For the mind is manifold, various, diverse. That mind which has attachment, aversion, confusion—originating from this are unskilled moral habits.¹¹

In short, the innermost causes of our unskillful moral habits are in the mind : greed, hatred and confusion.¹² Reflecting, we begin to become aware of these root causes of our actions and their consequences. This mode of reflection, bringing to awareness the root causes of our unskilled actions, is typically not part of the contemporary Western philosophical understanding of ethics.

Coming to know the root causes of our actions can also lead us to a better understanding of the moral skillfulness, or moral unskillfulness, of our actions. Whether an action proceeds from greed or from boredom or from anger or from compassion is largely irrelevant in mainstream Western philosophy. But this is an important feature in Buddhist ethics and might clarify what otherwise would be controversial. For example, is it right to file a tax return which fails to disclose all earned income? One might argue that no one has consented to pay taxes, that state taxation is coercive and theft, that taxes pay for weapons and other evils, and that, by lowering the amount of tax one has to pay, one is simply keeping the thief of state from taking more of ones earnings. On the other hand, the system does stipulate reporting all earned income and the expenditures of tax dollars do help all of us. One can imagine how these opening volleys over the moral status of failing to report all earned income on a tax form might lead to a protracted and inconclusive discussion. But when we bring into the discussion the typical motivation for failing to report all earned income, then Buddha's emphasis on greed, hatred and delusion might help clarify this apparent ethical controversy. It seems safe to assume that the typical motivation for failing to report taxable income or for not paying one's taxes is to keep as much money as possible for oneself, one's family, and one's projects. If that were the motive, and in discussions of failing to report all earned income on tax forms this is plausibly the typical motive, then the Buddha's focus on greed clarifies what might otherwise be controversial on the external level. Acting from greed does not lead to liberation, and where an action is motivated by greed, we need to suspect that it may be one that should be avoided. In this illustration understanding not only the consequences of the action but also its motivation is part of what we understand when we fully understand a precept and how it applies

to our own lives.

Although this illustration might suggest that the point of the inner focus is to identify clearly what external acts are to be avoided, it is important to emphasize that this is not the main point. The focus in the end is always on mindfulness, on inner awareness. According to the late Venerable Ajahn Chah, a renowned bhikkhu in the Theravada tradition, one should "just use the standards of the practice to reflect on oneself inwardly."¹³ Repressing those urges that motivate us not to refrain would not lead to mindfulness, for we would have driven the motive or urge out of our awareness. Likewise, expressing these motives or urges in word or deed would not provide an occasion for coming to be mindful of them. Restraint, falling between repression and expression, creates a region in which we can become mindful of how we are, and so itself is an expression of the Middle Way.

2. The Universalizability of Ethical Judgments

The idea that what is wrong for one person is wrong for any other person with similar capabilities and in a similar situation is almost as central to the contemporary philosopher's perception of ethics as is the focus on external actions. This feature of morality is referred to as the universalizability of ethical judgments. R.M. Hare, the leading spokesperson for universalizability, claims that "universalizability . . . comes to this, that if we make different moral judgements about situations which we admit to be identical in their universal descriptive properties, we contradict ourselves."¹⁴ For Hare, "a person who makes different moral judgments about cases which he admits to be identical in their non-moral universal properties encounters the same kind of incomprehension as is encountered by a logical inconsistency (for example a self contradiction)." Descriptive properties, those that are non-moral universal properties, are, for Hare, properties that the application of which involve truth-conditions. A key test of universalizability involves exchanging the roles of persons in a hypothetical case, leaving all else the same: if one does this, then the same moral judgment should apply after the exchange as before the exchange. For example, if Jill borrows Jane's hat and Jill's act is wrong, then if we switch Jane and Jill so that Jane is borrowing Jill's hat in an otherwise similar hypothetical case, then Jane's act should also be wrong.¹⁵

The inner focus in Buddhist ethics, briefly chronicled above, poses a difficulty for universalizing ethical judgments, for making such judgments

would require some confidence that we could know that these judgments were being made accurately. Consider further our example of Jane and Jill. Suppose we enrich the example by assuming that Jane thinks that borrowing something without asking was taking what was not given, whereas Jill does not think borrowing a hat for a short period of time is contrary to the precepts. In fact, Jill has never even thought that borrowing something from a roommate could be in the same category as an act of stealing, and so, since she thinks that taking what is not given is intended to prohibit stealing, she feels certain that borrowing, like buying or renting, is not prohibited by the precepts. Suppose, finally, that Jill tries to follow the precepts and that therefore she assiduously avoids stealing in any form. Given our enriched example, insofar as Jill is following the precepts, she would not be acting unskillfully if she borrowed Jane's hat, whereas Jane would apparently be violating the precepts if she borrowed Jill's hat.

The general point is that, since what is a skillful moral act will depend in part on a person's own motive and understanding, making judgments about what another person did would require that we know the other person's motive and how the other person understood what they were doing in light of the precepts. Because a person's motives and understanding are not in the public domain, we lack any reliable criterion by which to judge others. What appears to be a skillful act may in fact be quite unskillful, whereas what appears unskillful may in fact be skillful.

Buddhist ethics replaces the judgment of others with a strong emphasis that each of us is to understand the nature of his or her actions in his or her own experience. As Buddha said to the Kalamas :

Do not go upon what has been acquired by repeated hearing; nor upon tradition; nor upon rumour; nor upon what is in a scripture; nor upon surmise; nor upon an axiom; nor upon specious reasoning; nor upon a bias towards a notion that has been pondered over; nor upon another's seeming ability; nor upon the consideration, 'The monk is our teacher.' Kalamas, when you yourselves know... 'these things lead to harm and ill', abandon them.¹⁶

The emphasis on seeing for oneself keeps the focus of the precepts on the individual person who is trying to follow them. As the Dhammapada cautions "If a man looks after the faults of others and always inclined to be offended, his own passions will grow, and he is far from the destruction of passions."¹⁷ Our task is not to judge others, but instead to develop

within ourselves an awareness of how things are. Once this emphasis on inner awareness is clear, it also seems clear that the universalizability of moral judgments has no foothold in Buddhist ethics. Since the core of the development is inner, there is no point to telling what cannot be told, and so no point to criticizing or universalizing judgments of external actions. Each of us must see for himself.

It is important to note that this rejection of the universalizability of ethical judgments is not an adoption of a species of ethical relativism. One is to refrain from taking life, taking what is not given, sexual misconduct, incorrect speech, and intoxicants. Precisely what counts for violating each of these precepts will be a function of one's understanding. Intentionally killing a human being clearly violates the first precept, but what about killing a mosquito—or actions like eating meat that cause others to kill animals? Questions of this kind raise issues that each person must resolve through honest reflection on his or her own experience and on his or her deepening understanding of the precepts.

3. Not an Ethics of Praise and Blame

Praise and blame play a large role in ethics in the West. Part of this emphasis comes from the judgmentalness implicit in Western morality. Once one has given up on universalizable judgments and on judging others, there is no motivation to introduce the categories of praise and blame.

A second reason why praise and blame plays no essential role in Buddhist ethics is that, within Buddhism, the concept of a person is itself a construct. Except on the conventional level, there is no one to praise or blame. Since the goal is to gain liberation from these conventional confusions, one certainly would not go about reinforcing them. However, most of us live on the conventional level and, for good measure, we find even in the Pali texts the commonsense observation that "there never was, there never will be, nor is there now, a man who is always blamed, or a man who is always praised."¹⁸

Although all of this is alien to the contemporary western philosopher's view of ethics, it is not alien to the western tradition of ethics. Consider, for example, Epictetus' advice on praise and blame :

The ignorant man's position and character is this : he never looks to himself for benefit or harm, but to the world outside him. The philosopher's position and character is that he always looks to

himself for benefit and harm. The signs of one who is making progress are : he blames none, praises none, complains of none, accuses none.... And if any one compliment him he laughs in himself at his compliment; and if one blames him, he makes no defense... If men regard him as foolish or ignorant he pays no heed. In one word, he keeps watch and guard on himself as his own enemy, lying in wait for him.¹⁹

4. Why Be Moral?

The fourth feature I will highlight focuses on the question "Why be moral?" Consider how contemporary Western philosophers answer this question. They say that the reason for being moral is either just to be moral or that the reason to be moral is to promote security, happiness, rights, or some other observable value. By way of contrast, in Buddhist ethics there is an epistemological function that is consistent with the emphasis on the inward turn. The Buddha summarizes one such answer when he addresses Ananda's question : what "is the reward and blessing of wholesome morality?"²⁰ Buddha replies :

The Vision and knowledge with regard to Deliverance, Ananda. Thus, the reward and fruit of wholesome morality is freedom from remorse, the reward of freedom from remorse : joy; of joy: rapture; of rapture : tranquility; of tranquility : happiness; of happiness : concentration; of concentration : the vision and knowledge according to reality; of the vision and knowledge according to reality : turning away and detachment; of turning away and detachment : the vision and knowledge with regard to deliverance.²¹

Thus, Ananda, wholesome morality leads step by step to the Highest.

This epistemological role of ethics was not unknown in classical Western philosophy, as Alasdair MacIntyre notes when writing about Aristotle, "There is a fundamental contrast between man-as-he-happens-to-be and man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realized-his-essential-nature. Ethics [for Aristotle] is the science which is to enable men to understand how they make the transition from the former state to the later."

Since this classical view is alien to our contemporary conception of ethics, it is important to note that, in Buddhism, there is an epistemological function to ethics. Although much needs to be written about the

epistemological role of morality, for our purposes it is sufficient to identify clearly the fourth way in which the ethics of Theravada Buddhism would be unfamiliar to someone steeped in contemporary Western ethics and Western ethical theory.

5. Conclusion

I have illustrated four ways in which Buddhist ethics is unlike the contemporary, dominant view of ethics held by western philosophers. I have not even begun to try to explain the plausibility of the Buddhist answer to the "Why be moral?" question, and I have only briefly suggested some of the inner work that is integral to understanding the way in which the moral restraints work with mindfulness. The differences I have isolated would not appear dramatic if this essay were written two thousand years ago, and that, in itself, may encourage those of us in the West to look to the East to better understand our own fragments of the language of morality.

NOTES

1. Muller, F. Max. trans. *Dhammapada*. In *The Sacred Books of the East* Vol. X. Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1881. p. 141.
2. Woodward, F. L. trans. *Anguttara-Nikaya*. In *the Book of Gradual Sayings* Vol. I. Oxford : Pali Text Society, 1989. p. 1, 6. In *The Buddha's Ancient Path*. Kandy Sri Lanka : Buddhist Publication Society, 1974. Piyadassi Thera points out that the phrase translated above as "as such have mind for their causing" literally means : "mind precedes them all *manopubbangama*," p. 135
3. *Dhammapada*, op. cit. : p. I
4. Horner, I.B. trans. *Majjhima-Nikaya*. In *The Middle Length Saying III*, Oxford : The Pali Text Society, 1990. p. III, 73.
5. *Majjhima-Nikaya*, op. cit. : p. III, 73-74.
6. *Majjhima-Nikaya*, op. cit. : p. III, 74. Notice, too, that this "circling round" and "following after right action" also precedes right action. Thus right action is immersed in right view, right endeavor, and right mindfulness.
7. *Dhammapada*, op. cit. : p. 327.
8. Horner, L.B. trans. *Majjhima-Nikaya*. In *The Middle Length Saying II*, Oxford : The Pali Text Society, 1989. p. I, 373. "Of these three deeds thus divided, thus particularized, I lay down that deed of mind is the more blamable in the effecting of an evil deed, in the rolling on of an evil deed; deed of body is not like it, deed of speech is not like it" *ibid.* : pp. 373-374.

9. *Majjhima-Nikaya*, op. cit. : p. I, 420.
10. Woodward, F. L. trans. *Sanyutta-Nikaya*. In *The Book of Kindred Sayings*, London : Pali Text Society, 1979. p. LV, XI, I, vii.
11. *Majjhima-Nikaya*, op. cit. : p. II, 26.
12. Horner, I.B. trans. *Majjhima-Nikaya*. In *The Middle Length Saying I*, London : Pali Text Society, 1987. p. I,47. "And what, your reverences, is unskill's root? Greed is unskill's root, hatred is unskill's root, confusion is unskill's root. This your reverences, is called unskill's root," *ibid*.
13. *Food for the Heart*, Bahn Bung Wai, Thailand : The Sangha, Wat Path Nonachat, 1992. p.59. In the quotation above, taken from a discourse, I have changed 'yourself' to 'oneself'.
14. *Moral Thinking*, Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1981. p. 21. For Hare, "a person who makes different moral judgments about cases which he admits to be identical in thier non-moral universal properties encounters the same kind of incomprehension as is encountered by a logical inconsistency (for example a self-contradication)" *ibid.*, p. 115. Descriptive properties, those that are non-moral universal properties, are, for Hare, properties the application of which involve truth-conditions.
15. See especially Hare's *Freedom and Reason*, New York : Oxford University Press, 1963. p. Chapter 11.
16. Soma Tera, trans. *Anguttara-Nikaya III. 7, #65*. In *The Kalama Sutta*, Kandy. Ceylon : Buddhist Publication Society, 1963. pp. 6-7.
17. *Dhammapada*, op. cit. : p. 253.
18. *Dhammapada*, op. cit. : p. 228.
19. Matheson, P.E. trans. *The Manuel of Epictetus : 48*. In *The Stoic and Epicurean Philosophers*, New York : The Modern Library, 1940. p. 482.
20. For a brief but clear overview of the recent discussion in Western philosophy see Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1993. pp. 314-335.
21. *Anguttara-Nikaya*. In *The Book of the Gradual Sayings V*, op. cit. : p. X, 1.

SELF-REALIZATION ETHICS : VEDĀNTA AND ARISTOTLE

Narayan Champawat

Philosophers writing about Hindu Ethics have noticed certain features of Vedāntic morality such as a lack of universal ethical laws, relativity of ethical duties to persons and circumstances, a mixture of self-centered and society-centered directives, an emphasis on bodily as well as mental growth, and, an intertwining of ethics and metaphysics. These features are seen as providing evidence that Hindu ethics is somehow philosophically deficient. This attitude is a product of a tendency to view Kantian ethics as the model for ethical thought. However, a more adequate model for a rational reconstruction of Hindu ethics is provided by Eudaemonism. Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics is, historically, the best version of eudaemonism.

Eudaemonism asserts that the good for man consists in his happiness or well-being. Human well-being is obtained by that excellent activity which fulfills its nature, that is, by its self-realization.

We will now demonstrate how Aristotle's eudaemonism closely parallels Vedānta Ethics.

There are three major Vedāntic traditions : (1) Mimāṃsā; (2) Advaita Vedānta; and, (3) Theistic Vedānta.

Mimāṃsā ethics is the culmination of the Dharmashāstric tradition incorporating the Vedic Hymns, Brahmanas and the Epics. It views man's goals as three : artha, kama, and dharma (trivarga). In this tradition, a successful human life culminates in Heaven (svarga). The basic attitude here is that of life and world affirmation (pravṛtti). Both Advaita Vedānta (Samkara) and Theistic Vedānta (Ramānuja, Madhava, Vallabha) emphasize the fourth goal of man, namely, moksha. They advocate turning away from worldly concerns (*nivṛtti*).

The fundamental concept for eudaemonism is the good. The good is what everything aims at. Aristotle says that the end, what everyone aims at, is eudaemonia i.e. happiness or well-being. This is also the view found

in the Vedic hymns, Dharmashāstras and the Epics. *Ānanda* is frequently cited as the goal. But what sort of life is a life of well-being? Aristotle says that four main kinds of life seem to be chosen by men : pleasure, wealth, honour, and contemplation. These closely parallel the four Hindu goals of man, namely, kama, artha, dharma and moksha. We will later see how metaphysical differences account for the difference between Aristotle's contemplation and Vedānta's moksha. Aristotle quickly dismisses life of pleasure, which is chosen by the many, as the *eudaemon* life. We must be guided by the wise rather than the many. A similar discussion occurs in the Katha Upanishad when Death teaches Naciketas that the wise person chooses the better (*śhreyas*) over the pleasanter (*preyas*).

Aristotle claims that the wise would agree that well-being consists in the excellent functioning of a person. In order to decide what constitutes excellent functioning we have to study human nature. Here ethics relies on psychology and metaphysics. A human being has a body and a soul and the soul itself can be divided into a part made up of desires and appetites and a part which is intelligence. Aristotle recognizes three kinds of excellence corresponding to these three facets of human beings : bodily excellence, excellence of character and excellence of intelligence.

Aristotle underemphasizes bodily excellence in his ethical system, leaving it as a topic for biological or medical study. By contrast, bodily excellence gets greater recognition in Vedānta ethics through its central role in Hatha Yoga.

Aristotle pays great attention to excellence of character. Excellence here consists in placing desires and emotions under the control of intelligence. Aristotle's final definition, that of excellence of character (i.e. a moral virtue), is given as : "It is a settled state of choice, in a mean relative to us, which mean is determined by reason as the wise man determines it." (*Nicomachean Ethics*).¹ This definition has three parts : (1) Virtue is a character trait; (2) it is a mean, relative to us, determined by reason; (3) a man of practical wisdom is the authority for finding out what the mean is.

Vedāntic ethics too has an implicit definition of excellence of character : "It is a settled state of choice, in accordance with *dharma*, which is determined (first) by shruti, next by smriti, and finally by the wise man."

Just as Aristotle claims that virtuous action is determined by reason, Vedāntic ethics claims that it is determined by reason, principle or law, since dharma is the ordering principle of the universe. How do we find out what is the content of this law? For Aristotle, it is through the man of practical wisdom. For Vedāntic ethics, dharma is primarily revealed in

the shruti (smṛiti and the man of practical wisdom are secondary). Both systems allow virtue to be relative to person, time and place. It is worth noticing that Aristotle's reliance on the man of practical wisdom is much less authoritarian than the Vedāntic reliance on shruti. It leaves room for virtues to change over time as the cultural milieu and knowledge of human nature changes.

By applying his definition of virtue, Aristotle comes up with the following list of virtues : Courage, Temperance, Liberality, Gentleness, Friendliness, Truthfulness and a Sense of Shame. To these he adds Justice and Friendship. Each of these virtues also figures in the list of virtues advocated by Vedāntic ethics. But the justificatory structure of Vedāntic ethics is more complex than that of Aristotle's because the Indian tradition differs in two significant aspects. First, Vedāntic analysis of human nature indicates that, besides features common to all human beings, each person is a blend of the three gunas : sattva, rajas, and tamas. It follows that excellent activity leading to well-being will differ with the guna-nature. Second, Vedāntic metaphysics is quite different from that of Aristotle. For Aristotle, the span of human life extends from birth to death, and that is all. Thus, the good life lived through an entire life-span covers only one life on this earth. Vedāntists, on the other hand, include in their metaphysics reincarnation, karma, heaven, and Brahman. Good life, for them, has to include a better rebirth, attaining heaven and a proper relation with Brahman.

It follows that Vedantic ethics will have some virtues common to all human beings and some virtues specific to and dependent on the guna-nature of different persons. The common duties, called sanatan dharma, include truthfulness, generosity, self-restraint, refraining from murder and theft, and non-injury (ahimsa). The Indian concept of non-injury, as well as generosity, extends beyond humanity. It is considered a sin to cut a tree or kill a bird. Feeding birds is regarded as a Hindu duty. We see here a difference arising from the fact that whereas Aristotle emphasized man's social nature, Vedāntists saw man as related to and a part of the whole universe.

Besides common duties, there are duties specific to the four classes (varna), namely, Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. The rationale behind this is provided by their guna-nature. The source of the nature of Brahmanas (priests and teachers) is the quality of sattva; that of Kshatriyas (kings and warriors) is rajas, with sattva as the subordinate quality; that of Vaishyas (traders and farmers) is rajas, with tamas as the subordinate quality; that of Shudras (the servile class) is tamas. Therefore, the natural duties of brahmins are the control of internal and external

organs, austerity, purity, forgiveness, straight-forwardness, knowledge, wisdom and faith. The natural duties of Kshatriyas are heroism, boldness, fortitude, promptness, generosity, and lordliness. The natural duties of Vaishyas are agriculture, cattle-rearing and trade, and of the Shudras is in the form of service.²

The virtue of justice, i.e. giving and receiving what is due, which, for Aristotle, covers man's relations within society, gets a more extensive treatment in Vedāntic ethics. Man is a member of a family, first, and has corresponding familial duties. He is also a member of a wider social group and has duties to promote the welfare of society (*loksamgraha*). Furthermore, as a part of the universe, he has three debts : to Gods, to seers, and to the forefathers. He repays these debts through sacrifice, study, and progeny. There are also virtues specific to one's stages in the life-journey (*ashramas*), namely, student, householder, hermit, and ascetic. It is fair to conclude that Vedāntic treatment of virtues is more fine-grained than that of Aristotle.

In his treatment of intellectual virtues, Aristotle emphasizes reason, both theoretical and practical. Vedāntic thought does not emphasize reason in the same way. Truth is already revealed in *shruti*. The only function of reason is to learn and understand *shruti*. This has the unfortunate consequence that, in Vedāntic tradition, conduct of life is not as open to correction and amendment via experience as it is in the Aristotelian tradition.

It is appropriate now to look at two problem areas for Aristotle and Vedāntic ethics, namely, the treatment of slaves or shudras and the treatment of women. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle speaks of the slave as a living tool, thus concluding that his primary virtue is service. In the *Bhagavad Gita* the shudras are described as being primarily *tamas* and, therefore, are assigned service as their primary duty. In the *Politics*, Aristotle adds the biological argument that nature intended some men to be slaves. His theoretical underpinning is chiefly psychological. The soul contains a rational ruling part and an irrational part that is ruled. The slave lacks the deliberative part altogether, while the female has it but not in an authoritative way. Thus, Aristotle justifies assigning a subordinate position to women. Since the female is seen as an incomplete male, lacking in authoritative power of deliberation, the husband's stamp of authority is essential. Vedāntic thought takes a remarkably similar stance with respect to women. "From the point of view of female nature, women are regarded as morally inferior to men. Some early Dharma Sutra writers equate women with shudras in terms of their capacity for moral achievement."³ *Manu Smriti* states that a woman's father protects her in childhood, her husband protects her in youth, and her sons protect her in

old age; a woman is never fit for independence. It follows that the primary virtue of women is obedience to the male sex.

It is worth noticing that ill treatment of slaves/shudras and women in both Aristotelian and Vedāntic thought stems not from a defect in ethical sensibility but from mistaken metaphysical, psychological and biological beliefs.

Finally, let us look at the kind of life that is regarded as achieving the highest good. In Book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle says that the most *eudaemon* life is the life of contemplation and the second most *eudaemon* life is the political life. Why? Because the life of contemplation is most like the life of God, and God is the most *eudaemon* being. He says that we should not heed those who say that, being men, we should think of human things: "so far as possible one should act as an immortal and strive to live according to the highest in oneself."⁴ God is pure intuitive reason, whose activity consists in pure thinking of thinking. Man, although primarily a body and a soul which is occupied with discursive reason, has a limited capacity for intuitive reason. Life of contemplation is the highest because it displays this divine element in man. Furthermore, such a life combines worth, intrinsic end, heightened pleasure, self-sufficiency and unweariedness—all the attributes of the supreme end. Every one of these attributes is also found in the supreme end of Vedāntic life.

Aristotle seems to countenance two kinds of good life—the lesser one is the political life, the higher one, emphasizing the divine element, is the contemplative life. A similar duality runs through all the three traditions within Vedāntic ethics. In the *Mīmāṃsā* tradition, a life devoted to artha and kama, modulated by dharma, is a worldly good life and it culminates in a good next birth. But a life in which dharma predominates culminates in the highest good, namely life of Heaven (*svarga*). Great heroes of the *Mahābhārat* such as Yudisthira, Arjuna, and Bhishma and heroines such as Kunti and Draupadi are models of life lived by the precepts of *Mīmāṃsā* ethics.

In Advaita Vedantic ethics, the worldly good life is one lived according to duties entailed by the goals of artha, *kāma* and dharma, with increasing emphasis on non-attachment (*nishkāma karma*). In this tradition man is seen as existing on two levels: the empirical man is body and mind (including reason), and the transcendental man is witness-consciousness (*ātman*). Hence, the highest life is *moksha*, where the highest in man (*ātman*) realizes its unity with the Supreme witness-consciousness (*Brahman*).

In Theistic Vedānta, the worldly good life is similar to that in Advaita Vedānta but with the all-important addition of *bhakti* (devotion to the

supreme lord). Consequently, the highest life is one where the ātman dwells with the supreme lord and enjoys knowledge and bliss. Aquinas rather than Aristotle mirrors the eudaemonistic ethics of Theistic Vedānta.

A rational reconstruction of Vedāntic ethics as a variety of eudaemonistic ethics is intellectually satisfying because it explains some problematic aspects of Hindu ethics :

1. Many modern thinkers have been puzzled by many instances of great heroes of the Mahabharat such as Krishna and Yudhisthira resorting to occasional lies and deceits to win a righteous war. This puzzlement arises from an acceptance of the Kantian tradition in which moral rules such as 'Always tell the truth' must be exceptionless. In the eudaemonistic tradition, what is prized is the virtuous character. For example, Yudhisthira was a truthful person, i.e. he habitually told the truth. But what must be done in a given situation is determined by the judgement of a man of practical wisdom. Since Krishna and Yudhisthira were paradigms of practical wisdom, what they did was right.

2. Eudaemonistic ethics overcomes the dichotomy between self-regarding and other-regarding virtues. What is good for the self is also good for others. Doing what is good for others is also conducive to the good life of the self. No wonder that Vedāntic ethics does not praise self-sacrifice.

3. Mistreatment of shudras and women is a consequence not of moral blindness, but metaphysical and scientific mistakes. The information leading to the claim that women have a defective nature or that the guna theory correctly describes different varnas was plainly wrong.

4. Mistrust of human reason and too great a reliance on Vedic authority meant that mistakes in metaphysical or psychological theories were not open to correction. Hence, Vedāntic ethics, in spite of its many brilliant insights, failed in the long run to be a reliable guide to a truly human good life.

NOTES

1. McKeon, Richard. ed. *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1106, b 36–1107 a2. In *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. New York : Random House, 1941.

2. Murthy, B. Srinivasa. trans. *Bhagavad Gita*. Long Beach : Long Beach Publications, 1995. Revised second printing. pp. 18. 41–44.

3. Cromwell, S. Crawford. *The Evolution of Hindu Ethical Ideals*. Honolulu : University of Hawaii Press. p. 66

4. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Book X, 1177b pp. 33–34.

IV

ASIAN AND WESTERN THOUGHT

NEGATIVE DIALECTICS IN *MADHYAMIKA* AND THE CONTINENTAL TRADITION

Kenneth Liberman

What is to be compared in comparative philosophy? Its practitioners agree that it is facile to merely "collect comparisons" and construct lists of propositions that appear to be related, at least on the surface. Anyone who knows how to read can mix-and-match theories and categories that are divorced from the processes of reasoning that produced them. But what is there vital to philosophy besides theories? The negative dialectics of the *Madhyamika* tradition of Buddhism, starting with Nagarjuna, and the negative dialectics of the Continental tradition, starting with Hegel, share the opinion that theories are what is least interesting about philosophy; instead, they both address themselves to the process of thinking itself.

Of course, everywhere in the world philosophy has commenced with a preoccupation with the 'what,' and scholars' primary concern has been to account for reality in a comprehensive and intelligible way.¹ Hegel characterizes this philosophical orientation: "It is assumed that the material of knowing is present on its own account as a ready-made world apart from thought, that thinking on its own is empty and comes as an external form to the said material, fills itself with it and only thus acquires a content and so becomes real knowing."² To the degree that thinking is topicalized at all, it is so that it can be made to conform to certain mechanisms that are believed to provide a warrant for certainty. More often than not, these mechanisms are formal, unclarified, received notions³ that reduce thinking to a representation of itself, and formal compliance with the rules of the given systematized knowledge is mistaken for truth. Thinking becomes "enmeshed in the bonds of its categories,"⁴ and loses sight of itself.

In such a fashion logic, which is the natural element of reflective life, can lead to a betrayal of reflection. Emmanuel Levinas writes,

“Thematization is inevitable, so that signification itself can show itself, but does so in the solipsism with which philosophy begins, in the betrayal which philosophy is called upon to reduce.”⁵ As philosophers, both in Europe and in Asia, recognized this betrayal and struggled to think with and beyond formal ratiocination,⁶ philosophy began to address not merely rules and methods for making correct judgments but the internal processes of the events of thinking itself. Thought was recognized to be *already* implicated in the world. Reflective consciousness became reflexive. The problem shifted from the deduction of what reality is (as in Spinoza or the *Sarvastivadans*) to the problem of *how to think*.⁷ In the view of the phenomenologists, a mature philosophy acknowledges that the very movement of thought should be included in the content of that philosophy’s thinking. This implies a rejection of the conception of pure objectivity as the basis for truth and of the external world as a ready-made plenum. The concern here instead is with the processes of conceptualization itself. It is “a philosophy which does not make nature as given in sense-perception the basis of science, but which goes to the absolute Notion for its determinations.”⁸ The Hegelian term “Notion” refers to the processes of conceptualization. A given philosophy’s interpretation of these processes is the fitting subject of comparative philosophy.

Hegel analyzed the philosophical tradition of Europe with an eye to the experience of thinking they had, his *Logic* is a sort of phenomenology of philosophical consciousness. One contemporary Hegelian commentator observes, “Hegel’s criterion is the actual experience we have of the world, and it is not a theoretical framework which is employed to judge the value of various claims to knowledge.”⁹

Some General Congruencies

Hegel and Nagarjuna are taken here as exemplary of Continental and Madhyamika dialectics, although other philosophers will be considered as well.¹⁰ There is no intention here to argue that these two seminal thinkers are involved in “the same,” or even similar, projects. They are not the same, and there are vital differences between Continental and *Madhyamika* (or Middle Way School) dialectics. Despite this obvious historical fact, the suspicion that these two thinkers (and the traditions of philosophizing that they founded) were facing up to similar recognitions of the limitations of philosophical theorizing, or indeed of any reflective activity, gnaws at my academic conscience, and so I have pursued and assessed similarities in Hegel’s and Nagarjuna’s investigations of the processes of reflection.

Although these thinkers rejected the naive belief that the world exists the way it appears to common sense, neither Hegel's nor Nagarjuna's philosophical strategy was epistemological. There is nothing particularly noetic about their investigations, as is the case with idealist philosophers (e.g., Husserl and Vasubandhu). Just as Hegel opposed the Cartesian-Newtonian world view that sees the universe as mechanistic and causal—like the random, dumb, and unintelligent collisions of billiard balls—so did Nagarjuna oppose the realist theories of the *Vaiḥśikas* and others, in which the relations among entities were principally external. An Hegelian commentator queries, "What would it mean to have a purely external relating of something? It would mean that they could not relate, that they could not contact each other,"¹¹ this observation could have easily been that of a commentator of the Middle Way School.

The first stanza of the *Mulamadhyamakakarika* reads, "No things whatsoever exist, at any time, in any place, having arisen of themselves from another, from both or without cause,"¹² In this stanza Nagarjuna refutes the notion that an entity could be produced by another entity. The argument is that if two entities have no relation to each other, i.e., are purely other, then they could not influence each other. In his commentary to the above stanza, Candrakirti, considered by the Tibetan followers of the Prasāngika Madhyamika school to be Nagarjuna's principal commentator, cites Buddhāpālita: "Things do not arise from what is other than themselves, because it would follow that anything would be possible from anything."¹³ The rejection of external relation and of production from other are related analyses.

Hegel argues that the truth of entities lies in their Notion, i.e., is conceptual. Particularly, it is the internal relations of concepts, or what he calls the "reflected moment"¹⁴—that moment when one entity finds its truth only as the reflection of another (such as long with short, matter with form, or present with past and future)—that establishes the reality of an entity. "Short" is never short in-itself but only in relation to a "long." There is no such thing as an entity having independent self-subsistence. "It is only through relation," by which Hegel means conceptual or *internal* relation "that a specific content is essentially what it is."¹⁵ Hegel argues, "If objects are regarded merely as self-enclosed totalities, they cannot act upon one another."¹⁶

What Hegel means by internal reflection is well demonstrated by his discussion of matter and form: "The two are not on that account simply present as externally and contingently opposite to one another; neither matter nor form is self-originated, or, in another terminology, *eternal*."¹⁷

Matter and form presuppose each other. It is a mistake for the philosopher to address each as a separately existing entity, rather she/he must address "the mutual connection of both."¹⁸ "Matter must therefore be form, and form must materialize itself."¹⁹ There is always a "reciprocal presupposition."²⁰ Flay writes, "Does not the presupposition of something itself presuppose *having* that something as what presupposes it? If it doesn't, then we have a presupposition for nothing at all and thus have no presupposition. The presupposed and what presupposes it are 'internally' and not externally reflected into each other."²¹

Hegel uses the notion of force to illustrate the false reasoning of some scientific thought. Force is wrongly conceived to be a power that exists separate from an entity. Flay comments, "A force is a force only as it expresses itself. . . there is not first force in itself and then, subsequently, the expression of that force. For what is force in itself as what is not expressed? The potential? But what is such potential which is never solicited, never brought to expression?"²² An understanding that imparts "fixity" or subsistence to determinatenesses is inferior to that reason that goes beyond merely external relations to the internal relations of the phenomenon as they embody dialectically the mutual reflectedness of the determinatenesses. Hegel writes, "Force as reflected unity appears as positedness and thus as belonging to the existing thing. . . (it) has the thing for its presupposition."²³

Hegel makes a similar point regarding motion: This *external* manner of thinking always presupposes motion as already externally *present* in matter, and it does not occur to it to regard motion as something immanent and to comprehend motion itself in matter, which latter is thus assumed as, on its own account, motionless and inert."²⁴ Compare this with Nagarjuna:

Without a goer
going is not feasible;
without going just how
could a goer exist?²⁵

Entities do not bear their identities independently of mediation. "Every determinate being determines itself as another, so that there is no determinate being which is determined only as such."²⁶ Flay comments, "The intelligibility of what-is cannot be attuned simply through the positing of identity as the basis."²⁷ Rather, there is always "reciprocal determination,"²⁸ and what Hegel terms *contradiction*: "Everything is

inherently contradictory.”²⁹

This notion of contradiction, which acknowledges the *difference* necessary for the identity of anything at all (such as positive and negative —“The negative is just as much positive”³⁰) calls forth a doctrine of reciprocal determination that bears a striking resemblance to Nagarjuna’s seminal notion of *pratityasamutpada* (“mutual dependence,”³¹ “interconnectedly dependent,” or “reciprocal dependence”³²) when this notion is properly understood. In the Tibetan tradition there have been three principal interpretations of *pratityasamutpada*.³³ The first, and most mundane, is that of “arising through meeting;” that is, a recognition that entities are produced in dependence upon causes and conditions. Because of this beginningless and endless chain of causally dependent processes nothing abides inherently, and all is subject to change and impermanence. While this interpretation is not rejected by Tibetan Buddhist scholars, it is not considered to be as subtle as the inter-pretation “existing in reliance,” that is, the arising of entities through reliance upon their parts. For example, when one searches for a truly existing chariot or carriage,³⁴ one is unable to find it independently of wheels, reins, seat, canopy, etc. But the most subtle interpretation of *pratityasamutpada* is that of mutual dependence, which refers to the mutual dependence of things that arise only in, and as, the ensemble of the *internal* relations of their conceptualization.

This notion is very subtle, both in its Hegelian and in its Nagarjunan incarnations, because the reference here is to the movement of thought determinations and not to a static plenum of real or ideal entities. A thing or event is what it is, determined by its reciprocal determining/determination by/with its opposite,³⁵ which it bears within itself as the fundamental but contradictory moment of its existence. Hegel: “Positive and negative, cause and effect, however much they may be taken as isolated from each other, are at the same time meaningless without one another.”³⁶ Further, “(Positive or negative) *is, only in so far as the other is*; it is what it is through the other, through its own non-being . . . They are therefore not positive or negative *in themselves* apart from the relation to other; on the contrary, this relation—an exclusive relation—constitutes their determination.”³⁷ Hegel emphasizes that the object under investigation is not “an affirming present substrate” but “this movement” of reflection itself :

The *first*, over against this other, the immediate or being, is only this very equality of the negation with itself, the negated negation, absolute negativity. This equality with itself or *immediacy*, is

consequently not a *first* from which the beginning was made and which passed over into its negation : nor is it an affirmatively present substrate that moves through reflection; on the contrary, immediacy is only this movement itself.³⁸

Compare these two passages from Hegel and Nagarjuna. Hegel : "The determinateness of each consists in this relation to the other. . . the other constitutes the determinateness of each."³⁹ And Nagarjuna : "Whatever arises depending upon whatever, that is not identical nor different from it."⁴⁰ For both thinkers, identity and difference are not separable.

A critical descendent of Hegel, Jacques Derrida, penetrates the dialectical movement of this difference : "Yes, difference with itself, with self that is maintained and gathered in its own difference, in its difference from-with (*d'avec*) the others, as difference to itself, different from itself-for itself, in the temptation of the *with*, of calming it down in order to make it into a simple interior border."⁴¹

Common sense and naive science surrender to the temptation to tame ("calm") the results of such reciprocal determining/determination by reifying its products and promoting them to the status of independent identities, but this is inaccurate. The deeper, compelling agenda of Continental and Middle Way School dialectics is to retain sight of the movement of this mutual determining, and it is this agenda that should serve as the focus of our comparisons.

Retaining sight of this movement is not an easy matter. Hegel writes,

It would be labor in vain to attempt to intercept all the shifts and turns of reflection and its arguments in order to cut off and render impossible to it all the evasions and digressions by which it conceals itself from itself its own contradiction.⁴²

This style of reasoning which makes and clings to the false presupposition of the absolute separateness of being and nonbeing is to be named not dialectic but sophistry. . . we call dialectic the higher movement of reason in which such seemingly utterly separate terms pass over into each other spontaneously, through that which they are, a movement in which the presupposition sublates itself.⁴³

And elsewhere, Hegel offers an even more frank admission: "In this motley play of the world, if we may so call the sum of existents, there is nowhere a firm footing to be found : everything bears an aspect of relativity,

conditioned by and conditioning something else."⁴⁴ Candrakirti comments in a similar vein, "Everything pretends to be what it is not; it is essentially a swindle."⁴⁵

Causality

Hegel and Nagarjuna share many examples in their illustrations of dialectical reason. There are too many to present here, however, and such a listing would lead quickly to that facile approach to comparative philosophy that is best avoided. For example, the mutual dependence of the "many" and the "one"⁴⁶ and that of the father and the son⁴⁷ are taken up by Hegel and the Middle Way philosophers for similar purposes.⁴⁸ Presentation of only one of these illustrative analyses will suffice here, and that will be the relation of cause and effect.

Nagarjuna writes of the relation of cause and effect in the first chapter of the *Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way* :

If an effect consists of its conditions then the conditions are not, strictly speaking, conditions; if the effect arises from conditions which are not strictly conditions, how can it consist of conditions? Therefore not as its conditions themselves (does an effect exist). Nor does an effect exist as its non-conditions. . . . As the effect is non-existent, how could there be either conditions or non-conditions?⁴⁹

Similarly, in his *Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness*, Nagarjuna writes, "Following the logic of this explanation of mutually dependent origination one cannot use the cause of a result to prove that the result has inherent existence because the cause of the result originates in dependence on the result and so is devoid of inherent existence."⁵⁰ Tsong Khapa clarifies further, "If the result does not exist at the time of the cause, how can there be any dependence upon conditions, etc., since no site exists for any arising in dependence upon another?"⁵¹

Here is Hegel on cause and effect :

The actuality which substance has as cause, it has *only* in its effect. . . the cause is therefore truly actual and self-identical only in its effect. . . Effect contains nothing whatever that cause does not contain. Conversely, cause contains nothing which is not in its effect. Cause is cause only in so far as it produces an effect, and cause is

nothing but this determination, to have an effect, and effect is nothing but this, to have a cause. Cause as such implies its effect, and effect implies its cause; in so far as cause has not yet acted, or if it has ceased to act, then it is not cause, and effect in so far as its cause has vanished, is no longer effect but an indifferent actuality.⁵²

Hegel's analysis penetrates to the internal relations that are involved in the process of conceptualizing causality.

Further, Tsong Khapa, in his commentary on *Nagarjuna's Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way*, elaborates (following Candrakirti) a point about the contingent nature of the allocation any particular cause or set of causes to an effect. Candrakirti enumerates the many causal factors that may be included among the causes of the production of a blanket, such as threads, the weaver's brush, the loom, shuttle, pins, etc. The suggestion is that there is no end to the determination of such causes, e.g., the sun, the food the weaver consumes, etc. that may be included among the causes, the selection of causes being entirely contingent.⁵³

The very same argument is put forward by Hegel when he argues that one can propose any "multiplication of causes" since there is nothing objective about them: "If, for example, a man developed his talent in circumstances arising from the loss of his father who was hit by a bullet in battle, then this shot (or still further back, the war or a cause of the war, and so on to infinity) could be assigned as the cause of the man's skill."⁵⁴ The selection of a cause is arbitrary, and causes do not pre-exist independently. "The effect is the starting point; as such it has a cause, this in turn has a cause, and so on."⁵⁵

Derrida Considered

It seems almost impossible today to provide a sober assessment of the degree to which Hegel's contemporary descendent Jacques Derrida has developed a philosophical praxis that deserves comparison with the praxis of the Middle Way School. The sentiments on both sides of the controversy are vehemently motivated, even suspiciously so. That Derrida is a descendent of the Continental tradition of dialectical philosophy cannot be doubted, even though he has formulated some serious criticisms of Hegel, Heidegger, Nietzsche and others. To the extent that the dialectics of Nagarjuna and his followers share similar projects with Continental dialectics, comparisons with Derrida cannot be avoided.

In Continental dialectics, "Any thought determination can be properly

articulated only in relation to its 'other' or 'opposite,' such that the meaning of the given concept is expressed in a conceptual synthesis of the concept and its 'other'.⁵⁶ Certainly, this is a strategy not at all foreign to the Middle Way School. What Derrida has termed "the play of *differance*"⁵⁷ refers to the reciprocal determining/determination or differentiation of the "living movements" to which Hegel and Nagarjuna are addressed, including what Hegel calls "the inner nullity of these differences."⁵⁸ Coward, who has attempted comparison of Derrida with a number of Indian philosophers, has observed, "What is being deconstructed by Derrida, in his analysis of language use, is the human privileging of one of the pairs of opposites over the other."⁵⁹ That is, the privileging of being over non-being or identity over difference, is the object of refutation of Derrida, and this is very much related to "the middle path" of the Middle Way School. At the same time both traditions vehemently reject nihilism, or the privileging of non-being, or difference. The point *is* that identity is difference and difference is identity.

Further, the two traditions retain a skepticism regarding the use of logical syllogisms, and this peculiarity is more than stylistic. While Hegel does not reject the use of syllogisms altogether, "The syllogism....lacks the essential *dialectical* moment of negativity."⁶⁰ In practice followers of the Middle Way School in contemporary Tibetan monastic universities do not entirely reject the use of syllogisms either; in fact, they rely upon syllogisms during the initial period of training their young scholars to think clearly. Only after a scholar has become fluent in the use of syllogisms is he presented with the non-syllogistic dialectics of the Middle Way School. Hegel speaks to the point when he writes, "The defect of the formal syllogism, therefore, does not lie in the *form of the syllogism*—on the contrary, this is the form of rationality—but in the fact that the form appears only as an *abstract* and therefore notionless form."⁶¹ By notionless Hegel refers to the phenomenon that the "living movements" of reflection has been eclipsed.

Derrida is consistent with Hegel to the degree that he denies that the syllogism can serve as the basis of truth. There is no space within which the *logos* can remain as originary, for any syllogism is only and always derivative and unstable. This emphasis upon the always derivative status of any formal determination is the point of Derrida's attack upon "logocentrism,"⁶² and there does seem to be an important correspondence between this "always derivative" and the Buddhist notion of "beginningless time", especially for the Middle Way followers of the doctrine of *pratityasamutpada*.

Derrida attempts to reform transcendental logic (as, for example, practiced by Husserl and other constitutional phenomenologists) by reinstating more dialectical analyses. This project does not require a metalogic to found it, and he rejects Husserl's uninterrupted search for grounding understanding in some transcendental origins. Rather like Candrakirti, all that Derrida requires are the philosophical commitments of his logocentric opponents. Derrida preserves a studied reluctance to make any positive commitments, much as Candrakirti insists that the Middle Way proponents "advance no position."⁶³ The question for comparative analysis is whether Candrakirti engages in the same non-position taking as does Derrida.

Are There "Thick" Congruencies?

What, if anything, among this litany of comparison is truly consequential? Once one enters into comparative readings to the extent gone into here, one's gaze easily becomes fogged with one's own modern projection of meanings and interpretations. Whether one reads Nagarjuna and Candrakirti through the interests of Hegel and Derrida, or reads Hegel and Derrida through the lens of the former as I have done, the risk is always that none of them will be met adequately. But no sooner do I suspend my comparative attempts, that my philosophic intuition leads me back into them. These pauses in the analytic process can be salutary, but in themselves are no guarantee that one will have transcended a comparative myopia.

There seems to be at least three regions of vital congruity. These regions include a vigilance against essentialist notions, the admission that formal analysis is not ultimate (but not dispensable), and an unfaltering attention to the living movements or process of thinking.

Much of Nagarjuna's text is devoted to undermining the notion that entities exist according to their own inherent existence. This may be interpreted as the view that entities do not bear their own essence within themselves, apart from their relations with other entities. Nagarjuna observes, "Things are without an essential nature because they are seen to alter."⁶⁴ Further, Candrakirti cites the King of Meditative Stabilizations Sutra, "The one who wisely understands that things are non-things is never obsessed with things."⁶⁵ Hegel shares this perspective when he emphasizes that the determinations of conceptualization do not have "an independent self-subsistence."⁶⁶

Hegel elaborates, "Self-subsistence pushed to the point of the one as a

being-for-self is abstract, formal, and destroys itself. It is the supreme, most stubborn error, which takes itself for the highest truth, manifesting in more concrete forms as abstract freedom, pure ego and, further, as Evil."⁶⁷ The recommendation is that the existence of any object is not due to its own essence but due to the reciprocal determining/determination within the process of reflection upon which (or more precisely, as which) it is dependent. Derrida comments upon the movement of Hegel's dialectic that preserves this reciprocal dependence, a movement that Hegel calls sublation or *Aufhebung*, which Derrida wisely leaves untranslated :

Aufhebung is being, not as a determinate state or the determinable totality of being, but as the 'active,' productive essence of being. So the *Aufhebung* cannot form the *object* of any determined question. We are continually referred back to this, but that reference refers to nothing determinable.⁶⁸

This "object" in the German is "gegen." "*Gegenstand*" or objectivity means "to stand over against,"⁶⁹ however, there can be no question of a thing standing outside of and apart from its conceptualization. At the same time there is no proposal that a given thing is non-existent. So long as we retain the reference to the "active" reciprocal differentiation, we can avoid a collapse into an essentialism while still being able to use the objects that are determining/determined. Is this not the middle way?

Derrida makes a point of his not doing away with metaphysics, for he frankly admits that the discourse of European philosophy is the only means he has of speaking. In a similar way, the Madhyamika scholars insist on the vital role that formal analyses play in philosophical reflection. The Tibetan commentator Tsong Khapa writes, "If one does not analyze with proper reasoning, one's wisdom investigating suchness will hardly increase."⁷⁰

In fact, for both traditions logic is indispensable but its limitations need to be supervised by the dialectical imagination, not by a body of analytic forms that are believed to warrant correctness. The problem is that "there is. . . no philosophical statement possible that does not lose what it tries to retain and that does not lose it precisely by retaining it."⁷¹ Hegel observes, "For the logic. . . a completely ready-made and solidified, one may say, ossified material is already to hand, and the problem is to render this material *fluid* and to rekindle the spontaneity of the Notion in such dead matter."⁷² The interest in fixing truth within analytic forms is a philosopher's greatest temptation. While formal analytics may be

indispensable, they are not ultimate.⁷³

What is ultimate is something about which the Middle Way scholars are vague, as they must be if reality is betrayed the moment philosophical statement tries to retain it. For these philosophers, reality ultimately is not a state but a process. All the dialecticians reviewed so far concur in the fact that the proper domain of philosophical reflection lies in the investigation of the movement of the thought that thinks the mutual dependence of things. Formal analysis has a vital role to play—Nagarjuna asserts that ultimate truth can only be cognized by way of phenomenal or conventional (including formal analytic) truths⁷⁴—but such formal analysis is not ultimate. Ultimately, truth is what remains after the illusions of essentialist reflection are exposed; in the course of this recognition, the process of conceptualization is accurately revealed.

Hegel speaks of the manner in which illusion gives way to truth: “The Idea in its process creates that illusion and sets up another over against itself: its activity consists in overcoming that illusion. Only out of this error can truth be brought forth.”⁷⁵ Ultimate truth is this realization of the process of thinking. “Truth is to be grasped and expressed only as a becoming, as a process, a repulsion and attraction—not as being, which in a proposition has the character of a stable unity.”⁷⁶ Although both Buddhist and Continental philosophers are concerned with overcoming illusion, is it the same illusion that preoccupies them? What *does* the superior Being in meditative equipoise cognize? It is not a vacant gaze, the adepts have assured us of that. The wisdom that cognizes emptiness (*stong nyid rtogs pa'i shes rab*) relies upon the Middle Way dialectic to shatter all essentialist prejudice, and in the aftermath of this shattering—in the full exposure of the movement of the forces of conceptualization—it witnesses “suchness.” This negation is not strictly a total absence, the Middle Way theorists are adamant about that. Would Derrida’s specification of the meaning of negation in Hegel be of relevance here—“the *being there* of the *not* that, being there, is not, *not there*”?⁷⁷

It is “there” because it is the pivot of the superior being’s cognition. Essence is deconstructed by the recognition that it springs from the contrast with its opposite, lack of essence; but this lack of essence is in turn dependent upon there being something that exists as a lack. There is not a simple nothingness. Although Hegel didn’t realize it,⁷⁸ the Middle Way School’s nothingness as the “*not*” engaged with its opposite was related to his own thinking. Reality may be empty of being produced by its own essence, but even this emptiness is empty. The “emptiness of emptiness” militates against any reification of “Nothingness” into an absolute

principle. What is ultimate is the *activity* of mutual dependence.

Differentiation is the “dialectical motor” of the entire *Logic*.⁷⁹ For Derrida, this mutual differentiation, renamed “*differance*,” means both more and less than itself. It means less because it cannot constitute an *a priori* principle. It means more because it is an activity, whose movements necessarily exceed the terminology. This “activity” of the systems of differentiation and signification is the domain that comparative inquiry needs to address. Coward tells us, “The dialectics of the trace is what Derrida calls *differance*.”⁸⁰ In this dialectics, an origin is never more than the trace of a presence that has been deferred. Is this “trace” a concept we might wish to apply to a description of the witness of the wisdom that cognizes emptiness? Certainly not as the concept “trace,” but what if it can carry us to the living movement of conceptualization? Derrida himself complains, “*Differance* is much too general and indeterminate a concept; one must follow the determining process.”⁸¹

Some “Thick” Differences?

The foregoing demonstrates that it is not impetuous to claim that the Middle Way School of Buddhism and the dialectical tradition of the Continent have similar views of the processes of conceptualization. The concepts mutual dependence and reciprocal differentiation have related itineraries. A frequently used Tibetan term for “Mental elaborations” (*spyod pa*) implies the infinite capacity of differentiation to proliferate distinctions, and this capacity is held responsible for the appearance of the world and our entanglements with it. The difference is that although the Continental thinkers are on occasion critical of such mental elaboration, they generally accept conceptualization as the nature of things, while the Middle Way thinkers view these processes of differentiation as the root of cyclic existence, at least when one presumes that their products have true existence.

Derrida is committed to a view of existence in which conceptualization, while flawed, is unsurpassable. The Middle Way philosophers are committed to the idea of an ultimate truth, which has surpassed conceptualization. Tsong Khapa affirms that in order to overcome ignorance one must go beyond “the terms of the world”⁸² in which we are caught. The Middle Way philosophers propose that there is a state of liberation (Skt. *mukta*; Tib., *grol wa*), in which reality is directly perceived without mediation. This is a fundamental difference.

Hegel is more problematic on this point, for “absolute knowledge”

implies some transcendence of mundane conceptualization; however, full specification of absolute knowledge is always deferred,⁸³ and when he does explicate his notion of absolute it is tied always to concrete processes of reciprocal differentiation.⁸⁴ Of course, it may be said that the philosophers of the Middle Way School have not fully specified the notion of liberation; in fact, it is not to be specified. The meaning of liberation is deferred, and scholars instead refer students to the unmediated insight of persons in meditative equipoise who have achieved wisdom, which is at best an illustration and not an explanation. Their principal point is that these persons have surpassed mundane conceptualization, that they abide in thoughtlessness without mental elaborations. For European dialecticians this is an impossible achievement.

Further, while Derrida rejects the idea of "origins," Buddhists accept that there is an innate nature of the mind, pristine awareness (some call it Buddha-nature), that pre-exists conceptualization. Although it is beginningless, it does function as the source of the most profound realizations of their tradition. Such a concept would be considered metaphysical by European dialecticians. If everything is derivative, nothing can be innate.

Beneath these important differences there may be room for some reconciliation, depending upon what is one's interpretation of liberation. Since Middle Way scholars insist that the route to wisdom lies in witnessing the processes of conceptualization, it may be that its view of surpassing conceptualization does not involve the removal of all notions (recalling that in Hegel 'notion' refers more to the process than to the products of conceptualization). Their insistence that *samsara is nirvana* and that *nirvana is samsara* implies that the world still appears, only it is apprehended in a different manner. Certainly, the superior beings who cognize emptiness are witness to something — it cannot be simply a vacant stare. The direct cognition of suchness is not the cognition of a *thing*, but it may consist of an appreciation of the processes of world appearance that are revealed by their dialectical method and meditative insight. Any cognition of emptiness is dependent upon the itinerary of what has been negated. Liberation is not so much denial as witness. If this is the case, then it is not all that distant to Hegel's project when he submits, "At each stage of its further determination it raises the entire mass of its preceding content, and by its dialectical advance it not only does not lose anything or leave anything behind, but carries along with it all that it has gained."⁸⁵ If what the wisdom that cognizes suchness is witness to is in fact the reciprocal determinations of conceptualization as world-productive

phenomena, then the Middle Way scholars and Continental theorists are working in domains that parallel each other. Further investigation of the relation between dialectical method and meditative insight in the Mahayana tradition is very much needed before these comparative questions can be answered conclusively.

NOTES

1. Flay, Joseph C. "A Companion to Hegel's Logic : A Proposal," unpublished manuscript, nd, p. 3.
2. Hegel, G.W.F. *Hegel's Science of Logic*, trans. by A.V. Miller, London: Allen and Unwin, 1969, p. 44.
3. Husserl, Edmund. *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Evanston, IL : Northwestern Univ. Press, 1970, p. 42-51.
4. Hegel, G.W.F. *Hegel's Science of Logic*, p. 37.
5. Levinas, Emmanuel. *Otherwise Than Being, Or Beyond Essence*, The Hague : Martinus Nijhoff, 1981, p. 152.
6. Hegel, G.W.F. *Hegel's Science of Logic*, p. 693.
7. Cf. Heidegger, Martin *What is Called Thinking?*, New York : Harper and Row, 1972.
8. *Ibid*, p.179.
9. Flay. "A Companion to Hegel's Logic : A Proposal," p. 5.
10. Throughout this essay I rely upon the interpretation of Nagarjuna of the Gelug sect of Tibetan Buddhism.
11. Flay, Joseph. *Lectures on Hegel's Logic*, State College, PA : Dept. of Philosophy, Pennsylvania State University, 1989, Vol. 1, p. 35.
12. Cited in Sprung, Mervyn. *Lucid Exposition of the Middle Way, The Essential Chapters from the Prasannapada of Candrakirti*, London : Routledge, 1979, p. 36.
13. *Ibid*, p. 42.
14. Hegel. *Hegel's Science of Logic*, p. 476.
15. *Ibid*, p. 86.
16. *Ibid*, p. 714.
17. *Ibid*, p. 451.
18. *Ibid*.
19. *Ibid*, p. 452.
20. *Ibid*.
21. Flay. *Lectures on Hegel's Logic*, Vol. 3, p. 6.
22. *Ibid*, Vol, 3, p. 39.

23. Hegel. *Hegel's Science of Logic*, p. 519.
24. Ibid, p. 181.
25. Cited in Jeffrey Hopkins Chapter Two of the Ocean of Reasoning by Tsong Khapa, Dharamsala, India : Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1974, p. 16.
26. Ibid, p. 118.
27. Flay. *Lectures on Hegel's Logic*, Vol. 3, p. 36.
28. Hegel. *Hegel's Science of Logic*, p. 452.
29. Ibid, p. 439.
30. Ibid, p. 54.
31. This is the translation suggested by B.K. Matilal, *Perception*, Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 57, and G.C.Nayak, *Philosophical Reflections*, Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass, 1987, p. 9ff.
32. Sprung. *Lucid Exposition of the Middle Way*, pp. 59 and 64.
33. Thegchok, Jampa. *Lama Tsong Khapa's Praise to Dependent Arising*, Lavaur, France : Nalanda Monastery, 1990, p. 56.
34. Cf. Candrakirti, in C.W. Huntington, Jr., *The Emptiness of Emptiness*, Honolulu : University of Hawaii Press, 1989, pp. 173-6.
35. Flay. *Lectures on Hegel's Logic*, Vol.4, p. 13.
36. Hegel. *Hegel's Science of Logic*, p. 122.
37. Ibid, pp. 425 and 427.
38. Ibid, p. 399.
39. Ibid, p. 314.
40. Cited in Kalupahana, David. *Nagarjuna : The Philosophy of the Middle Way*, Albany : SUNY Press, 1986, p. 273.
41. Derrida, Jacques. *The Other Heading*, Bloomington, IN : Indiana U. Press. 1992, pp.25-6.
42. Hegel. *Hegel's Science of Logic*, p. 94.
43. Ibid, p.105.
44. Hegel. *Zusatz P123*, cited in Flay, *Lectures on Hegel's Logic*, Vol.3, p. 36.
45. Cited in Sprung. *Lucid Exposition of the Middle Way*, p. 44.
46. Hegel. *Hegel's Science of Logic*, p. 172; Nagarjuna, *Tong nyid bdun chu pa*, in *Dbu ma rigs chogs Inga*, Dehra Dun, India : Prajna Press, 1984, pp. 108 and 113.
47. Hegel. *Hegel's Science of Logic*, p. 441; Nagarjuna, *Tong nyid bdun chu pa*, in *Dbu ma rigs chogs Inga*, Dehra Dun, India : Prajna Press, 1984, p. 109.
48. Hegel summarizes, "The most trivial examples of above and below, right and left, father and son, and so on *ad infinitum*, all contain opposition in

each term." Hegel. *Hegel's Science of Logic*, p. 441.

49. Sprung. *Lucid Exposition of the Middle Way*, pp. 73-4.

50. Komito, David Ross. *Nagarjuna's "Seventy Stanzas"*, Ithaca, NY : Snow Lion, 1987, p. 138.

51. *De Ltar dus na 'bras bu'i bdag gyi dngos po yod pa min Lta rkyen la sogspa rnams ci la ltos nas gzhan du 'gyur ba'i Ltos sa med pas*. Tsong Khapa, *Dbu ma rtsa ba'i tshig le'ur byas pa shes rab ces bya ba'i rnam bshad rigs pa'i rgya mtsho* (Ocean of Reasoning, Explanation of [Nagarjuna's] Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way Called "Wisdom"), Dharamsala, India : Tibetan Cultural Printing Press, nd, p.81, lines 5-6.

52. Hegel. *Hegel's Science of Logic*, p. 559. Cf. also p. 151 : "In the causal relation, cause and effect are inseparable; a cause which had no effect would not be a cause, just as an effect which had no cause would no longer be an effect. . . that which is determined as effect again has a cause, that is, the cause has to be separated from its effect and posited as a different something; but this fresh cause is itself only an effect—the unity of cause and effect; it has an other for its cause—the separation of both determinations, and so on to infinity.

53. Cf. Khapa, Tsong. *Dbu ma rtsa ba'i tshig le'ur byas pa shes rab ces bya ba'i rnam bshad rigs pa'i rgya mtsho*, pp. 100-101.

54. Hegel. *Hegel's Science of Logic*, p.561.

55. Ibid, p.564.

56. Duquette. "Kant, Hegel, and the Possibility of a Speculative Logic," p.3.

57. Derrida, Jacques. *Margins of Philosophy*, Chicago : University of Chicago, 1982, p.11.

58. Hegel. *Hegel's Science of Logic*, p. 615.

59. Coward, Harold. *Derrida and Indian Philosophy*, Albany, NY : SUNY Press, 1990, pp. 87-8.

60. Hegel. *Hegel's Science of Logic*, p. 837.

61. Ibid, p. 684.

62. The mere mention of this term seems to raise great ire, and the worst fears, among Derrida's detractors. This may be in part due to the way the term has become a slogan for postmodernists, but Derrida himself has remained very specific about the intent of his criticism here. What is proper for comparative philosophers is to consider in an unprejudiced way whether Derrida's criticism shares any characteristics with those of Nagarjuna, Candrakirti, and others.

63. Sprung. *Lucid Exposition of the Middle Way*, pp. 36-8.

64. Ibid, p.146.

65. Ibid, p. 163.

66. Hegel. *Hegel's Science of Logic*, p. 42.
67. Ibid, p.172.
68. Derrida, Jacques. *Glas*, Lincoln, Neb. : University of Nebraska Press, 1986, p. 34.
69. Heidegger, Martin. *What Is a Thing?*, Chicago : Henry Regnery, 1967, p. 137.
70. Khapa, Tsong. *Dbu ma rtsa ba'i tshig le'ur byas pa shes rab ces bya ba'i rnam bshad rigs pa'i rgya mtsho*, p. 83.
71. Derrida. *Glas*, p.139.
72. Hegel. *Hegel's Science of Logic*, p. 557; emphasis mine.
73. Formal analytics is intended here in the sense elucidated by Edmund Husserl in 1969 : 48–71 and 184–9.
74. Cited in Kalupahana, Nagarjuna : *The Philosophy of the Middle Way*, p. 333.
75. Cited in Findlay, J.N. *Hegel : A Reexamination*, London : Oxford U.Press, 1958, p. 38.
76. Hegel. *Hegel's Science of Logic*, p. 172.
77. Derrida. *Glas*, p. 219.
78. "As we know, in the oriental systems, principally in Buddhism, *nothing*, the void, is the absolute principle." (Hegel 1969 : 83)
79. Donougho, "A Reply to Edward Halper," p. 211.
80. Coward. *Derrida and Indian Philosophy*, p. 40.
81. Derrida. *Glas*, p. 168.
82. "De la chos kyi brda ni." Tsong Khapa, *Dbu, ma rtsa ba'i tshig le'ur byas pa shes rab ces bya ba'i rnam bshad rigs pa'i rgya mtsho*, p. 75.
83. Derrida. *Glas*, p. 225-6.
84. E. g., "In considering contradiction, ordinary thinking stops short at the one-sided *resolution* of it into *nothing*, and fails to recognize the positive side of contradiction where it becomes absolute activity" (Hegel 1969 : 442).
85. Hegel. *Hegel's Science of Logic*, p. 840.

SPACE FOR THE SELF : A COMPARISON OF YUASA YASUO AND CHARLES TAYLOR

Lloyd Steffen

Although English usage has evolved so that the term "self" has come to stand for the individual person, or the particular being of an individual, noun employments of the term "self" have never quite lost their essentially reflexive character, especially in philosophical discourse. While "person" continues to carry clear moral connotations in typical linguistic usage, and "human being" or the now archaic and non-inclusive term "man" have been commonly employed as superordinate terms to indicate the race, the species, or the being who was comprised of body and soul (or spirit), "self" has always and uniquely indicated relationality. To be a self is to be in relation. The self, in fact, is a relation. The self is a self in reflexive relation to its own self.¹

In the history of Western thought, be it as far back as Socrates and Augustine, or as recent as Heidegger and Foucault, self-relatedness is attended to as critical to the philosophical enterprise. Explicating the self as relational nexus, or as the negotiator of the many and various terms of the self's relations, continues to stand atop the agenda in that branch of philosophical investigation identified as philosophical, or, in other circles, theological anthropology.

But understanding the self as a relation of self-relatedness is sometimes more complicated than even intricate Western analyses of the self reveal. I say this because Western philosophers do not often remark on their own philosophical investigations into the self as if their investigations were themselves expressions of broader cultural projects driven by culturally-bound anthropological agendas. What comparative philosophy has contributed—and has the potential to contribute even more widely to Western philosophy—is a confrontation with the anthropological assumptions that underwrite Western analyses of human self-relatedness. For even when the Western philosopher or anthropologist is concerned

to address and expose the assumptions of a culturally normative view of selfhood, the most fundamental assumptions can still resist interrogation, usually in the guise of the question not deemed important enough to ask. The non-Western philosophical analyses, by presenting an alternative metaphysic, can challenge, even startle the Western philosopher into a confrontation with his or her own tradition of assumption, construction, and argumentation. A self-conscious philosophical anthropology must confront itself as a product of culture, so deeply embedded in culturally determined frames of reference that the adequacy of a philosophical account of the self's relations will rest in part on the degree to which these frames of reference are themselves explicated and taken into account. As comparative philosophy requires the philosophical investigator to consider alternative cultural frames of reference, it also forces the investigator back into a reexamination of the frames of reference shaping his or her own perspectives, and that is the issue at the heart of this paper.

Differences in assumption and emphasis, as exposed by comparative analyses, invite reflection on the self as a culturally contingent construction. What I shall argue in this paper is that comparativist examination does not simply expose a radical discontinuity between one cultural view of the self and another. What a comparativist examination of selfhood reveals, rather, is a deeper, inter-subjective and even cross-cultural connectedness in the philosophical project that seeks to understand the self-in-relation. That inter-connectedness shows itself here and there, in various contact points—points of emphasis—even if larger conceptual assumptions and metaphysical supports seem not to be in any obvious way compatible.

My specific topic is the self-relatedness of the self, and my approach to this topic is comparativist in that I propose to consider how two culturally distinct philosophical treatments of the self-in-relation make contact across conceptual barriers and cultural boundaries. Two relatively recent works of major importance have advanced the case that philosophical anthropologies are culturally framed projects, and that any particular view of the self inevitably expresses fundamental—and often unexamined—commitments to normative views of selfhood that are themselves culturally-bound. The provocative Japanese philosopher, Yuasa Yasuo, has made this case explicitly in *The Body: Toward an Eastern Mind-Body Theory*.² Charles Taylor has made this case by way of implication in *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*.³ Read together these two works expose fundamental Western commitments

to a normative picture of the self divorced, philosophically, from space in favor of temporality (Yuasa) and from moral space and cultural frameworks (Taylor). The focus of both of these philosophers on spatiality exposes a point of contact, an emphasis, that illuminates our understanding of the self as a relation of self-relatedness. I begin with Charles Taylor.

A. Space for the Self : Charles Taylor

In *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, Charles Taylor has undertaken an exhaustive survey of Western European philosophical and cultural thought. Taylor explores as a philosopher and historian of ideas the modern meaning of selfhood and the moral sources of human subjectivity as it has developed in the West. At issue for Taylor is the question, "Is subjectivity really so impoverished a notion in modernity (/post-modernity) that it constitutes a rejection of rational order and a turn to what we might want to call philosophical subjectivism?"

Taylor argues that in the West, the sources of modern selfhood can be extracted from Enlightenment ideas about the role and meaning of human rationality. The overriding value in the Enlightenment turn in modern culture can be identified as "naturalism," which can be broken down into a commitment to the value of Nature as good (Romantic value) and to a normative picture of human reason as disengaged and disembodied.⁴ Naturalism has created the modern predicament, according to Taylor, which is marked by a confusion about what it means to affirm meaning in ordinary life, which is where we understand most concretely the self-in-relation. The self-in-relation is constituted by a vision of goodness, for it is that vision which motivates people to act, to decide, to make community and create discriminating value relations—"qualitative distinctions"—in relation to our own selves and others. In the modern era, the analysis goes, naturalism has flattened and devalued this idea of people and communities operating from visions of goodness, even though in ordinary life, such visions underwrite the fundamental values that we enact and upon which our dignity as persons depends. That vision, and the values dependent upon it, ground and constitute the identity of selves-in-relation.

Beginning his text by making connections "between identity and the good," Taylor focuses on what he calls "strong evaluations," which, as he defines them, "involve discriminations of right or wrong. . . which are not rendered valid by our own desires, inclinations, or choices, but rather

stand independent of these and offer standards by which they can be judged".⁵ In noting a dominant cultural commitment to a notion of disengaged reason, Taylor examines the historical development of the modern identity, focusing on such particulars as the individualism rooted in high valuations on the goods of self-mastery (Plato); self-exploration (Augustine); and disengaged reason, articulated by Descartes and extended by Locke.

Taylor presents the Enlightenment as having bequeathed to the cultural forces shaping the modern identity a radical form of self-objectification, which includes the prospect of remaking the self in a more rational and advantageous way. The beneficent hope expressed in the Enlightenment's radically subjectivist view of the person is that disengaged reason will promote human welfare. Taylor identifies Locke as a critical articulator of this valuation of disengaged reason, for in arguing forcefully for the acquisition of self-mastery, Locke advanced the view that mastery over nature is the surest route to the relieving of human suffering. That beneficent goal, Taylor points out, is achieved by means of a mode of rationality distinguished by a "pure instrumentality" that seeks to "bring the best results, pleasure or happiness."⁶

Taylor is critical of this turn to instrumentality, for instrumentalism divorces reason from the body, from desires, inclinations, from actions motivated by visions of goodness. Taylor views this picture of disengaged reason as promoting an understanding of what he calls—I think his language on this point is significant—a *disembodied consciousness*, and he regards this development as "illusory."⁷ The ethical theory ultimately generated from this view of disengaged reason and disembodied consciousness—utilitarianism—is, in Taylor's view, specious, if not dangerous. I shall return to this point momentarily.

The modern identity, shaped as it has been by an ideal of disembodied, instrumental reason, has expressed itself culturally in naturalist modes of analysis. Naturalism is apparent in everything from the mastery over nature found in technological development to the cultural emphasis on self-fulfillment or self-realization :

...the present climate is much more impregnated with naturalism than were its nineteenth-century sources.

One thing this climate derives from Enlightenment naturalism is the stance of defending nature and ordinary desire from what are seen as specious spiritual demands, which lay the external standards of tradition on the self and threaten to stifle its authentic growth

and fulfillment. Another thing it inherits is the belief in science and technique, which naturally has strong roots in the United States. This emerges in the great importance given to methods of therapy and the sciences which underpin them: psychoanalysis, psychology, sociology.⁸

Taylor responds to this analysis :

Our normal understanding of self-realization presupposes that some things are important beyond the self, that there are some goods or purposes the furthering of which has significance for us and which hence can provide the significance a fulfilling life needs. A total and fully consistent subjectivism would tend towards emptiness: nothing would count as a fulfillment in a world in which literally nothing was important but self-fulfillment.⁹

Furthermore,

A society of self-fulfillers, whose affiliations are more and more seen as revocable, cannot sustain the strong identification with the political community which public freedom needs.¹⁰

Taylor finds that the dignity of ordinary life in the modern/post-modern era has been significantly challenged because a strong cultural emphasis on disengaged and disembodied reason has flattened value differentiation, thereby effecting a loss of moral richness in people's lives. This restates the modern predicament giving rise to Taylor's project to reclaim the moral sources of modern selfhood. As the above extracts reveal, the modern employment of disengaged reason to affirm the value so predominant in contemporary American society, that of self-fulfillment, threatens not only to deaden psychological reality (hence : where is there meaning in life beyond myself?), but to deny a spiritual dimension to life, which, on Taylor's analysis, provokes profound questions about the character of corporate life and political involvement in community and social experience.

Taylor's analysis in *Sources of the Self* presents a deep analysis of a culture's commitment to a normative view of disengaged reason and disembodied consciousness. His critical, yet constructive alternative to naturalism involves a project to reconfigure the self in what he calls "moral space." That reconfiguring is accomplished by taking into account

the self that is related to itself through others and through the inescapable "frameworks" of cultural contingency. Naturalism eschews moral space and, in that it upholds self-objectifying and illusory notions of pure, disengaged reason, denies the frameworks that shape the simplest acts of value discrimination. It is in his attack on naturalism and in his defense of moral space that Taylor creates space for the self. By creating space for the self, Taylor makes possible a way of understanding the self that affirms a view of the self as spatially embodied and related to itself through a complex tangle of self-other (moral) relations.

1. Frameworks and the Self in Moral Space

Taylor argues that the modern identity is constructed in a cultural and conceptual context, which is what is meant by a "framework." A framework, simply put, is a background picture wherein our moral reactions are grounded as if by instinct: "Here we are dealing with moral intuitions which are uncommonly deep, powerful and universal."¹¹ The appeal to "universal" in this claim, deliberate as it is, is not to say that Taylor is insensitive to cultural variety. As he says, "this 'instinct' receives a variable shape in culture."¹² Taylor, then, concedes cultural diversity and even relativism, but not the kind of relativism that would allow the subjective turn to shipwreck on pure subjectivism. His argument is that even as human persons acquire and exercise their "moral reactions" within the givenness and the contingencies of cultural frameworks, our moral reactions are themselves grounded in an assent to, an affirmation of, a given ontology of the human in which the human person receives status as qualitatively distinct from other beings. For underlying all cultural contingency is a moral insight that human being is worthy of respect. It is in this moral ontology that we experience and articulate "our deepest moral instincts, our ineradicable sense that human life is to be respected."¹³ Denying that access to this moral ontology can be gained by adopting disengaged modes of naturalist or scientific rationality, Taylor nonetheless argues that the moral instincts that ground our identities as moral persons are present and universally so. And just to make the point, he offers the view that "There is such a thing as moral objectivity, of course."¹⁴

The idea of a framework for the morally constituted self, then, arises as a way to articulate moral being in its contingency: "Frameworks provide the background, explicit or implicit, for our moral judgments, intuition, or reactions."¹⁵ If moral objectivity obtains with respect to

human ontology, the variability of culture, which is identified by the framework notion, allows for the fact of contingency in articulating that ontology. It is within the framework in which human persons actually live and “determine where they stand on questions of what is good, or worthwhile, or admirable, or of value” that we see created “the horizon within which I am capable of taking a stand.”¹⁶

Taylor’s claim is that identity itself depends upon these frameworks. Frameworks open up the *moral space* where human persons make qualitative distinctions about how to live and what to choose, and those frameworks—that moral space—cannot be successfully evaded: “A person without a framework altogether would be outside our space of interlocution; he wouldn’t have a stand in the space where the rest of us are. We would see this as pathological.”¹⁷

In discerning Taylor’s understanding of selfhood, it is clear that Taylor holds the view that the self is constituted through exchange in language, which is to say that the self is social and always constituted individually through dialogical relation with others. The self is also fundamentally moral. It is oriented toward the good—goodness moves it to engagement and action within “webs of interlocution.”¹⁸ Our sense of the self is connected inextricably to our sense of the good; we come to articulate our sense of orientation in the moral space where questions about the good can be raised, this space being created or cleared by our frameworks; and the qualitative distinctions in value we make within frameworks, which are background assumptions to our moral reactions and judgments, then appear as the “contexts” which give our moral reactions their sense and meaning.¹⁹

Taylor finds the moral philosophy that has developed in the framework of naturalistic thinking contradictory and inadequate to the complexity of human selfhood. That philosophy, utilitarianism, values and even—dare we say it—embodies disengaged reason. But utilitarianism is a mode of instrumentalism that serves already endorsed values that the disengaged and instrumentalist mode of reasoning itself cannot account for. Taylor’s critique is simple and devastating. For his account is simply that utilitarianism determines that the end of moral calculation is pleasure or happiness, which is then situated as a value preferable to others. The problem, of course, is that utilitarianism cannot establish out of the resource of instrumental, disengaged reason the value content of “utility.” Utilitarianism denies that our moral sources are embedded in frameworks where we live and interact with others, yet the benevolent end it pursues—happiness or well-being for (or in) the greatest number.—is clearly the

product of a moral preference for certain goods and values presupposed by the naturalistic mode of reasoning. The utilitarian assumption that the ideal of benevolence can be determined independently of persons and their frameworks, is for Taylor, preposterous, and he charges utilitarianism with incoherence. The philosophy cannot of its own resource coherently account for the good of universal benevolence that must precede any rational calculation that seeks to promote that good.

The broader issue is that naturalistic thinking denies the reality of those frameworks that advance various goods and values, which makes the point that disengaged rationality is itself the expression of a particular cultural framework. "The utilitarian lives within a moral horizon which cannot be explicated by his own moral theory",²⁰ says Taylor, and the contradictory nature of this mode of valuation and reasoning makes a larger point about the limitations of any mode of rationality that seeks to promote values of disengagement and disembodiment—which it is Taylor's task to expose, critique, challenge and correct.

2. Taylor's Alternative Framework : Embodied Selfhood

On Taylor's analysis, the self is constituted through frameworks, which reflect and transmit culturally variable systems of valuation, and such is the case in the West with the premium placed on the notion of disengaged rationality. Taylor, then, acknowledges that conceptions of the self are subject to cultural variation, even as he argues for goods that provide a universal ground for moral selfhood. What are those goods?

[T]he recognition of some intrinsically valuable purpose in life beyond the utilitarian; expressive unity; the fulfillment of one's expressive potential; the acknowledgement of something more than instrumental meaning to the natural environment; a certain depth of meaning in the man-made environment.²¹

What Taylor has identified in *Sources of the Self* is a normative view of the self in the West attached to the view of disengaged rationality. It can be found in traditional philosophical articulations—Descartes' disembodied soul, Locke's punctual self, or Kant's notion of pure rational being—as well as in modern/post-modern variants, especially, in Taylor's view, the deconstruction of Derrida. Much of the most insightful philosophy, and poetry, and literature of the twentieth century, Taylor claims, has been devoted to refuting this picture of the disengaged

subject,²² and he endorses those who have been critical of that version of the subjective turn. "The case against disengaged subjectivity always has to be made new",²³ so powerful is it in a culture the framework of which is dominated by science and modes of instrumental reason.

Taylor counters this normative, culturally framed conception of the rational self by advancing a conception of self that emphasizes the role of emotions, sympathy, and languages that connect to shared "ways of experience."²⁴ He advances an anti-instrumentalism notion of reason that attends the human reality of inner experience and what he calls "personal resonance."²⁵ Seeking to reconnect reason to action, and selfhood to social existence and life in community, Taylor advances a view of the self-in-relation that emphasizes the self's identity as grounded in political formations and community identities. He criticizes the instrumentalism that finds its ways into atomistic political aims, where community becomes merely the context for individualistic quests for self-fulfillment. While excessive development of this counter-norm could lead to the kind of flattened subjectivism seen in aspects of the human potential movement, the more illusory concept of self is that which denies frameworks and embodied reason, and asserts the disengaged subject as an ideal self. In the *Ethics of Authenticity*, Taylor fills out and summarizes this view, using the language of embodiment :

We are embodied agents, living in dialogical conditions, inhabiting time in a specifically human way. . . .if we are properly to treat a human being, we have to respect this embodied, dialogical, temporal nature.²⁶

Recapitulating the constructive thesis of *Sources of the Self*, Taylor writes in the follow-up work :

Instrumental reason has also grown along with a disengaged model of the human subject, which has a great hold on our imagination. It offers an ideal picture of a human thinking that has disengaged from its messy embedding in our bodily constitution, our dialogical situation, our emotions, and our traditional life forms.²⁷

Taylor's critique exposes a prevailing Western perspective about the selfhood that has become normative, but which is culturally-bound nonetheless. Again, his historical review details the development of this concept of self and relevant permutations as instrumental reason has taken

root deeper and deeper in a culture given to valuing mastery of nature and technological development. But the moral sources of the self are of course broader and richer than this operative notion suggests. Taylor's countermove is to offer a view of the self that acknowledges and even values embodiment, that positions the self as embodied in time and community and social experience, and that recognizes itself in its relations to others and in its self-relatedness as situated in moral space. The concern to recognize moral space is essential for Taylor's criticism of a self constituted essentially by disengagement, for moral space is the arena for the interplay of self and others (dialogic relationality) as rationality expands to include not only cognition but cognition expressed through emotions, sympathy and human volition. In the end, Taylor can be viewed as arguing that space—moral space—identifies the locale of the self's relations. It is in moral space where the givenness of the self-as-embodied comes to be recognized as a critical datum in configuring how the self is related to itself and to others in political community and to what I can only call "more humane" forms of ethical orientation.

By attending to embodied rationality, by articulating situational frameworks in space as well as time, and by advancing moral ideals of benevolence grounded in the messiness of our embodied being, Charles Taylor argues philosophically for making what I am calling "space for the self." To create that space, he undertakes an exhaustive challenge to a predominant conception of selfhood and disembodied rationality attractive—even normative I would say—in the West. Taylor's philosophical project invites comparison with a critique of Western rationality—and a constructive proposal for understanding human self-relatedness—to be found in a Japanese philosopher who, likewise, in my view, makes space for the self—Yuasa Yasuo. Yuasa, like Taylor, emphasizes spatiality as the critical context for understanding the self-in-relation. It is to a consideration of the point of connection with Taylor to be found in Yuasa's important book, *The Body*, that I now turn.

B. Space for the Self : Yuasa Yasuo

Yuasa Yasuo is a Japanese philosopher in command of Western sources. In *The Body : Toward An Eastern Mind-Body Theory*, he performs a comparative philosophical analysis on a problem central to Western thought, the problem of the mind-body relation. Yuasa seeks to break down the subject/object dichotomy by recasting the self in space. He defends the view that selfhood is foundationally *body* and that

understanding the self in relation is ultimately to understand the body in space. Arguing for a spatially-conceived embodied selfhood, Yuasa aims his study at a framed ideal in which the mind-body split is overcome in an actual experience of self-unity, which directs his attention away from typical Western mind-body explications and towards the end of justifying cultivation and praxis through which actual moments of self-unification can be experienced. What is at stake in this analysis is the articulation of a self valued for its capacity to cultivate itself to the end of achieving through practices of meditation a grasping of the mind through the body and the body through the mind. Yuasa invites science into his conversation, but in the cultural framework in which he is working, in the framework where mind-body is finally integrate-able, science becomes what it was originally meant to be, a method rather than a metaphysics of mind, and certainly not the anchor for an ontology of human selfhood.

Yuasa's book resists neat summarization and what I shall say about the book will necessarily be brief and selective. Suffice it to say that Yuasa fills an amazingly large philosophical landscape, drawing on texts dealing with Buddhist meditation and scrutinizing such phenomena as acupuncture, holistic and psychosomatic medicine, and kundalini yoga. His excursion into the thought of Watsuji, Nishida, Dogen and Kukai on the body performs the work of constructing an Eastern theory of spatially-conceived selfhood that proceeds in full conversation with such Western figures as Bergson, Merleau-Ponty, Husserl, Heidegger, and Jung.

In an argument that connects with Charles Taylor, Yuasa argues that the normative view of the self in the West expresses a commitment to a philosophical anthropology based on a particular way of conceiving rationality. That philosophical anthropology is itself a product of an even more basic philosophical (and cultural) commitment to the primacy of temporality. Yuasa presents the views of several Eastern philosophers to lend support to the perspective he offers, and I would take a quick look at Yuasa's treatment of Watsuji and Nishida to see how certain accents in their philosophical work lends support to Yuasa's central position regarding the meaning and nature of human self-relatedness.

Yuasa argues strenuously that spatiality is more primary to the ontology of person than temporality. He turns to Watsuji (1889-1960) to support his case, arguing that unlike Heidegger, who found fundamental being (Dasein) in temporality, "Watsuji undertook the project of grasping the fundamental human being from the standpoint of *spatiality*." Watsuji employs the Japanese term, *basho*, to identify the place—the field—in which are to be found the interconnected meanings of the life-world.

Taylor's concern with frames of reference immediately suggests itself, for Watsuji—and Yuasa himself—means by *basho* that existing in space is the primordial fact and the primary significance of being human.²⁸ Such space is inter-subjective “life space”, and it is in this life-space, this *basho*, where the self experiences itself in its relatedness to self and other and finds meaning in the world. And the meaning the self finds takes account of those things that are present to human subjects in their experience of space, *which always involves body*. Yuasa, then, is advancing a philosophical perspective on selfhood that is grounded in the foundational spatiality of the self as embodied being. This radical notion of embodied being requires that we take spatiality as foundational to self-relatedness, which is to say that *basho* will draw our philosophical attention not to that which is not embodied (i.e., disembodied consciousness or disengaged reason) but to that which one encounters spatially in embodied being. Concretely, philosophical investigations grounded in the spatiality of *basho* will concern themselves with body and all that is related to self-as-body-in-relation. Rather than focusing on the temporal issue that we are selves who exist in history, a temporal concept, *basho* would require philosophers to concern themselves with such a commonplace bodily relation as one's experience of climate. From Watsuji's notion of *basho*, Yuasa affirms the idea that we are not simply individuals temporally bound, as Heidegger averred, but beings under a double structure of individual and social being. As Watsuji writes, “When persons are seen in this concrete double structure, temporality can proceed with spatiality”,²⁹ and that leads to a consideration of the self in space as body.

Yuasa employs Watsuji to make the case that in the Eastern development of a mind-body theory, body-determined spatiality is foundational: to “exist in a spatial *basho* means nothing other than to exist as a human being by virtue of one's body; I exist in my body, occupying the spatial *basho* of here and now: This is what it means for me to exist within the world.”³⁰ While noting that Watsuji offers no explicit account of the body, Yuasa extends Watsuji's preliminary views to involve him in Yuasa's own project to affirm a fundamental ontology of selfhood grounded in the spatiality of bodily being, and Yuasa even says that this spatial existence of body “has decisive relevance to his [Watsuji's] understanding of the nature of humanity.”³¹

Yuasa has clearly undertaken a project to identify “sources of the self” as they are constructed philosophically under the rubrics of spatiality and embodied existence. As a comparativist in dialogue with the Cartesian

view that ethics is concerned with individual consciousness, Yuasa notes that Watsuji explicated Descartes' understanding of the body as "merely a part of the human subject's spatial experience."³² Watsuji rejected this Cartesian mind-body split (and by implication any notion of disengaged or disembodied reason that necessarily attaches to it), arguing that space exists as life space (*basho*) endowed with human meanings even before a particular subject's spatial experience. From Watsuji Yuasa extracts space (body) to identify the fundamental givenness of existence as bestowed, and "one is born in the life-space under various structural interconnections of meanings, and by growing up in them, one can then, so to speak, *become* a human subject."³³

To affirm body presupposes an affirmation of the self in space, and this establishes a significant, cross-cultural point of contact with Taylor's Western project. In drawing on Nishida, Yuasa extends his position to establish a moral dimension—much as Taylor does—for Nishida's insight is that in presupposing spatiality as the foundation of human ontology, one must presuppose also that others are present in that space as well. Thus does Yuasa move from the idea that the self is foundationally spatial and body to claim spatiality as a moral source of selfhood. Thus is opened the social dimension of spatiality, that is, spatiality and body provide the grounds for establishing moral connectedness of self-in-relation-to-others. Spatiality for Yuasa moves in the same direction as moral space for Taylor—both views ultimately involve themselves with community and social experience as the self relates itself to itself through encounter with others.

In affirming the primary character of the self as spatial, Yuasa holds that self-as-body forces us to rethink (at least in Western terms) the role of rationality in conceiving the self. For temporality emphasizes a particular kind of rationality, the kind that leads to the Western mind-body dualism in which mind is primary and body is secondary. This rationality does not attend to what connects mind-body, but what separates them. It is the rationality that emphasizes as Kant did the self's identity as conscious of itself in and through time (temporal self); that identifies a pure reason or consciousness disembodied from the self. Yuasa's alternative is to consider a form of body rationality, which he takes pains to illustrate by explicating Nishida's notion of "dark consciousness," an idea related to the phenomenon of "acting intuition."

Nishida provides Yuasa with a way to rethink rationality. Nishida had identified what he termed "dark consciousness" as the particular form of consciousness in which the self is present to itself as both object

and subject, where distinctions between self as subject and object break down. Dark consciousness functions to make ego-consciousness disappear; and exposing dark consciousness to philosophical scrutiny is tantamount to identifying the interiority of the self itself, where willing and thinking become unified in experience.³⁴

Nishida is the philosopher Yuasa turns to help explicate the non-dualized experience of mind-body. Nishida's concept of dark consciousness identifies the experience of immediate apodicticity, that stage prior to self-awareness in which the self experiences the not-yet-differentiated self as subject and object. What Yuasa finds compelling in Nishida's understanding of dark consciousness is that the experience of immediate apodicticity proceeds "by means of a practice that confronts the self's interiority itself" which he calls an "ecstatic state" or a state of acting intuition.³⁵ It is this experience that practice can cultivate, but it is not the Kantian experience of giving rational form to sense experience. It is, Yuasa says, "acting intuition [that] grasps human-being-in-the-world, not to cognize it. Persons are subjects qua action before they are thinking, cognizing subjects."³⁶ And that action "now means that the self, receiving the power of its intuition, advances toward the world of everyday life."³⁷ This active intuition is "the disclosure of the unifying force . . . operative at the base of all conscious acts : intellectual thinking, moral practice, artistic performance, and religious acts."³⁸ This acting intuition describes what in other language we might term "embodied rationality." It is a form of "thinking" that is spatially-constructed, presented in a cultural frame where it is actually so valued that it is the goal of personal cultivation, that goal being the actual unifying of the mind and body in experience. Nishida gives the example of the person who has a "knack" for something,³⁹ who, with practice and cultivation, finally becomes able to accomplish that activity with mind and body in masterful sync. This is embodied selfhood—this is the picture of self in which body functions in attunement with mind, with no division, with no disembodied rationality or ideal of disengaged reason holding a privileged place in the system of valuation.

Yuasa's picture of embodied selfhood, complete with a non-dualistic rationality that creates no artificial distinctions between reason and the self's relations to self and others in experience, posits a view of reason that in the West has been pronounced in such ancient, pre-Socratic notions as Heraclitus' idea of "logos" (the capacity to discern how things "hang together"), and more recently in contemporary Western accounts of the emotions. Recent accounts analyze emotions as meaning-complexes

wherein feeling and cognition constitute a form of embodied rationality, a non-discursive (self-)communication system that is holistic in bringing body and mind, feeling and judgment together in the specific meaning-complex of a particular emotion. As emotions can be educated, so too the conjoining experience of mind-body can be cultivated, the hope being, as Nishida says and Yuasa endorses, that cultivation practices might lead to an experience of nothing less than "a capturing of life."⁴⁰

The spatially conceived self, Yuasa's embodied self, "is a being who *acts* on the world with a body, while understanding the modalities of being through the sense intuition supplied by that body. . . . [T]he body's spatial relationship with the world is more important than anything else for the acting intuition's mode of being"⁴¹. In this we discern an Eastern view of the self that is also a critique of the disembodied self advanced in the West. Yuasa corrals Nishida, Watsuji and several Western philosophers (e.g., Bergson, Husserl, Merleau-Ponty) to establish the foundations for an ontology of person-as-body that rejects the primacy of temporality and supplants it with a spatially conceived notion of self.

C. Summary and Conclusion

Yuasa and Taylor both expose and critique certain Western assumptions about the meaning of the self, one from within the Western tradition (Taylor), the other outside it (Yuasa). For all their differences as particular works of philosophy, these two works, when read together, point to underlying continuities in emphasis and outlook. For each is critical of a primary assumption in Western philosophical anthropology, and each offers a corrective. Yuasa seeks in critical engagement with the Western emphasis on temporality to assert the primacy of space as the key not only to philosophical anthropology but to philosophy itself. Taylor criticizes the cultural ideal of disembodied rationality so prominent in Western philosophy, then proposes to think about the self in moral space, which for Taylor is always tied to what he calls "frameworks."

My case in analyzing these two philosophers is that both are engaged in projects designed to make space for the self. The Eastern emphasis on the self in space exposes Western philosophical assumptions about the self as temporally rather than spatially conceived; and more than that, it allows connection to a counter-strain of thinking about the self that is present within the Western tradition itself. By indicating a point of deeper continuity between one Japanese philosopher and one Canadian philosopher on this point, we broaden the conversation about how to

understand the self and its relations; and we position ourselves to grasp the meaning of selfhood within varied interpretive frameworks. That the self must be understood against the backdrop of culturally constructed frameworks of meaning and interpretation, however, is a conclusion that must be held in dialogical tension with an even more daring claim that I think Taylor and Yuasa both offer the other side of cultural contingency. That claim is simply this: that analyzing selfhood through spatiality exposes realities and continuities that are not culturally contingent, but discernable as universally valid insights into the nature of the self and its relations.

I would summarize the comparison of Taylor with Yuasa by noting that both philosophers recognize the importance of embodiment for conceiving the self. They both take into account the self as spatially conceived, Taylor in the notion of cultural frameworks and moral space, Yuasa in his embodiment project.

Both see the result of reconceiving the self spatially as helping to explicate action. Taylor is concerned to account for identity through the self's dialogic action/engagement with others, the end of which is the creation of personal identity in conjunction with the formation of good community through individual political involvement. Yuasa likewise conceives the self socially and finds action its most foundational expression of being. Both develop ontologies of the person that are concerned to develop space for the self; and both overrule the claim of theories of the temporal self that tend to idealize disembodiment and disengagement which both consider untrue to the complexity of relationally-conceived human being. Both are critical of cultural affirmations of science or technology that value instrumental reason as a foundational support for an ontology of the human. Science, both seem to say, is a method put to work within a cultural frame—it is not itself an ontological grounding. Many other parallels between these two thinkers can be discerned, including a common interest to turn attention to religious meaning. But the hope here was to be suggestive rather than exhaustive.

The kind of comparative analysis undertaken here has value if it turns us to reflect not only on our traditions of valuation, but on our often unquestioned philosophical assumptions about the self and its relations. The comparative process accents the need to examine more critically the tradition in which we—whoever “we” happens to be—are grounded. Yuasa, it should be noted, is quite comfortable in performing such comparative work himself and in modeling how that kind of cross-referencing can be accomplished. Beyond that self-reflection occasioned

by encounter with "the other" is this concern: is there a cross-cultural "universal" notion of selfhood to which we can acquire access? Is it possible that comparative analysis will reveal to us a human ontology beyond cultural diversification, one that is inadequately discerned through the traditional resources of, say, an exclusive commitment to something so basic in the West as the temporal self? If so, we must realize, with Taylor, that the problem is not that the Western tradition lacks resources to counter notions of a self constituted through disengaged reason and disembodied consciousness, but that we need to find ways to access them. One may, in fact, opt to run through the Western tradition as Taylor has done and, like Taylor, argue for emphasizing the counter-point he articulates through "moral space." But if there is a human ontology, and not just a Western (or Eastern) ontology of the human, it behooves those of us who are Westerners to consider the comparative enterprise as a means of access to that spatially conceived counter-point. The comparative move can create the conditions for a productive self-confrontation with one's own culturally determined and frames sources for conceiving the self and its relations, and doing so by provoking encounter with the strangeness of otherness, which a Western reader of Yuasa is sure to experience. The importance of such a comparative analysis, then, lies in the fact that we come to grasp beyond the reality of cultural form and contingency the truth about how the self is related as a self to its own self, which is in space and through body, and always in culture and in dialogic relationship with others. And because one has explored and become self-conscious of the influence of cultural variables in framing our concepts of self across cultural boundaries, we are situated to inquire if there is not possibly a human ontology beyond cultural diversification. Spatiality may hold the key to a cross-cultural formulation of how the self is constituted in its self-relatedness. Spatiality—if Taylor and Yuasa are right—presents a radical challenge to traditional Western modes of philosophizing about the self.

NOTES

1. I draw here on Kierkegaard's pseudonymous author, Anti-Climacus, who offered the following statement: "The self is a relation that relates itself to itself or is the relations's relating itself to itself in the relation; the self is not the relation but is the relation's relating itself to itself." Soren, Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, ed. and trans. by Howard and Edna Hond, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980, p. 13.

2. Yuasa, Yasuo. *The Body: Toward an Eastern Mind-Body Theory*.

Edited by T.P. Kasulis. Translated by Nagatomo Shingenori and T.P. Kasulis.
Albany : SUNY Press, 1987.

3. Taylor, Charles. *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*.
Cambridge : Harvard University Press 1989.

4. Taylor, 1989 : 316–320.

5. Ibid, p. 4.

6. Ibid, pp. 170–71.

7. Ibid, p. 172.

8. Ibid, p.507.

9. 1989, p. 507.

10. Ibid, p. 508.

11. Ibid, p. 4.

12. Ibid, p. 5.

13. Ibid, p. 8.

14. Ibid, p. 8.

15. Ibid, p. 26.

16. Ibid, p. 27.

17. Ibid, p. 31.

18. Ibid, p. 38.

19. Ibid, p. 41.

20. Ibid, p. 31.

21. Ibid, pp. 504–05.

22. Ibid, p. 514.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid, p. 505.

25. Ibid, p. 514.

26. Taylor, Charles. *The Ethics of Authenticity*. Cambridge : Harvard
University Press, 1991.

27. Ibid, p. 101–2.

28. Yuasa, p. 38.

29. Ibid, p. 30.

30. Ibid, p. 39.

31. Ibid, p. 40.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid, pp. 61–62.

35. Ibid, p. 65.

36. Ibid, p. 68.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid, p. 69.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid, p. 67.

WITTGENSTEIN AND RAMAKRISHNA ON THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Barry Curtis

The life and teachings of Ramakrishna offer a solution to a problem that troubled Wittgenstein in his later writings on religion. Wittgenstein said that coming to believe in God was not a matter of intellectual demonstration but of accepting religious teachings lovingly. But Wittgenstein himself could not "open his heart" to God. The primary reason had to do with the Problem of Evil. God, as the author of all things, is ultimately responsible for the suffering from which we call on Him for salvation. How can such an unlovable being be loved? Traditional solutions to the Problem of Evil involve denying the reality of evil or denying God's responsibility for it. But Wittgenstein found such solutions unsatisfactory. Ramakrishna, however, suggested a solution of a different kind.

Ramakrishna taught that all religions, including Christianity, were valid paths to God. He was deeply influenced by Hindu advaitism, which identifies God with the impersonal Absolute, but in his heart, Ramakrishna was not an advaitist. He gave his heart to Kali, the consort of Shiva, whom he worshipped as mother of the universe and goddess of destruction. Kali is unabashedly responsible for all the evil in the world as well as all the good. Through his devotion to Kali, Ramakrishna tried to teach us to love God in spite of the darker side of His character. We are to love God in the way we might love another human being—e.g., a sweetheart—unconditionally, and not because He merits our love on moral grounds. In this way, Ramakrishna cheerfully acknowledged God's responsibility for evil but invited us to love Him anyway.

Such an approach to devotional religion is difficult for Westerners because it requires us to give up a prejudice whose roots run very deep in Western thought. The prejudice, whose origins can be found in Greek philosophy, is that man needs a reason for everything—even for loving

God. If God weren't perfectly good—or anyway, good on balance—there would be no reason to love Him, and loving Him would be impossible. It was, above all, this prejudice that prevented Wittgenstein from “opening his heart” to God. The genius of Ramakrishna was to call this prejudice into question in a very dramatic way.

“Stiff Knees”

Wittgenstein accepted Kierkegaard's view that belief in God is not a matter of reason, but of “passion” (CV 53).¹ “Proofs” for the existence of God, said Wittgenstein, are always unsuccessful—since for every reason there is a valid counter-reason (CV, p. 29). More importantly, such proofs are foreign to the religious spirit, which is not the product of reason (CV, p. 64). Demonstrations for religious beliefs are “repellent,” he said, because they are really just rationalizations, offered by believers to provide an analysis and foundation for what they actually came to believe in another way—not through proof but through “opening their hearts” to God. (CV, pp. 85, 46). “Opening one's heart” in this way is the beginning of faith, which Wittgenstein called “a passionate commitment to a frame of reference” (CV, p. 64).

And faith is faith in what is needed by my heart, my soul, not my speculative intelligence. For it is my soul with its passions, as it were with its flesh and blood, that has to be saved, not my abstract mind (CV, p. 33).

Wittgenstein had great respect for those who were able to open their hearts in this way, but found that he was unable to do so himself. “The linings of my heart keep sticking together,” he said, “and to open it I should each time have to tear them apart” (CV, p. 57). His writings make it clear that he saw this lack of open-heartedness as an *incapacity* or *defect*. For he admitted a need for salvation (CV, p. 33), and saw the remedy as a passionate commitment (CV, p. 64), but he could not bring himself to make the necessary leap of faith. “I cannot kneel to pray,” he says, “because it's as though my knees were stiff” (CV, p. 56).

Wittgenstein gave a number of reasons for this case of “stiff knees.” Most of them are mainly of psychological interest. They include fear (CV, p. 56), pride (CV, p. 46), self-will (CV, p. 45), inertia (CV, p. 33), spiritual immaturity (CV, p. 32).² The most important reason, however, was not psychological but philosophical. Wittgenstein was troubled by the

Problem of Evil—a problem which has troubled philosophers and theologians since Epicurus. Epicurus is supposed to have put the problem this way : Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then He is not omnipotent. Is He able, but not willing? Then He is malevolent. Is He both able and willing? Then whence evil?

Various solutions to the Problem of Evil have been proposed since ancient times. Indeed, a whole branch of theology—"theodicy"—has grown up around the task of defending God against the charge of evil. Many inventive proposals have been offered, including these :

- (1) evil is unreal : what appears evil to human beings is just an illusion;
- (2) God does not approve evils, but permits them, because every possible alternative would involve even greater evils than the present scheme of things;
- (3) evil is no more than the absence or "privation" of good;
- (4) evil is indispensable to the existence of good, because good and evil are contraries which cannot exist without each other;
- (5) the evil in the universe is caused by man's wickedness;
- (6) the world is a moral training ground for building character, and the evils in the world are necessary for "soul making";
- (7) our limited intellect cannot grasp the mystery, and hence we must trust in God's goodness and accept the paradox unresolved.

Wittgenstein, however, was unimpressed by such "solutions," which he saw as mere rationalizations. All of them contradict either the reality of evil or God's ultimate responsibility for it. But given the teachings of Christianity, Wittgenstein found it "obvious" that evil—at least in the form of suffering if not sin—must be real and that God must be responsible for it. For Christianity is a salvific religion. If evil were unreal, there would be nothing to be saved from; and if God were not responsible for evil, then the path to salvation which necessarily involves evil would not be His deliberate creation.

God, Evil and Salvation

To understand Wittgenstein's view about God and evil, it is important to bear in mind that the only religious teachings which Wittgenstein considered in any detail were the teachings of Christianity. It is the picture

of God which emerges from these teachings—as contained in the Gospels, the letters of St. Paul, and the writings of Kierkegaard—which Wittgenstein found so troublesome. Perhaps if Wittgenstein had considered the teachings of other religions, some of his difficulties might have disappeared. But perhaps not. For Wittgenstein was preoccupied with salvation, and the questions which Wittgenstein raised in connection with Christianity can be raised about other salvific religions, too.

In Christianity, as in other religions which promise salvation, the path to deliverance leads through despair. To embark on this path, a man must first go through what Kierkegaard called a “dark night of the soul,” where he loses all confidence in his own ability to cope with life and calls upon a higher power for strength and guidance. It is, above all, despair that educates a man to a belief in God—not through reflection and reasoned proof, but by forcing the concept on him (*Vide CV*, pp. 28, 86). As Wittgenstein put it,

The Christian religion is only for the man who needs infinite help, solely, that is, for the man who experiences infinite torment . . . The Christian faith—as I see it—is a man’s refuge in this ultimate torment (*CV*, p. 46).

To the extent that Christianity provides a refuge from torment, it is a magnificent gift to mankind. And so long as we only skim the surface of Christian teachings, this is what we find: a wonderful promise of salvation through faith. Taken at face value, such a promise seems easy for a man to “seize upon lovingly.” On closer inspection, however, a problem arises. For God, as the author of all things, is also the author of the path to salvation—a path which requires “ultimate torment.” God has constructed the world in such a way that salvation can only come out of suffering. The agent of our salvation, it seems, is also the architect of our distress.

Wittgenstein raised this problem in connection with John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, an allegorical story about the path to salvation. The pilgrims in the story must face and overcome all sorts of dangers and obstacles on the way: swamps of despondency, hills of difficulty, valleys of humiliation, pits of foolishness, clouds of confusion. They must also cope with a huge cast of evil and unsavory characters, including bandits, wicked judges, false guides, satyrs, ogres and fiends. Only a few of the pilgrims are able to overcome all these problems and temptations and cross over to the Celestial City to be in the presence of God.

Pilgrim’s Progress, according to Wittgenstein, is an example of how

“religious similes can be seen to move on the edge of an abyss.”

For what if we simply add: “and all these traps, quicksands, wrong turnings, were planned by the Lord of the Road and the monsters, thieves and robbers were created by him”? Certainly, that is not the sense of the simile! But such a continuation is all too obvious! For many people, including me, this robs the simile of its power (CV, p. 29).

By focusing on the role of evil in the drama of salvation, Wittgenstein calls our attention to the centrality of evil in Christian doctrine. The role of sin and suffering—evil if you will—in salvation is so essential that any attempt to deny its reality, as some thinkers have tried to do, would condemn Christianity to uselessness. For without evil, i.e., suffering or sin or both, there would be nothing for anyone to be saved from, and Christianity would have nothing to do. Evil is an ineluctable part of the Christian program—and, indeed, of any religion centered around a program of salvation. Rolf Gruner makes this point in an article in *Theology*, where he discusses the role of evil in the religion of theists.

For it is no overstatement to say that their faith depends on it. All religious belief is connected with the manner in which men see themselves and the world, and where the “tragic sense” of life is lacking and the consciousness of indigence, deficiency and transitoriness absent, religion will be unknown. Perfect beings in a perfect universe have no need of it, nor apparently have those for whom evils are avoidable defects to be gradually eliminated by man’s growing perfection.

Gruner admits that evil creates a paradox for those who believe that God is all powerful and all good, but suggests that such irrationality need not be an obstacle to faith. For, as he puts it, “...the strongest believers have usually been those who have had the firmest conviction of the reality of evil, and many or most of them have never made any attempt at theodicy.”³

As Wittgenstein has shown, however, the Problem of Evil doesn’t necessarily go away just because we recognize that religious questions are a matter of faith rather than reason. The Problem of Evil is an obstacle not merely to rational belief, but to faith as well. For it is an obstacle to love, which, in Wittgenstein’s mind, is the precondition of faith (CV, pp. 33, 64). Once we see God as responsible for the “infinite torment” from which we call on Him for salvation, is a leap of faith still possible? Can we still “open our hearts” to God as we would to an innocent bystander who comes to our aid in distress? Can we still respond with gratitude?

With love? Are such emotions even available to us? These are the questions that lead to "stiff knees."

Intimations of a Solution

Is there any solution to the "stiff knees" problem? Wittgenstein hinted at one. As his discussion of *Pilgrim's Progress* proceeds, he begins to have some second thoughts. Earlier, he said that when we discover God's role in creating the hardships suffered by the pilgrims, this "robs the simile of its power." But now he adds,

But more especially if this is—as it were—suppressed. It would be different if at every turn it were said quite honestly; "I am using this as a simile, but look: it doesn't fit here." Then you wouldn't feel you were being cheated, that someone was trying to convince you by trickery (CV, p. 29).

In *Pilgrim's Progress*, God's part in permitting or creating the problems of the pilgrims is, to a large extent, suppressed. It is only in the last few pages that any kind of clear statement emerges. This takes place as the Pilgrims approach the last obstacle on the road to heaven—a river with no bridge, where the depth of the waters is inversely proportional to one's faith in God. One pilgrim (Hopeful) says to the other (Christian):

These troubles and distresses that you go through in these Waters are no sign that God hath forsaken you, but are sent to try you, whether you will call to mind that which heretofore you have received of His goodness, and live upon Him in your distresses.⁴

Throughout Christian teachings, as in *Pilgrim's Progress*, the Problem of Evil tends to be kept in the background. The foremost metaphor of Christianity is that God is a kind and loving father. His role, if any, in creating or permitting sin and suffering is left unmentioned, so long as no one asks about it. When someone does ask about it, the normal response is to recite one of the "solutions" listed above—which Wittgenstein regarded as mere rationalizations. This is what creates the "air of deception" which Wittgenstein sensed in Christianity.

But what if Christians were to admit God's responsibility for evil openly right from the start? In recent years, some theologians have advocated this idea. Gruner, for example, has suggested that theists would be wise

“if they not only admitted evil but emphasized it as crucial” (op. cit.). This would mean a drastic shift of emphasis for Christianity—so drastic perhaps as to render the religion unrecognizable. But the air of deception would at least be removed. Was Wittgenstein saying that this would be enough for him to be able to “open his heart”? No. But he did say that he could *understand* such teachings.

Someone can be told, for instance : “Thank God for the good you receive but don’t complain about the evil : as you would of course do if a human being were to do you good and evil by turns”I can say: “Thank these bees for their honey as though they were kind people who have prepared it for you”; that is *intelligible* and describes how I should like you to conduct yourself. But I cannot say: “Thank them because, look, how kind they are!”—since the next moment they may sting you (CV, p. 29).

Teachings which honestly acknowledge the role of God as savior *cum* tormentor would thus avoid the problem of “trickery.” But would this help to solve Wittgenstein’s “stiff knees” problem? Could the God of such teachings be loved? Wittgenstein didn’t say. After raising the possibility of such a conception of God, he quickly dropped the subject and went on to talk about something else. Unfortunately, Wittgenstein’s imagination in this area was limited by his exclusive focus on the teachings of Christianity. He did not have before him a lively example of religious teachings which do involve love for such a “savior-tormenter” God. But such a model is available in the Gospel of Ramakrishna.

Ramakrishna and Kali

Ramakrishna taught that all religions, including Christianity, were valid paths to God. He was deeply influenced by Hindu advaitism, which identifies God with the impersonal Absolute, but in his heart, Ramakrishna was not an advaitist. His own religious path was based on the worship of Kali, consort of Shiva and mother of the universe. Kali is both the goddess of destruction and the savior of mankind. The statue of Kali at Dakshineswar, where Ramakrishna officiated as priest, tells the story. The goddess is displayed standing on a white marble image of the prostrate body of Shiva. She wears a garland of human heads and a girdle of human arms. Her lolling tongue is dripping with blood. In Her two left hands She holds a man’s severed head and a sword. With Her two right hands She offers boons and reassurance to Her devotees.

No one could have been more open or honest about God’s responsibility

for evil than Ramakrishna. Ramakrishna taught that Kali is responsible for all the evil in the world, which She visits upon us that we might seek salvation from her. In this respect, She resembles the “hidden” God of Christianity as seen by Wittgenstein. But Kali’s role as tormentor-savior, far from being hidden, is the foremost teaching about her. Kali’s *modus operandi*, according to Ramakrishna, is to entrap mankind through Maya, the Great Illusion, and then to grant salvation through grace. As Ramakrishna put it,

Bondage and liberation are both of Her making. By Her maya worldly people become entangled in ‘woman and gold’, and again, through Her grace they attain their liberation (GSR, p. 136).

Kali does all this, Ramakrishna said, not for the sake of justice, or because some greater good will come of it, but “because it is great fun” (GSR, p. 818).

The nature of God is like that of a child. As a child builds up his toy house and then breaks it down, so God acts while creating, preserving and destroying the universe (GSR, p. 176).

To attain salvation, we must first get the attention of this “playful mother” (GSR, p. 136). We must chase after Her until She reveals herself to us. Above all, we must propitiate her. The key to propitiation, according to Ramakrishna, is love. Above all, one must open one’s heart to the Divine Mother.

To my Divine Mother I prayed only for pure love. I offered flowers at Her Lotus Feet and prayed to Her : ‘Mother, here is Thy virtue, here is Thy vice. Take them both and grant me only pure love for Thee’ (GSR, p. 138).

But is it really even possible for us to love such a God? Suppose we conceive of God as Ramakrishna saw him—as a tormentor-savior; and suppose we try to see God’s behavior as Ramakrishna taught us—as a form of recreation or “play.” Is it even possible for us to love such an unlovely being? Ramakrishna once described a vision he had of Kali in which

She appeared with a child in the womb, which She brought forth

and swallowed up the next instant. And as much of it as went into Her mouth became void! She showed me that all is Void. And She said as it were, 'Come confusion! Come confusion!'"(SSR, section 1005).

Is this a deity which only a saint—or a lunatic—could love?

Loving the Unlovely

There is a deep prejudice in Western religious thinking to the effect that man needs a reason for loving God. (This is an instance of a more general prejudice in the West to the effect that man needs a reason for everything.) Fortunately, in the religious tradition of the West, God provides man with a reason for loving Him, by being perfectly good. If God weren't perfectly good—or anyway, good on balance—there would be no reason to love Him, and loving Him would be impossible.

I call this idea a *prejudice* because it insists on standards for loving God which we would never demand of ourselves for loving each other. We do not require, e.g., that our parents or children or sweethearts be perfectly good in order to sustain our love. On the contrary, we are capable of loving people in spite of some very serious vices and defects. Though we would probably pull ourselves up short at unredeemable depravity, we do not, in the context of our relationships with other human beings, set especially high moral standards for the objects of our affections.

So why does the West set such high standards for God? Partly because of the influence of Greek philosophy on Christianity. When early Christian thinkers sought to harmonize Judaism with Greek thought, they identified Yahweh—the mighty personality of the Old Testament—with the Ultimate Reality of Plato and the Platonists, which Plato called the Form of the Good. Yahweh, whom the ancient Israelites loved despite His prickly temperament, thus became “sanitized” for Western consumption by being merged with the Greek philosophical paradigm of perfect goodness.⁵ Perfect goodness thus came to be part of Yahweh's essence, so that He could no longer even be conceived except as wholly good.

This identification of God with The Good dovetailed nicely with St. Paul's teaching of God's universal love for mankind—*agape*. For *agape* is spontaneous, unmerited love. God loves humanity, not because they deserve it, but despite their lack of desert. He even loves sinners. Through His grace, He fills the faithful with this same love—*agape*—which they, in turn, direct toward their neighbors. Such universal love is tantamount

to omnibenevolence, which is exactly what the Platonic Form of the Good would be expected to have if it were given a personality. The God of Christianity thus takes on the qualities of The Form of the Good, by radiating goodness (in the form of love) down on mankind. This, in turn, gives believers a justification for loving God. God is to be loved because He is omnibenevolent and therefore eminently loveable. To love God is thus something *rational*—something which can be argued for, and not just left to the emotions.

Man's love toward God, of course, is not love in the sense of *agape*, which is unmerited and needs no justification, but *eros*.⁶ Eros is love in the sense of passionate desire, which begins with beautiful objects in this world, and then ascends to higher and higher objects until it seeks the Form of Beauty itself (which, in Plato, is identical with the Form of the Good).⁷ Eros thus implies a lack—a desirable object which one doesn't have and therefore wants. Hence *eros*, unlike *agape*, is egocentric—it seeks union with beauty and goodness for the sake of its own satisfaction. And, above all, *eros* is *motivated* love—it is awakened by the beauty, and, ultimately, the goodness of its object. It was Augustine, not Paul, who developed the *eros* theme in Christianity, through the notion of *caritas*, which is "*eros* for God."⁸ Throughout the history of Christianity these two themes, sometimes at odds with each other, have been intertwined: God's *agape* for man, and man's *eros* for God. Both themes necessarily presuppose a divinity who is good, and who thereby justifies our love for Him and makes it rational.

The teachings of Ramakrishna provide a striking contrast to the "goodness-centered" religiosity of the West. For Ramakrishna invited us to love God not because He is good, but in spite of the fact that He is both good and evil. We are to love Him without justification—spontaneously and unconditionally, and not because He deserves it. For Westerners, such teachings require not only a new conception of God but also a new conception of religious love.

Ramakrishna's love for God does not fall neatly into any of the traditional Greek categories of love. His worship of Kali as mother of the universe suggests the Greek concept of *sterge*, or love for parents (Sanskrit: *apatya*). Indeed, Ramakrishna often compared himself and other devotees to the children of Kali, speaking of his love for Her as if She were his own mother. But it was not love in this sense that marked the height of Ramakrishna's devotional experience.

The form of love which Ramakrishna seems to have felt most acutely for God was *madhura*, or sweetheart-love (LSR, pp. 81-82; 171-172;

SSR p. 174). While the model for this form of love is that which obtains between the sexes, *madhura* differs from *eros* in several ways. Unlike *eros*, *madhura* does not imply unsatisfied desire. For *madhura* persists even when the loved one is actually possessed. Nor is *madhura* egocentric. For the lover's ultimate concern is not to gain his own happiness but to lose himself in adoration of the other. Most importantly, *madhura*, unlike *eros*, is unmerited—not based on the “goodness” of the beloved. While we can, perhaps, list the virtues of a sweetheart, they are never sufficient to explain our love. Indeed, we may love her for her vices too. It is even possible to fall in love in this sense with someone whom we know to be evil, or at least partly evil—someone who might, for all we know, destroy us. *Madhura* exceeds even *apatya*, or love for one's parents, in its freedom from entanglement with the goodness or “meritoriousness” of its object.

In this respect, *madhura* resembles *agape*: both are forms of unmerited love. Unlike *agape*, however, *madhura* is not universal or “indiscriminate.” Typically it is possible to feel *madhura* toward only one loved one at a time. This is a form of love for which the Greeks had no name, and of which they seem to have had no concept. But it is a kind of love familiar in the modern world, both East and West. Love in this sense does not require that its object be wholly or even predominantly good. Thus it provides a paradigm for the kind of love one might feel for a God whom one believed to be responsible for evil as well as good. Other forms of love, including love for a master (*dasya*), love for a friend (*sakhya*) or love for a child (*vatsalya*), also provide useful models for loving God, but Ramakrishna said that *madhura* includes them all (GSR, p. 115).

It was through the cultivation of *madhura* that Ramakrishna is said to have achieved the “zenith” of his devotional practices (RGM, p. 241, 245-246). Ramakrishna's *madhurabhava* was directed not to Kali, but to Krishna, partly because this form of devotion is part of the Vaishnavite tradition. Since the model for *madhura* in this tradition is the love of Radha for Krishna—Ramakrishna dressed himself as a woman, and identified himself with Radha (RGM, pp. 233-237; LSR, pp. 173-180). By showing his love for Krishna in this way, Ramakrishna demonstrated once again the eclecticism and ecumenicism of his religious teachings.

But it was Kali to whom Ramakrishna gave his love throughout most of his adult life, and this love bears the unmistakable stamp of love for a sweetheart. For years, Ramakrishna prayed continually for the goddess to reveal Herself to him. Only after a long series of austerities, when he was on the brink of suicide in despair of ever seeing Her did She appear to him for the first time. This sent him into a prolonged religious ecstasy,

which he experienced again and again whenever he sensed Her presence. Soon, Ramakrishna began to see Kali in everyone and everything: in the ant, the cat, the marble floor, the door-sill, even the sexual organ. He saw Her in trees, plants, animals, men, grass. He saw Her in the innocent child and the honest man; in the cheat, the swindler, the villain, the prostitute.⁹ He saw Her and loved Her in everything, both good and evil.

Ramakrishna's love for Kali provides a kind of answer to Wittgenstein's "stiff knees" problem. For Ramakrishna showed how it was possible to love God as one might love a sweetheart, in spite of the dark side of her nature. Clearly, love of this kind cannot be gained through ratiocination or through an effort of will. According to Ramakrishna, one must pray for it, and then it comes—if it does—by grace (GSR, p. 138, SSR, pp. 672–686). But one must love the goddess, if one can, with open eyes—i.e., without nursing illusions or indulging in wishful thinking about the "perfect goodness" of the loved one, as lovers sometimes do. Only in this way can one avoid the element of deception which Wittgenstein found so unattractive in Christianity.

Of course, to see God in this way—as both good and evil—would be an enormous step for most Westerners. Not even the most outlandish of Christian heresies ever denied the omnibenevolence of God.¹⁰ Indeed, God's omnibenevolence is so much a part of His essence in Christian teachings that Ramakrishna might be said to be worshipping an entirely different god. But this obstacle—of attributing evil as well as good to God—would not seem insurmountable for Wittgenstein. Indeed, Wittgenstein appears already to have taken a tentative step in this direction by endorsing the advice to "Thank God for the good you receive but don't complain about the evil : as you would of course do if a human being were to do you good and evil by turns" (CV, p. 29).

But to acknowledge such a God or even to "thank" Him—is one thing, and to love Him is another. Ramakrishna himself said that it was "extremely difficult" to love and worship Kali. "It is no joke," he said (GSR, p. 116). But the difficulty in loving Kali is not so different from the difficulty in loving a human being. Like Kali, people too can be wonderful, terrible, playful, enigmatic and cruel—all at the same time. Human beings are capable of inflicting a great deal of pain on those who love them—sometimes on purpose. So it is with Kali, only on a larger scale. For in Her omnipotence, She is capable of wreaking enormous havoc in our lives. Nevertheless, many ordinary people throughout India and elsewhere love and worship Kali. This in itself is evidence that the

extraordinary religious gifts of Ramakrishna are not a prerequisite for devotion of this kind.

NOTES

1. References to the works of Wittgenstein and Ramakrishna will be made in accordance with the following scheme of abbreviation :

CV : Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Culture and Value*. Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1980.

GSR : *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. New York : Ramakrishna Vivekananda Center, 1973.

SSR : *Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna*. Madras : Ramakrishna Math, 1949.

LSR : *Life of Sri Ramakrishna*. Mayavati, Almora, Himalayas : Advaita Ashrama, 1955.

RGM : *Ramakrishna the Great Master*. Madras : Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1952.

2. Wittgenstein also has some quarrels with particular religious doctrines (e.g., predestination—CV, p. 32; Judgment Day—CV, p. 33).

3. Gruener, R. "The Elimination of the Argument from Evil." *Theology* 83 (1980), pp. 416-424.

4. Bunyan, John. *The Pilgrim's Progress*. New York, E.P. Dutton, 1964, p. 157.

5. The clearest evidence for this is in Augustine (*City of God*, VIII, 5-6; *Trinity*, XII, 15.24).

6. It has long been observed by commentators how rarely Paul speaks of *agape* from man to God (Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, New York, Harper and Row, 1969, p. 124).

7. Plato. *Phaedrus*, 250-251, *Symposium*, 211.

8. Nygren, op. cit., pp. 482-518

9. As a result of these experiences, Ramakrishna told his followers over and over again that "God has become everything" (GSR, p. 345, 393, 818; SSR, 1000).

10. Exceptions to this rule are apparent rather than real. The Manicheans did not reject God's omnibenevolence, but His omnipotence, by crediting Satan with independent power. The Gnostics denied the omnibenevolence of Yahweh, but they also denied Yahweh's supremacy as a creator-god, and affirmed the existence of an omnibenevolent "God beyond God." John Henry Blunt, ed., *Dictionary of Sects, Heresies, Ecclesiastical Parties and Schools of Religious Thought*, Ann Arbor, Michigan : Gryphon Books, 1971.

HINDUISM IN PERSPECTIVE : A CRITIQUE OF ALBERT SCHWEITZER

O'Hyun Park

Albert Schweitzer's interpretation of Indian thought is an interesting and influential example of the western attempt to understand Indian religious ideas. His treatment of Indian religious traditions is set forth in two books : *Christianity and the Religions of the World* and *Indian Thought and Its Development*. To him, his own religion is superior to any other religion, simply because it is an ethical teaching :

Christianity must, clearly and definitely, put before men the necessity of a choice between logical religion and ethical religion, and it must insist on the fact that the ethical is the highest type of spirituality, and that it alone is living spirituality.¹

Schweitzer seems determined to defend Christianity in the light of the ethical criterion which he has worked out before undertaking the task. As he came to this understanding, his earlier sympathy for Indian religion abated. Since his youth, Schweitzer had taken the religious quest : How can the finite attain union with the infinite? In his quest for an answer, Schweitzer was greatly influenced by Indian thought :

Indian thought has greatly attracted me since in my youth I first became acquainted with it through reading the works of Arthur Schopenhauer. From the very beginning I was convinced that all thought is really concerned with the great problem of how man can attain to spiritual union with infinite Being. My attention was drawn to Indian thought because it is busied with this problem and because by its nature it is mysticism. What I liked about it also was that Indian ethics are concerned with the behaviour of men to all living beings and not merely with his attitude to his fellow-man and to human society.²

In his later life this approach, however, came to be increasingly influenced by his own commitment to Christianity.

After he had decided to devote his life to helping Africans, he came to ask himself the reason for helping them. For this reason, he struggled to "find the elementary and universal conception of the ethical which I had not discovered in any philosophy."³ While making his way through the African jungle one day he found the ground for helping others : *reverence for life*. In the concept "reverence for life," his affirmation of life in this world had taken root. "Now I knew," wrote Schweitzer, "that the world view of ethical world and life-affirmation, together with its ideals of civilization, is founded in thought."⁴ His idea of reverence for life, therefore, was his whole rationalization for helping others.

Schweitzer then attempts to put this idea of reverence into practice in every area of his life and to base his moral evaluations upon it. From this point of view, the human situation is defined as follows : "The most immediate fact of man's consciousness is the assertion : I am life which wills to live, in the midst of life which wills to live, . . ."⁵

According to Schweitzer, this is the context which calls for an ethical relationship of self and the will-to-live, and for an affirmation of his will-to-live. His reverence for life or life-affirmation is, to him, a product of his experience of an ethical God. For Schweitzer, that which is directly opposed to such an ethical element in life is pessimistic and undesirable. And thus he interprets Indian religious ideas as opposed to ethics : "Indian thought, and Schopenhauer's also, is full of inconsistencies because it cannot help making concessions time after time to the will-to-live which persists in spite of all world and life denial, though it will not admit that the concessions are really such."⁶

Negating non-ethical religious thought, Schweitzer claims that the ethical is the criterion employed for evaluating the essential substance of a religion. Any religion which is not mysteriously ethical is to him insignificant. To him, ethical mysticism, to wit, finite union with infinite is the highest form of religion. In other words, a religion can be real only insofar as it is ethically mystical.

Consequently, Hindu religious ideas are to him deficient in this regard, although he believed that later Indian thought attempts to compensate for the indifference to ethics which he finds characteristic of Hinduism in its classical period.

But Schweitzer seems to overlook the fact that Hinduism is not so much one thing to be historically developed, as it is a many-splendored thing exhibiting many levels. Hinduism is not something which can be

identified with an objective teaching or doctrine. Hinduism has no founder and no central authority, and thus it has no mandated context. Nevertheless, it accommodates itself to every level of human life. It adapts itself to an intellectual mind; it can also be fitted to emotional as well as activist temperaments. The mainness of Hinduism is for the fitness of each individuality as well as for inner self. To fit into all human types and modes for the sake of helping all is the ultimate concern of Hindu religiosity. This fitness is called *Adhikara* and means that Hinduism has an intrinsic flexibility which enables it to become all things to all human beings and to put all human beings in their proper places.

Hindu religious ideas, according to Schweitzer, are less ethical than Christian religious ideas, simply because Hindu mysticism emphasizes ecstasy in isolation from life in this world. Thus, Schweitzer views Hinduism as focusing on a kind of trance which is irrelevant to ordinary lives as well as to human reason. To Schweitzer, Indian mysticism holds that the infinite Being, or *Brahman*, is identical with human inner reality. The union with *Brahman* is to him clearly a special experience of an immaterial sort, an experience which excludes ordinary experiences :

“The consciousness of being uplifted above the world which is experienced in ecstasy is the condition determining the Indian world and life negation.”⁷

Schweitzer's view embodies a widely prevalent fallacious understanding of the matter, namely, that mystical ecstasy is a purely psychological experience which calls for an obliteration of the world and the individual's personality. If the supreme is viewed in dualistic confrontation with the finite, then to experience it necessitates a turning away from the finite. This understanding of the relationship of the finite and the infinite is to be found within Hinduism, as it is to be found in Christianity and in other religions. It sets up an ultimately competitive relation between the finite and the infinite, between the worldly and the unworldly, and bids the seeker choose between them.

This is not the final or highest understanding of the matter in Hinduism, however, since Hinduism seeks a One which is without a second, and such a One does not require the setting aside of the second or third or fourth. *Brahman* is the reality of world, not a reality in competition with the world. Were the latter the case, Schweitzer's indictment of Hinduism would be irrefutable. The attainment of *Brahman* would then require the negation of this world. But Schweitzer has not understood the ultimately non-dual character of Hinduism even as he avoided dealing with the unworldly aspect of the Christian Gospels and their pointing to a kingdom

not of this world. By the same token, Schweitzer misses the import of Hinduism's pointing to a state which is beyond good and evil. He interprets this as a despairing of life and as an exaltation of non-action over action. What it means, however, is that where good is set over against evil, life is fragmented. Whenever the ego takes action, whether it opts for good or for evil, it is unable to suture the fissures which it creates. Thus, non-action does not mean no action, but action in which the ego is not pitting itself dualistically against the world. It is action in which I act, yet not I, but *Brahman* in me. Does not the Bible point to the same possibility of transcending dualism when it says : "To the pure all things are pure?" And does not the Beatitude suggest that this self-same transcendence of dualism is the prerequisite of the mystical version : "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God?"

To Schweitzer, dualism is the very heart of his ethical mysticism in the sense that it presupposes two principles in the history of human life. One is an ethical God who protects human ethical goals; the other is the impersonal power existing as nature. He sees the world as a battleground wherein ethical power contests natural power. A religion can be considered as being monistic if its ultimate allegiance is to the totality of impersonal power. Thus, the monistic God is not separated from the natural forces, and one can know God through the knowledge of the world. In this way, monism is in opposition to dualism.

For Schweitzer, there is an unbridgeable gulf between dualism and monism and between the ethical and the natural. That is why even when Hinduism as a monism seeks for an ethic, Schweitzer insists, it has never successfully attained one : "They strive for an ethic. They stretch out towards it in thought; but in the end they sink back exhausted."⁸

To Schweitzer, Hinduism is both passive and pessimistic. By virtue of its passivity and pessimism, Hinduism is inferior to Christianity, and Schweitzer claims in the conclusion of his book, *Indian Thought and its Development* that "the thought of mankind must advance to a position where it derives its world-view from ethics,"⁹ for the ethical God is higher than the natural God. Thus it is quite natural for him to obey what the ethical God wills and to negate what the natural God urges. In order to do so, Schweitzer wills to fight both for the ethical and against the natural. To Schweitzer, it is contradictory that one is ethical and at the same time natural : "I therefore recognize it as the destiny of my existence to be obedient to this higher revelation of the will-to-live in me. I choose for my work the removal of this division of the will-to-live against, so far as the influence of my existence reaches."¹⁰

Dualism also characterizes his conception of the relationship of self and other. To him, a life for others entails the death of self. The life of the self must be suppressed by the will-to-live for others. It is natural egoism from which Schweitzer wants to be free. Nature and ego together constitute the evil against which he fights: "The struggle against the evil that is in mankind we have to carry on not by judging others, but by judging ourselves. Struggle with oneself and veracity towards oneself are the means by which we work upon others."¹¹ In the dualism of self and others, whoever shall lose one's life for others, the same shall find it again. This can be taken to mean that whoever shall lose one's selfish life, the same shall find altruistic life. To Schweitzer, this amounts to the fight for good and against evil: "There we have given us that basic principle of the moral which is a necessity of thought: It is good to maintain and promote life; it is bad to destroy life or to obstruct it."¹² Although Schweitzer wants to help others according to his ethical principle, he ignored the necessity of the non-duality of self and other. No matter how much one may strive to help others, the goal can never be fulfilled by denying one's own ego. Here Schweitzer misses the point that one's existence for others is not merely ethical being which requires self-denial. Where altruism is seen as opposite to egoism, to live for others ethically necessitates the death of egoism. However, as far as human experience goes, to totally extirpate the ego appears to be an impossibility. No matter how much one talks about good and endeavors to practice it accordingly, egoism, or the natural, can never be overcome in this way. As soon as altruism or ethics is pitted against egoism or the natural, it is no longer altruistic or ethical, and becomes another form of evil. It is because ethics is the fulfillment of an imperative that the ethical relationship of self and other lacks naturalness or grace.

The dichotomy of life-affirmation and life-denial cannot be a criticism for distinguishing one religion from another, since all religions are confronted with it and no religion has ever achieved a conceptual or theological resolution of it. All have erred at some periods in their histories by going too far in one direction or the opposite. This is as true for Christianity as is for Hinduism or Buddhism. It may be helpful to contrast Schweitzer's version of Hinduism with two others which present opposite evaluations of Hinduism, even though at crucial points their readings of Hinduism are not so very far from Schweitzer's. Where Schweitzer is excessively taken with the ethical dimension of religion and insufficiently attentive to its spiritual aspects, S. Radhakrishnan sees Hinduism mainly as a spiritual discipline and find it praiseworthy for precisely the reason

that Schweitzer finds it wanting.

An extended attempt to rebut Schweitzer's charges against Hinduism is made by Radhakrishnan in his *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*. He accuses Schweitzer of an oversimplification of Hindu religious thought as well as of the religious situation in general :

"The many reservations which Schweitzer is obliged to make in applying his scheme of world affirmation and world negation as opposite categories of which one or the other must be denied show that it is not adequate to the facts."¹³

The fact is that Hinduism is not divorced from daily life, and Radhakrishnan cites with approval the favorable comparative estimate made of Hinduism by Sir George Birdwood: "India may yet be destined to prepare the way for reconciliation of Christianity with the world, and through the practical identification of the spiritual with the temporal life, . . ."¹⁴

For Radhakrishnan, Hinduism and Christianity are both oriented towards a world beyond this one, and in that respect can both be called other-worldly : "Religion springs from the conviction that there is another world beyond the visible and the temporal with which man has dealings, and ethics require us to act in this world with the compelling vision of another."¹⁵ Moreover, the ecstatic element is discernible not only in Indian religions but in Christianity as well : "Any argument based on ecstatic phenomena will apply to all religions alike."¹⁶ For Radhakrishnan, Hinduism only partakes of the genuine character of all religions in giving its ultimate allegiance to a kingdom not of this world. World negation and world affirmation must be connected, and to uphold either without the other is to present a truncated view of things.

Hinduism is both this-worldly and other-worldly, both monistic and theistic, both ethical and supra-ethical; but Radhakrishnan does not perceive, finally, that Hinduism proposes a way to overcome these and all other dualisms. In other words, his reply to Schweitzer is not radical enough and his own grasp of Hinduism seems conditioned by occidental and Christian concepts. Admittedly, Radhakrishnan's interpretation of Hindu religious ideas conceives of the goal in terms of union with the infinite, while Schweitzer's conception of the spiritual union sees it as taking place in human ethical will.

Schweitzer would have liked to be able to set up Hinduism as an abstract position opposite to his own; when he thinks of it as such, he criticizes it

for being monistic, supra-ethical and life-denying. At other times he sees it as resisting such over-simplified pigeon-holing. Then he criticizes it as being illogical and inconsistent. *Hinduism*, he says :

... possesses an astonishing capacity for overlooking or setting aside theoretical problems because from time immemorial it has lived in a state of compromise between monotheism and polytheism, between pantheism and theism, between world and life negation and world and life affirmation, and between supra-ethical and ethical ways of regarding things.¹⁷

That his problem with Hinduism is the result of his own limited conceptions does not occur to him. Hinduism, in fact, is neither the clear-cut abstraction with which he sometimes seeks to equate it nor the tissue of inconsistencies which it seems to him to be at other times. It is rather something he will be precluded from grasping so long as he lacks the awareness of the inner drive of Hinduism toward that which is beyond dualism.

It is Schweitzer's rationalism which is offended by the Hindu sense of reality as that which eludes conceptualization. The conflict, in truth, is not between a religion which affirms life and one which denies life, as Schweitzer supposes. It is rather a conflict between religio—nwhich must ever go beyond reason and beyond ethics to find the source of grace—and Pelagianism which grasps life as a task to be accomplished by human being. The Pelagian remains unreconciled to oneself and to life until both have been transformed by one's work. There is no acceptance of life as it is, and no reliance on grace. Oriental religion seeks the ultimate concord with life, and the sageliness of the sage is just this harmonious rapport. But the outcome of Pelagianism can only be the ineradicable disparity between the world as actuality and the world as ideally envisaged. Schweitzer's words are not those of one who had made ultimate peace with life :

Only at quite rare moments have I felt really glad to be alive. I could not but feel with a sympathy full of regret all the pain that I saw around me, not only that of men, but of the whole creation.¹⁸

It will remain always an enigma whenever human being tries to understand the whole life by any rule. To Schweitzer, reverence for life is more important than life itself, and he forgets the fact that life itself is the

source of all beings and that it is even present in the human. In other words, Schweitzer is so attached to the *rule of reverence for life* that he forgets the *creator* of all lives : "The Maker of all things, self-luminous, all-pervading, He dwells always in the hearts of men. He is revealed by the negative teachings(of the Vedanta), discrimitative wisdom, and the knowledge of Unity based upon reflection. They who know Him become immortal."¹⁹

For Hinduism, life is not something that issues from one's work and actions; it is rather that one and one's work are real so far as they issue from that which dwells always in the heart. Hindu spirituality does not ask the seeker to choose a particular form of Hindu religious thought, but to aim at actualizing the life which is in oneself. This being its intent, it is simply beside the point for Schweitzer to find "some theoretical loophole in them which might give an opening to hostile criticism."²⁰

Therefore, Hindu religiosity is not based on any ideality which is incapable of actualization; it is a search for the beyond that is within. The human search for the ultimate in India is a search for the ultimate which is within human being. In other words, the search for the ultimate is a search for the non-duality of the ultimate and the immediate. Non-duality is not the outcome of striving to imitate the divine perfection. It is realizing the perfection which is already in human being. Seen from this point of view, the ultimate human goal in India is attained neither by moral effort nor by theological knowledge nor by any other faculty : "The eye does not go thither, nor speech, nor the mind. We do not know It; we do not understand how anyone can teach It. It is different from the known; It is above the unknown."²¹ Both the known and the unknown are outside one's inmost self, and thus are dualistic. Transcending both knowledge and ignorance, the ultimate reality in Hinduism is neither abstract nor concrete, but non-dual: "It is the Ear of the ear, the Mind of the mind, the Speech of speech, the Life of life, and the Eye of the eye. Having detached the Self (from the sense organs) and renounced the world, the wise attain to immortality."²²

This seems to support Schweitzer's interpretation of Hinduism as supra-ethical. However, the detachment and renunciation referred to are not to be dualistically interpreted as a leave-taking from the world. Hindu renunciation should not be identified with the denial of life in this world. On the contrary, the *Bhagavad Gita* says : "Not by abstention from works does a man attain freedom from action; nor by mere renunciation (of works) alone does he rise to perfection."²³ When the Hindu sense of reality refuses to equate it simply with the world, that does not necessarily mean

it opts for worldly detachment. Aside from both detachment and attachment, Hindu religiosity aims at the non-duality of detachment and attachment:

Indeed, no one can exist, even for a moment, without doing some action. Everyone is forced to work, helplessly driven by the forces born of nature.²⁴

All kinds of actions are done by the modes of nature but he whose mind is confused by egotism thinks, "I am the doer."²⁵

Otherwise stated, what is sought is the living relatedness of detachment and attachment, such living relatedness is not merely relational in the sense that it occurs between two objects. In other words, non-duality is not a oneness which opposes itself to a possible twoness. Instead, it is One without any second. And that One is known as Self : "The Self, indeed, is below. It is above. It is behind. It is before. It is to the south. It is to the north. The Self, indeed, is all this."²⁶ The Self is the center of one's self. It is one's original undivided life. So if Hinduism turns away from this world, it should not be taken to mean that there is something more *alongside* the material world. That would only be setting up an opposite to the material world, and reality is not one of two opposite. In other words, if reality is not A, neither is it identifiable as not-A. Neither world-affirmation nor world-denial yields reality, but only that which is neither affirmation nor denial. In this way, Hinduism points to the spiritual without eliminating the material: "The senses, they say, are superior. Superior to the senses is the mind, superior to the mind is the intellect, and superior to the intellect is He."²⁷

In short, the essence of Hindu religiosity lies in pointing to wholeness. The artificial divisions between the ethical and the non-ethical, between higher self and lower self, between this world and other world, between life-affirmation and life-negation are witnesses to a basic inner dichotomy of the cultural and the natural, of duty and desire, of reason and passion, and the active and the passive within human being. As far as human experience goes, one can never remain in permanent onesidedness. The fact of human history is that one can never lend oneself fully to any one pole of any pair of opposites, and hence history shows a perpetual oscillation between the poles. The more one generation is moralistic, the more the next is uncomfortable with it, and impelled to establish its own culture on naturalistic grounds. What history reveals is that it is utterly

impossible for people to identify themselves fully with either pole of any opposition, and whenever they pretend to do so, sooner or later the pendulum swings to the opposite.

Hindu religiosity is surely not to be merely ethical. Nor does it equate life with the natural. To Schweitzer, ethical life is seen as fighting life. He imposes his will upon himself, on others, and on nature. But the oriental sees life not in fighting life but in the graceful rapport with life. It is the central meaning of grace that life is not something fully manageable or malleable and that a yielding is called for, Grace is also a corollary of non-duality of the human and the divine. As soon as the human is separated from the divine, one's life is not graceful. One is set over against life and involved in fighting it. Seen from the Hindu point of view, human task is not merely to reverse life but also to live wholly. For Schweitzer, ethical life alone is sacred, but to the Hindu life itself—regardless of its quality—is sacred.

Hindu spirituality is thus not any collection of ideas to be compared with another collection called Christianity. It is a way to the One which is all in all. Thus, in the final analysis, it is not a possession of Hindus. And so Hinduism has no need to move along the way towards the truth as envisaged by Schweitzer.

Perfection in the Hindu sense is not to be sought at the end of history nor in any historical event or process. It is to be realized in oneself. There is no need to say, "Be ye perfect even as your Heavenly Father is perfect," for the reason that one's perfection in its truest sense of the word is not differentiated from God's perfection. Perfection in every way is divine: "Whatever being is glorious, prosperous or powerful, recognize it to have sprung from a spark of My splendor."²⁸ Hindu religiosity lies in human search for the ultimate that is within. The central thrust of Hindu religious thought will never be grasped deeply, so long as one approaches it as Schweitzer did as a body of "dead-cold data and static external observables in human behaviour or an enemy territory which must be reconnoitered in order to be conquered with the least possible effort."²⁹

In Schweitzer, the inwardness of Hinduism has been greatly distorted and largely misconceived as a consequence of his dualistic rendering. Whenever he accepts anything as true, he believes that its opposite must be false and that consistency demands a detaching of oneself from this opposite. To such adualistic consciousness, it is hardly plausible that Hindu spirituality is so truly universal and all-embracing that it cannot be identified with any form of objective knowledge or doctrine. In this sense, Schweitzer's understanding of Hindu religious thought is mainly external.

NOTES

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23. Murthy, B. Srinivasa. trans. *The Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter 3 : 4, (Long Beach : Long Beach Publications, 1995), p. 45.
24. *The Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter 3 : 5, as translated in Ibid. p. 46.
25. *The Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter 3 : 27, as translated in Ibid. p. 48.
26. Nikhilananda. trans. *Chandoga Upanishad*, vii : 25, 2. In *The Upanishads*, Vol 4, p. 354.
27. *The Bhagavad Gita*, 3 : 42, as translated in Ibid. p. 50.
28. *The Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter 10 : 41, as translated in Ibid. p. 92.
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A BUDDHIST AND A HINDU CRITIQUE OF DESCARTES

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In this paper I would like to offer some thoughts about several notions of the self. More specifically, I would like to discuss Descartes' notion of the self and contrast it with two others, namely the Buddhist and Hindu notions.

It is well known that Descartes makes the self the starting point for his philosophical system. In Meditation I, he raises skeptical doubts about all knowledge claims based upon sense experience on the grounds that his senses might be deceiving him or he might be dreaming. And he even says that the apparent truths of mathematics and geometry are doubtful (i.e., not indubitable) since there may be an evil genius who is bending all his efforts to deceiving him even about such apparently certain matters as that $2+3 = 5$ and that a square has four sides.

In Meditation II Descartes continues to follow the method of doubting everything that could possibly be false, until he finally arrives at his famous pronouncement that what is indubitable is—as he states it there—“I am, I exist.” This, he adds, “is necessarily true every time that I pronounce it or conceive it in my mind.” In his *Discourse on Method and Principles of Philosophy* he expresses this point by stating, “I think, therefore I am.” This is commonly referred to as “the *Cogito*.”

So, says Descartes, even if there is an evil genius, I can still be assured that I am, as long as I think. What is the nature of this “I”? As he begins to explore this further he states :

But I do not yet know sufficiently clearly what I am, I who am sure that I exist. So I must henceforth take very great care that I do not incautiously mistake some other thing for myself, and so make an error even in that knowledge which I maintain to be more certain and more evident than all other knowledge [that I previously had].¹

And, after further investigation, he concludes that what he is—his essential nature—is a thinking thing (*res cogitans*), a thing or being that thinks : “I am therefore, to speak precisely, only a thinking being, that is to say, a mind, an understanding, or a reasoning being. . .”

He then proceeds to explain what a thinking thing is. It is, he says, “a being which doubts, which understands, which affirms, which denies, which wills, which rejects, which imagines also, and which perceives.”

But perhaps Descartes *has* made a mistake in this. I will provide two lines of criticism. To lay the foundation for the first, let me point out that it was a widely accepted view in the medieval tradition preceding Descartes, and with which he was undoubtedly familiar, that (a) there can be no substance without accidents and (b) there can be no accidents without, or apart from, substance.

Descartes apparently accepted this view of the inevitable connection between substances and attributes, for in the *Principles of Philosophy* he states that it is manifest by the natural light that “nothing has no qualities or properties, so that where we perceive some there must necessarily be a thing or substance on which they depend.”²

So, for example, any substance (noun) must have some attributes, features or characteristics (adjective). The table might be white or black or. . . But it must have *some* color, and *some* shape, etc. Conversely, we never see black *simpliciter*, but a black *table* or a black *book* or a black whatever.

But if Descartes were completely rigorous in the application of his method, even these principles would have to be questioned, “doubted.” And yet Descartes does not doubt them, as is evidenced by his view that because thinking is occurring, there must be a thinker. In other words, there must be a thinking *substance*—a substantial self or I. For recall what he said in the passage cited earlier : “I must henceforth take very great care that I do not incautiously mistake some *other* thing for myself. . .” This, obviously, presupposes that (to put it as he might) “I am some (kind of) thing.” And this is precisely what the Buddhist doctrine of *anatta*, or no-self, denies.

The Buddhist notion, closely connected with the doctrine of dependent origination (*paticca samuppada*), is that there is no substantial self, that what we call the self or “I” merely refers to various *processes* (bodily processes and four mental processes).

In the words of the Venerable Nagasena, speaking to King Milinda :

“As Nagasena I am known, O great King, and as Nagasena do my

fellow religious habitually address me. But although parents give such names as Nagasena, or Surasena, or Virasena, or Sihasena, nevertheless the word 'Nagasena' is just a denomination, a designation, a conceptual term, a current appellation, a mere name. For no real person can here be apprehended."³

The theory denies that the self is a substance independent of the processes making up the person.⁴ Moreover, since everything is mutually dependent or interdependent, even the apparent distinction between self and other(s) is an artificial and ultimately arbitrary construct. As I understand it, Buddhists regard this kind of thingifying—and the subsequent futility of trying to preserve an unreal self—as one of the main sources of suffering. Since understanding and eliminating the cause of suffering is the primary focus of Buddhism, this view has more than merely theoretical interest.

I might also add that in some ways this perspective is similar to what David Hume was getting at in his famous discussion of the self.

Assuming that all knowledge must be derived from sense experience, Hume wonders about the idea of the self and what impression or impressions give rise to this idea. He finds there is no such constant and invariable impression :

"If any impression gives rise to the idea of self, that impression must continue invariably the same, thro' the whole course of our lives, since self is suppos'd to exist after that manner. But there is no impression constant and invariable. Pain and pleasure, grief and joy, passions and sensations succeed each other, and never all exist at the same time. It cannot, therefore, be from any of these impressions, or from any other, that the idea of self is deriv'd; and consequently there is no such idea. . ."

That is, there is no such *legitimate* idea. In other words, "self" or "I" doesn't refer to any thing. Hume continues as follows :

"For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or dark, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe any thing but the perception. When my perceptions are remov'd for any time, as by sound sleep; so long am I insensible of *myself*

and may truly be said not to exist. And were all my perceptions remov'd by death, and cou'd I neither think, nor feel, nor see, nor love, nor hate after the dissolution of my body, I should be entirely annihilated, nor do I conceive what is farther requisite to make me a perfect non-entity. If any one upon serious and unprejudic'd reflexion, think he has a different notion of *himself*, I must confess I can reason no longer with him. All I can allow him is, that he may be in the right as well as I, and that we are essentially different in this particular. He may, perhaps, perceive something simple and continu'd, which he call *himself*; tho' I am certain there is no such principle in me.

But setting aside some metaphysicians of this kind, I may venture to affirm of the rest of mankind, that they are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in perpetual flux and movement. . .”⁵

And Hume then compares the mind to a theater “where several perceptions successively make their appearance. . .” There is, he adds, “no *simplicity* in it at one time, nor *identity* in different. . .”⁶

Hume looked for his self and didn't find it. But in the Appendix to his *Treatise* he recognized that his account failed to explain how successive perceptions are united in consciousness, a problem later taken up by Kant. In the end, Hume left the problem unresolved, remarking :

“...upon a more strict review of the section concerning *personal identity*, I find myself involved in such a labyrinth that, I must confess, I neither know how to correct my former opinions, nor how to render them consistent.”⁷

And, finally,

“For my part, I must plead the privilege of a sceptic and confess, that this difficulty is too hard for my understanding.”⁸

Hume, at least, seemed to appreciate the problem. Descartes seems simply to pass over it.

Now if this is so, then Descartes was not even entitled to assert the existence of a substantial self and, in so far as the rest of his philosophy

depends upon this, he could go nowhere. Again we may be reminded of Hume's observation that "The Cartesian doubt. . . were it ever possible to be attained by any creature (as it plainly is not), would be entirely incurable."⁹

So to sum up this line of criticism, it is that Descartes went too far, even in stating that he—as a substantial self—exists.

A second line of criticism is that, in identifying himself with his mind, he didn't go far enough; in other words, that he has indeed "incautiously" mistaken "some other thing" for his self. For reasons that will become evident shortly, I will call this a Hindu criticism.

As we have seen, Descartes identifies himself (or his self) with his *mind*. Indeed, he even expresses what seems to be a kind of worry that "it might perhaps happen" that, as he puts it, "if I totally ceased thinking, . . . I would at the same time completely cease to be."

In identifying with his mind, Descartes has a lot of company. It seems to me that this identity is one commonly assumed by intellectuals, and especially by academics. Nonetheless, I believe that it is an incorrect identity. Indeed, Descartes himself seems to have some slight awareness of this, because a little further on in Meditation II he intimates that there must be something to guide the mind :

But I see well what is the trouble : my mind is a vagabond who likes to wander and is not yet able to stay within the strict bounds of truth.

And again,

Therefore, let us give it the rein once more and allow it every kind of liberty, permitting it to consider the objects which appear to be external, so that when a little later we come to restrain it gently and at the right time and force it to the consideration of its own nature and of the things that it finds in itself, it will more readily permit itself to be ruled and guided.

So without explicitly saying so Descartes seems tacitly to acknowledge here that the mind (which he seems to think he is) should be bounded and guided by truth, which presumably is something distinct from the mind. And when he speaks of "us" giving it the rein and "we" later restraining it, does this not suggest some other reality beyond or superior to the mind?

It seems to me that it does and that this may well open the door for talking about what might be called *spirit* as a third kind of substance or level of reality, besides bodies and minds.

In spite of the wisdom contained in the statement that “those who say don’t know and those who know don’t say” (*Kena Upanishad*) I’d like to try to say a bit about what I mean by *spirit*. I am attempting to indicate something which the mind is unable to *grasp*—that is, *define*. Spirit might be said to be more encompassing than the mind or senior to it or vibrationally “higher.” And just as the body, for example one’s hands, cannot “get a hold of” mental substance or the mind, so too the mind cannot “get a hold of” what I am here calling spirit.

Yet spirit can be experienced and known. It can be sensed or felt. At this point a few examples would be useful to clarify what I mean.

Let us consider the spirit of competition, for example, or the spirit of appreciation. One can express these spirits and can sense that this is the spirit in which something is being done. (Here “spirit” is used roughly the same as we might use “attitude”.) Likewise we can sense that people are acting in a cooperative spirit; and we can especially sense this in ourselves. This is not merely a matter of behavior, though it no doubt is generally manifested in behavior.

Life itself is spirit or an aspect of spirit. No one has ever seen life; rather, we see life forms. Yet we say that life is or is not present in some form and we can sense its presence or absence.

Truth is spirit; and love is spirit. When Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life” (John 14 : 6), he was indicating his oneness with or, as we might put it, his transparency to, what he called “the Father”, God. God is spirit (God is love). A Christian might say that love, truth and life are the primary characteristics of spirit. The words “I am” are used in the bible to indicate—or express—the identity of God.¹⁰ This is a statement of Being. It is God’s essence to be. God cannot not be. For God alone, essence and existence are one. Everything else is contingent or, in Aquinas’ terms, merely possible (“possible to be and not to be”). God is conceived, then, as a necessary being, a being that *must* be.

So instead of saying “I am (a or) my mind”, Descartes might have simply said : “I am.” This is a statement of being, but not qualified in the way he qualified it. If spirit is viewed, as in the Hindu tradition, as unlimited, as *atman* which is one with *Brahman*, then this would be an affirmation of one’s divine nature (*Tat tvam asi*, i.e. “Thou art that”). Descartes, of course, being a Christian and not a Hindu, would hardly be likely to take this course. Somewhat later in the *Meditations* (in Mediation

III and V) he tried to prove that God exists. Part of his argument in Meditation III is based on the realization that he has the idea of an infinite being and that he himself is not such a being (“... I who am a finite being...”). In accordance with a medieval doctrine he embraced, he claims that the cause of something (for example the idea he has of an infinite being) must have at least as much objective reality as the effect, and so the idea must have come from an infinite being *other than himself*.

Descartes quite confidently asserts that he is not an infinite being. But if he is spirit, then he *is*, i.e. he is God (or at least an aspect of God). This, again, is a Hindu perspective.

So whereas the first criticism is that Descartes went too far, this criticism is that he didn't go far enough and so ended up with a view of himself as separate from deity.

Finally, lest it objected that it is inconsistent or at least unfair for me to criticize Descartes from the two perspectives I have discussed, I would like to suggest that perhaps the Hindu and Buddhist views are not nearly so different as they may appear. For to say that I am nothing is another way of saying that arbitrary limits are unreal, that there is no real separation between myself and all that there is. This, it seems, is another way of saying that the self is one with all, in other words to affirm the Hindu view.

If I draw a circle on a chalkboard, I have drawn *something*, something limited by the circumference. If I expand that circle infinitely, it could be said that it is now infinite and includes all that is. But if I erase the original circle and ask “What's there?”, the answer might well be: “Nothing.” But what's “there” if the circle has been infinitely expanded is also “nothing”, and yet it could equally be regarded as “everything.” “Nothing”, of course, could also be viewed as *no thing*, i.e. no limited or finite thing. And this, it seems to me, may be precisely what the Hindu doctrine of “*neti neti*” (“not thus, not thus”)—used to indicate Brahman—is intended to signify.

Above I mentioned that the mind cannot grasp spirit, and that truth is an aspect of spirit. Let me conclude this paper by suggesting that the mind may let itself be grasped *by* the truth. That is, it can become a channel or vehicle for the release or expression of the truth. It is sometimes said that God or spirit cannot be defined in positive terms; that one can only say what God *isn't* or what God is *like*. I agree. Similarly, one cannot define the truth, but one might talk about it analogically. I suggest that the truth may be thought of on the analogy of a flowing river. There is always fresh water flowing downstream. Similarly, there is always

something fresh to be known and given expression through the mind, if one is "in the flow" or (in the vernacular) "with it." This, I would argue, is the way in which one may know the truth. Not, of course, all that there is to know, but that "portion" of the truth which is moving through one's mind at that moment. Since there is always infinitely more to know, humility is always appropriate even when one knows what one does. This, I take it, is part of what the poet Tagore was indicating when, at the beginning of *Gitanjali*, he writes: "Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure. This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again, and fillest it ever with fresh life."

On this view, what has previously been expressed of the truth is (any longer) the truth, and so reliance upon books—even *not* sacred books—or past teachings will always fall short of knowing the truth.¹¹ But such prior expressions of the truth may be useful in serving as reminders that there is truth which one may become connected with, through an open-hearted yielding to it. As one is so yielded, one may experience union with the truth and may then say truly, "I am the truth."

NOTES

1. All quotations from Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy* are from the Library of Liberal Arts edition, published by Macmillan and translated by Laurence J. Lafluer.

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5. Hume, David. *A Treatise of Human Nature*, edited by L.A. Selby-Bigge, Oxford. Book I, Part IV, Section VI, Of Personal Identity.

6. Quoted in W. T., Jones, *A History of Western Philosophy*, Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1969, p. 308.

7. *Ibid*, p. 633.

8. *Ibid*, p. 636.

9. David, Hume. *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 2nd Edition, edited by A. Selby-Bigge, Oxford. Section XII, p. 150.

10. For example: "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." (John 8 : 58)

11. In this regard cf. *The Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter Eleven, lines

53-54 : "Neither by the Vedas nor by austerities nor through gifts nor through sacrifice can I be seen in the form in which you have seen Me. O Arjuna, only by exclusive devotion to Me alone can I be known in this form, seen and entered into this form, O scorcher of the foe." (Translated by B. Srinivasa Murthy, Long Beach Publications, 1985.)

WITTGENSTEIN AND SVATAHPRAMANYAVADA¹

P.R. Bhat

It would be fruitful to contrast Wittgensteinian position on language and reality with that of svatahpramanyavada of Mimamsakas and that of Ramanuja of Indian schools of thought. Though, there is a vast difference between the philosophical positions held by Wittgenstein and that of Indian thinkers, there is striking agreement on the issue of the relationship between language and reality. Wittgenstein and thinkers supporting svatahpramanyavada are of the view that this relationship is internal.² Any external relationship between language and reality could be thought of only after conceiving of their internal relationship. In fact, the relationship between language and reality has to be assumed prior to any specific inquiry about language or reality or concerning both. The aim of this paper is to bring out this similarity in reasoning and focus on the philosophical issues pertaining to language and reality and bring out certain implications.

At two levels the issue of the relationship between language and reality could be discussed : (1) At a general level, the relationship between language and reality could be dealt with. The issue would be : How is it that language is able to reflect reality? This is a metaphysical issue concerning the relationship between language and reality. (2) At a more specific level, i.e., at the level of statements, the issue would be : What are the conditions under which a particular statement is said to be true or false?

The specific issue of a statement being true or false under certain circumstances is related to the general issue of the relationship between language and reality. Having assumed a certain relationship between language and reality, it is possible to conceive of different methods or criteria to demonstrate this relationship between a specific statement and the corresponding state of affairs i.e., offer a criterion of truth. Both

Wittgenstein and the proponents of svatahpramanyavada believe that the internal relation between language and reality is internally metaphysical in character. However, this relationship between language and reality in the case of specific statements could be demonstrated with the help of different methods or criteria assuming the harmony between language and reality.

An inevitable consequence of the above position would be that there could be no theory of truth. Any theory of truth that can be conceived of could only be a criterion of truth springing from a world-view. No theory is assumed to be describing this internal relationship between language and reality. However, assuming this relationship to be metaphysical and indescribable, one could construct a criterion of truth. Correspondence, Coherence and Pragmatic to name the most prominent ones, offer different criteria for identifying statements or judgements which are true. They do not describe the relationship between language and reality, but would help to identify the statements having this internal relationship.

This essay is divided into three sections. In the first section, we shall work out the position of Wittgenstein and his views as is understood by this author. In the second section, we shall try to explain the general position of thinkers holding svatahpramanyavada. And in the third section, we shall discuss the prominent criteria of truth basing them on the metaphysical relationship of language and reality.

I

Much of the discussion on the nature of language and its relationship with the reality could be found in the concept of 'grammar' in the later writings of Wittgenstein. Grammar is conceived to be the most general concept, and he believes that it cannot be defined or explained further. The term 'concept' too is used in a most general sense. He would not call something very common and definable word to be a concept. Grammar being a concept. Wittgenstein believes that there cannot be any explanation for it. By giving reasons Wittgenstein says : because any explanation that one conceives of would assume the very concept of grammar in order to make the explanation possible.

While describing grammar, Wittgenstein states that grammar is the only link between language and thought on the one hand and language and reality on the other. So far as language and thought are concerned, what grammar does is to describe the uses of words, and indirectly the language.³ By describing the uses of words, grammar describes the

sensible combination of words. It also helps us to identify the nonsensical combination of words.⁴ However, grammar does not explain the meanings of words. That is to say, grammar does not justify the uses of words beyond pointing out the rules for the uses of words. Thus, grammar is not anything that is normative in character according to Wittgenstein.

When grammar attempts to link language and thought to reality, it has to work always with certain constraints. What belongs to the essence of the world cannot be expressed by language says Wittgenstein. If something is essential to the world, evidently it has to be necessary for the existence of the world. Essence cannot be something which can be negated, for the negated sentence cannot have any meaning if the very essence which is the meaning is negated. But, anything that can be said in language can always be negated. Thus, anything that can be said in language cannot be the essence of the world because it can be negated and we cannot utter necessary truth about the world. Therefore, the essence of the world cannot be expressed in the language claims Wittgenstein.⁵

What this grammar which has this special ability to link language with reality consists of is explained by Wittgenstein in the following manner. Grammar is not derived from reality and it is not in any sense accountable to reality.⁶ Thus one cannot expect the structure of the grammar to be the same as the structure of the reality or anything similar to this. Wittgenstein holds that grammar is arbitrary in the same sense in which a choice of a unit of measurement is.⁷ It consists of symbols and their rules; and the rules are arbitrary and conventional in nature.⁸ Since it consists of rules for the use of words, and since rules are conventional in nature, grammar is autonomous. But grammar has enough flexibility inbuilt for the language to function well.⁹ It is described as a 'theory of logical types' by Wittgenstein.¹⁰

Having recognized the autonomy that the language has by freeing itself from the reality, Wittgenstein speaks of the general perspective that we humans have by having extremely general concepts. He holds the view that language and its concepts are instruments. We choose concepts for understanding, observing etc. according to our convenience. Concepts lead us to make investigations; they are the direct expressions of our interests.¹¹ Concepts help us to comprehend things. They correspond to a particular way of dealing with situations according to Wittgenstein.¹² Thus concepts are more general than rules. He believes that the importance of a concept cannot be brought out so easily. They are hardly mentioned because of their great generality. But they express extremely general facts of nature according to him.¹³ When one has a new conception, one thinks

that one has discovered a new object. Conceptual change gives us the impression that the phenomenon that one is observing is different. And *this difference in observation* is due to the conceptual change which is grammatical in nature. What one has primarily discovered is a new way of looking at things.¹⁴ To claim that observing does not produce what is being observed, is to make a conceptual statement. That is to say, a conceptual statement is extremely general and expresses the fact of our human interest in the form of a grammatical rule.¹⁵

We could now consider how we introduce other rules for the use of our autonomous language once our basic concepts have played their roles. Wittgenstein maintains that the link between language and reality is always through the rules which are arbitrary. One chooses an arbitrary rule with a purpose. 'Arbitrariness' indicates certain intentional act on the part of the human beings.¹⁶ This is to say that the language and reality are connected by the grammar of the language with conventional rules chosen with specific purpose.

Commenting on our commitments¹⁷ to such arbitrary rules, Wittgenstein maintains that once the rules are conventionally accepted, one does not have the freedom not to obey them. One is committed to a rule to use it in a regular and systematic manner when we formulate a rule.¹⁸ In this sense grammar is not entirely arbitrary. Regularity in use is essential for a word to belong to a language.

Even the logical necessity is also attributed to language by Wittgenstein. This is because, one feels the logical compulsion in the case of logical necessity, and this feeling is not possible without reference to a rule. And a rule has to belong to a language.¹⁹ What looks as if it had to exist, is part of the language says Wittgenstein. We noted earlier that one cannot speak of essence of reality, but interestingly Wittgenstein speaks of essences in the case of language. The essence of the world is deposited in the paradigms of language in the form of rules only.²⁰ He holds the view that the concept of essence is possible only when one refers to a rule. It is the paradigm that would stand out as the essence of a rule. And paradigm is nothing but something that is conventionally taken to be the best example.²¹ The logical compulsion that we experience is due to the rules, i.e. paradigms.

Interestingly Wittgenstein assigns very important role to the definitions. Definitions can be taken as something that begin new conventions. All that we need to do is to insist on the use of a statement which has no sense. It would acquire the status of a grammatical rule and thus thereafter would help us in using and justifying the terms thus defined. The

connection between language and reality are made by the definitions of words claims Wittgenstein.²² The rules thus invoked must have applications. In applying a rule, one has either obeyed or not obeyed a rule. There is no third alternative and obeying or not obeying is always in terms of practice.²³ Thus, the rules are intimately related to what we believe and practice in every-day situation. The phenomenon of language is based on regularity, on agreement in action.²⁴

Commenting on the harmony between thought and reality, Wittgenstein claims that this harmony is also found in the grammar of language.²⁵ There is no language conceivable which does not represent this world. However, one could conceive of an artificial language which has no application like some in Mathematics. But no natural language, or an artificial language that is meaningful, could be conceived which would not represent this world. Without having any application, language does not remain language.²⁶ We do not first work out the structure of language and then fit the reality on to it claims Wittgenstein. Language is always evolving, not something that is a finished product without interacting with reality. New rules are added, and old ones are modified depending on the human need.²⁷ What at best we can do is to make a model of a fact essentially relating to the world we live in. The paradigm that we use is essentially related to the world where we live in and to the rules which are part of the grammar.

Wittgenstein believes that language cannot contradict reality. This is because, he believes that there is a metaphysical harmony between language and reality. This he demonstrates on the basis of the following. An ostensive definition, for instance, cannot come in contradiction with any other rule of the language. This is because unless one rule contradicts another, an ostensive definition cannot contradict anything in language.²⁸ Moreover, Wittgenstein believes that there can never be a contradiction between a rule and reality (a fact), but only between one rule and another: 'contradiction is between one rule and another, not between rule and reality.'²⁹

By showing that there is harmony between language and reality, Wittgenstein curbs our tendency to justify rules. He claims that no rule of grammar can be justified by showing that the application of the rule makes a representation agree with reality.³⁰ This would be arguing in circular. By showing that application agrees with the representation of reality, one has not provided any additional information. Moreover, our perception of reality itself is moulded by the conceptual framework that we adopt. Therefore, no surprise that our notion of reality agrees with our perception

of reality.

Since language is autonomous, there would be a tendency to speak of it as totally arbitrary. Though rules are arbitrary, their applications are not since there is a commitment to rule which goes well with the starting of the convention by offering a definition. Thus, the application of rules in a given context is determined by the world.³¹ Given the rules, what the description of the reality is going to be is solely determined by the reality. A rule is arbitrary, but not its application.³² Having decided on what to call red, we cannot choose not to call a red flower red. The same logical difficulty is felt in asserting a self-contradictory statement.

Wittgenstein impresses upon the point that rules and their applications are necessarily related by invoking the notion of *internal relation*. When a rule is given, in a sense all its applications are given.³³ Every rule when applied would have the form of a statement which would have a corresponding use, i.e., application.³⁴ While applying the rules we do not decide whether the statement is true or false. We decide about the truth value of the statement subsequently. We cannot build our language on the basis of true sentences, we have the concept of true or false because we have our language.³⁵ We make the model of fact in the world we live in and the question of the model being true or false does not arise while modelling.³⁶ Similarly, one cannot speak of correspondence between what is said in language and what is there in reality. This is because, like the method of measurement is antecedent to the correctness or incorrectness of a statement of length, language is prior to the correctness or incorrectness of the statements in language.³⁷ Grammar should first permit certain combination of words in the form of a sentence having sense; and only certain sentences having sense could be true. This in turn implies that a statement which is not backed by a rule lacks sense, and hence cannot be either true or false. And to claim that a statement is true even if there is no rule to justify the use, is to make a grammatical statement. That is to say, the statement would itself function as a rule, and the statement in that case is true by definition as we noted earlier. Or by insisting that a statement is true, one is modifying an existing grammatical rule, which is the same as making a new rule for the use of the term in question.³⁸ Thus, when we claim that something is true by definition, we have either introduced a new rule or modified the existing rule in an arbitrary manner and this newly introduced rule for the use of the word belongs to our grammar requiring no further justification.

Talking about justification, anything can be somehow justified by invoking a new rule says Wittgenstein. Since rules are arbitrary, it is

possible to invoke an arbitrary rule to justify the use of a word. But language is based on regularity and agreement in action, therefore, one cannot invoke new rules every now and then to justify each use of words. We normally justify the use of a word by citing a rule.³⁹ Giving grounds, justifying the use of a word comes to an end somewhere. The end is not a certain proposition striking us immediately as true according to Wittgenstein, but it is our action. We terminate our process of justifying by saying that it is what we simply do.⁴⁰ The end is an ungrounded way of acting.⁴¹

Instead of trying to justify each and every knowledge, Wittgenstein would prefer to justify only that bit of knowledge which has a certain element of doubt. 'Doubt' is the other side of certainty. All the contexts where we seek justification are the contexts where certain doubts have naturally arisen. In order to highlight this contention, Wittgenstein makes the following point. It is possible to ask a specific question about calculating: Have I calculated correctly? There cannot be a doubt of the form: Is it possible to calculate correctly? One can doubt this or that particular thing, but one cannot have general doubt of the following kind: Is there any external object? In other words, the term 'doubt' has certain meaning, and the meaning includes the possible procedural mistakes that one possibly commits. But the procedure itself cannot be doubted further. This is because any procedure itself is a rule and no rule can be justified further. It makes no sense to doubt a rule though an application of a rule resulting in a statement can be doubted. And therefore Wittgenstein holds the view that there cannot be a sceptical doubt of the general nature which Moore wanted to refute.⁴²

Interestingly, Wittgenstein holds no theory of truth, and he shows the futility of meta-statements. Meta-statement about one's knowledge adds no strength to the initial statement. For example, if I know something, then I also know that I know it. But such claims do not add anything to the certainty of one's knowledge. Whether I am so must be objectively established.⁴³ Claiming that someone knows something has only significance to those people who take the person to be trustworthy. In such contexts, the person who claims that he knows for sure, has made only one point, that he has made sure that he has not committed a mistake. Others would believe in the authority under the assumption that it is possible for the person in question to make sure. But those who doubt the existence of any physical object make no such provision for making sure of the existence of any physical object.⁴⁴

No amount of ensuring whether one has satisfied all the correctness of

the conditions of the picture of the world would give us the correct picture of the world. How the world is projected in language cannot be described. This is the reason why Wittgenstein does not believe in a theory of truth. But one can imagine how it is done, and the picture of this imagination can be described according to Wittgenstein. One could judge this picture on the basis of the mythology that one accepts.⁴⁵ Thus, one can offer a criterion of truth though there cannot be a theory of truth. We can have many mythologies and similarly, one can have many criteria of truth; however, it is not possible to have any theory of truth explaining the relationship between language and reality. The proposition which attempts to describe this relationship as is mentioned above only a make-believe world-picture based on a world-view, and not necessarily one should have such an imagined theory of truth to survive. The role played by such a proposition is comparable to the role played by a rule in a game. And a game can be learned purely practically, without learning any explicit rules.⁴⁶

To sum up the discussion in this section, there is no way one could justify the knowledge claim other than citing the rules in favour of the claim, and since rules are arbitrary, the process of justifying knowledge has to come to an abrupt end some where. The end of such a process of justifying knowledge claim is not a proposition, but an action which is linked with life. The process of justifying is terminated by claiming that 'this is what I do.' Knowledge needs to be justified in terms of rules only when there *is genuine doubt*, and not when one *could possibly doubt*.

II

Svatāhpramāṇyavāda as proposed by different philosophers of India are strikingly similar to the philosophical position of Wittgenstein described in section I. The overall perspective of svatāhpramāṇyavādins and that of Wittgenstein is the same. They share the view that it is the action, not the abstract philosophical argument which is the right indicator of what one believes. Knowledge must be linked to action. There is a basic agreement on the issue of knowledge and its justification among these thinkers at the general level. Their position is : valid knowledge requires no justification, and even if one tries to provide justification to such knowledge claims, ones does not fully succeed in doing so. Wittgenstein and svatāhpramāṇyavādins believe in the possibility of sense perception. Knowledge arises when the subject object contact takes place through the medium of sense organs.⁴⁷

All the svatāhpramāṇyavādins refute the possibility of external validation of knowledge. They are of the opinion that the very conditions that give knowledge are the conditions of one's belief in the truth of the knowledge.⁴⁸ As we have noted earlier, Wittgenstein too has believed that meta-statements do not provide any additional information which are not already contained in the original statements. Knowledge is enmeshed with the form of life; it is linked to one's life intimately. Svatahpramāṇyavāda is translated often to mean 'self-validity of knowledge.'⁴⁹ The justification issue of knowledge has to be left untouched according to these thinkers. No matter what one tries to do, any attempt to justify knowledge in general would not succeed. However, some believe that those knowledge claims which are not genuine can be identified.⁵⁰

We find that Prabhakara, Kumarila, Ramanuja and their followers are the proponents of svatāhpramāṇyavāda. One also finds some reference to Madhva and Sāṅkhya in this context. We will not be able to go into the details of every view here. In order to keep the subject matter manageable, we concentrate only on agreed general form of svatāhpramāṇyavāda among the scholars.

Svatāhpramāṇyavāda as stated earlier would believe in the self-validity of knowledge. In other words, a sentence which gives some knowledge about the object would also give the belief in the knowledge. As Wittgenstein⁵¹ does, svatāhpramāṇyavādins believe in the redundancy theory of truth. To affirm that a statement is true is simply to affirm the statement itself, and to say that it is not true is to deny it. 'P' is true = P. Ascribing truth value to a statement does not make it different.

Both Wittgenstein and svatāhpramāṇyavādins support the view that language is intimately related to the form of life. We do not, and cannot separate language from our practice of life. This being so, language is a good tool in performing different functions of life. Belief in what we know is natural and normal; disbelief is exceptional and rare. This point is also established from the angle of the tool concept of language. Use of language is logically prior to misuse. Language is comparable to the institution of promise on this count. Institution of promise could work if and only if most of the people most of the occasions keep their promises. If they fail to do so, the institution of promise would naturally collapse. If promissory notes loose their purchasing power, they cannot function as money. In the same manner, if language fails most of the time including describing the reality, it would loose its significance. Language might be used to falsely describe certain things and that would get identified when it comes in conflict with the rest of the body of the knowledge. Exceptions

should not be treated as norms, and we need to prepare ourselves to identify and treat deviant statements differently.

Proponents of svatāhpramāṇyavāda believe that no knowledge can be justified in terms of another knowledge. Their argument can be summarized as follows : If knowledge is not intrinsically valid it can never be validated afterwards, for the second knowledge which is said to validate the first being itself knowledge is intrinsically invalid and requires another knowledge to validate itself and so on *ad infinitum*.⁵² This argument is familiar even in the Western tradition. A typical sceptic would argue that my belief needs to be justified in terms of some other belief; and this second belief needs to be justified by providing yet another belief as a reason for it. And this process would never come to an end and hence no knowledge gets justified.⁵³ In response to the sceptic, philosophers have offered the solution of justifying more complex and doubtful knowledge with that of less questionable knowledge and finally in terms of most certain knowledge i.e. self-evident knowledge. Svātāhpramāṇyavādins like Wittgenstein have rejected this procedure of establishing knowledge since justification would never come to an end as no knowledge would be self-evident if every doubt free knowledge is not self-evident. In fact, Mimāṃsakas indicate the inevitability of action, whether one entertains the philosophical question and spends one's entire life on it or no, one needs to act to survive. This is strikingly similar to what Wittgenstein has pointed out that the termination of the process of justification is always in action by pointing out the manner in which we simply do things.

In a manner of speaking, we could say that instead of reducing the number of self-evident propositions to bare minimum and justifying other knowledge claims in terms of these, both Wittgenstein and svātāhpramāṇyavādins have argued for granting maximum number of statements to be considered as self-evident as long as there is no ground to disbelieve or question the knowledge.

Having accepted that knowledge and belief in knowledge is normal, how does one identify and eliminate the problematic claims? The answer to this question can be found in the criterion of truth which the next section is all about.

III

Having said that the relationship between language and reality is intrinsic, one can now speak of criteria for identifying this intrinsic relationship between a statement and the corresponding fact. The traditional theories

of truth, namely, Correspondence, Coherence and Pragmatic have not been complete without assuming the intrinsic relationship between language and reality, for this very reason, they cannot be considered theories of truth. It is our contention that they assume the harmony between language and reality and provide reliable criteria of truth basing their theory on this metaphysical assumption. If they are to act as theories of truth, they should, in our opinion, explicate this relationship between language and reality competently. They should be able to explain individual statements and the facts that make them true.

We shall consider only the major three theories of truth namely, Correspondence, Coherence and Pragmatic in their very general form. What we find is that these theories do not have adequate account of the relationship between language and reality in general, though they have satisfactory account of how one can heuristically devise a mechanism which can help us to effectively identify true statements. These theories, though fail at the general level, provide competently reliable criteria of truth in the context of specific statements. No need to mention that if these theories fail in their general form in addressing themselves to the relationship between language and reality, their modified versions are also not expected to perform better.

We do not think that there is much need to mention the Indian and the Wittgensteinian perspectives separately in this context since they agree on all major points that we intend to discuss in what remains. We shall show shortly how these three theories of truth do not explain the relationship between language and reality, but assume the harmony between the two and provide their criteria of truth.

Of the three, Correspondence theory can sound as a theory of truth providing the much wanted link between language and reality. This theory, in its general form, claims that a statement is true if and only if it corresponds to the fact. In other words, the statement "Snow is white" is true if and only if the snow is white. In order to demonstrate how language could correspond to reality, this theory invokes the notion of 'structure' and holds that if the structure of a statement is identical with the structure of the reality, then the statement is true.

Sometimes, the language and reality relationship is demonstrated in two stages by invoking an object-language which is supposed to fall between our natural language and reality. At least structures at two levels are being imagined here, one at the level of language, and another at the level of reality despite language and reality having hardly any similarity. Whether one imagines an object-language or structured reality, that should

not matter much, but one defines truth in terms of structural identity between language and reality in any case.

If one speaks of object-language as something that links the natural language and reality, one has the additional responsibility of showing the correspondence at two levels, one between object-language and the natural language, and another between object-language and the reality. If in this process, one is able to show that the structure of the statement is the same as the structure of the reality, then one has shown that the statement is true.

What is noteworthy is that if one solves the issue of structural identity between qualitatively two types of things, namely, a statement and a fact, by invoking object-language, the problem reappears when one considers object-language and reality together. This attempt to show that object-language has the structure of reality would never succeed if we have not succeeded in showing how natural language has the same structure as reality in the first instance. We need to show how language and reality have the same structure in order to save Correspondence theory, but somehow that does not seem to be possible.

As noted earlier, if Correspondence is a theory of truth, it must address itself to the issue of the relationship between language and reality. It must be in a position to show how language and reality are inter-related, rather than work backwards presupposing their internal relationship. The question that we should address ourselves is not : Can one organize one's knowledge of language and reality in a manner in which it is possible to test the truth value of a statement? A test of the truth value of a statement could be done by any criteria of truth. One is required to explain without assuming any prior knowledge of the relationship between language and reality, the nature of this relationship.

Even if we assume the knowledge of the relationship between language and reality in a limited number of cases such as self-evident statements and work out the criteria of truth for all statements, one cannot validly claim to have offered a correspondence theory. To grant that there are self-evident statements of the form, "A cannot be both B and not B" is to grant the harmony between thought and reality. Note that the laws of thought are considered to be laws of reality here. And to think that a statement or its negation must be true is to believe in the systemic nature of both thought and reality. In our opinion, Correspondence theory is not in a position to offer a complete theory of truth. However, with adequate metaphysical assumption of the harmony between language and reality, it is in a position to offer a powerful criterion of truth. In other words,

Correspondence theory is not able to explain the nature of this relationship between language and reality, but assuming that such an internal relationship exists, it can offer a criterion to test this relationship.

Coherence theory does not seem to deal with reality in an explicit manner at all. It in fact maintains that a statement cannot be verified with a fact. A statement can only be verified with another statement. A statement is by definition either true or false, and all true statements can be put in one basket and all false ones in another. It is believed that naturally all true statements would be consistent with one another. And since any statement can have either of the two truth values, naturally all false statements, like the true ones, would be consistent with one another. Thus, an odd man is taken out and declared false whenever there is a statement which does not fit the rest of the statements which are taken to be true.

Coherence theory also cannot be considered to be a full theory of truth for the following reason. Given certain knowledge about the truth values of certain statements, it is possible to correctly identify certain other statements which are consistent with them. But this theory too does not give any account of the relationship between language and reality. Moreover, if the reality itself is contradictory in nature, then the theory cannot be used very effectively. The theory grounds itself on the metaphysical assumption that the reality is systemic and consistent. It does not succeed as a complete theory because, it does not explain why a statement must be true, rather it only indicates which statement is true given the fact that a statement is consistent with the set of statements which are considered to be true. Having accepted a set of statements to be true, the theory can effectively identify other statements which should belong to this set.

A close look at the theory would make it clear that the Coherence theory like Correspondence theory, is developed against the background of a certain metaphysical assumption : language and reality are in perfect harmony. The assumption is that all true statements form a consistent system, and so is the reality systemic. Reality is not itself contradictory, and therefore, it is enough if one knows some true statements to infer the truth of other statements. All true statements naturally represent all true facts given the assumption that both all true statements in a language are consistent with one another, and all facts of reality are consistent with one another or inconsistent facts cannot be represented in language.

Pragmatists believe that the knowledge and its authenticity could be verified in terms of its application. The basic assumption is that the existents have one or the other attributes, and each attribute can be used

as a control panel and manoeuvre it to produce a desirable effect which can be called as technology. And this technological application of the reality is understood as 'work.' Thus, any statement about reality if it is a correct description of the reality, must have a function. And if someone who is interested in knowing whether a statement is true has to put the knowledge to test by manoeuvring the reality.

Metaphysical assumptions of Pragmatism is the same as the above mentioned two theories of Correspondence and Coherence. They also assume that the universe is regular and systematic. Testing of utility of knowledge cannot be done if the objective universe were to change every now and then including its very principle of change. Pragmatism has to hold the view that the universe is uniform and systematic. Moreover, the laws of nature themselves are not contradictory to one another. If a statement made is the true description of reality, then by manoeuvring that aspect of reality, one could achieve a certain predictable result. If one fails to achieve any result by applying one's knowledge, this failure can only be attributed to our failure in understanding the true nature of reality.

In this account of pragmatism, there is an important role assigned to 'expectation.' Without having certain conception of the objects in the universe and natural laws operating on them, no expectation is possible. And without any expectation and manoeuvring the variables, it is not possible to verify whether something 'works.' And therefore, one cannot use pragmatic theory as the theory accounting for the relationship between language and reality, but has to assume the very relationship before venturing to apply this theory for identifying true statements.

To sum up our discussion in this section, what we have noted is that Correspondence, Coherence and Pragmatic theories of truth could give certain account of language and reality with reference to certain statements in particular. When these accounts are considered at the general level, they fail equally. No theory of truth, in fact, has attempted to establish the knowledge claim in general. We also noted that all the theories of truth make one common assumption, namely, that language and reality are in harmony. And this harmony between language and reality cannot be established, but has to be taken for granted as metaphysically given.

Having granted the metaphysical status to the harmony between language and reality, one could work out different criteria of truth as outlined above.⁵⁴ For example, following Correspondence theory, one can conclude that a statement is true because our verification of the fact matches with the statement made. But the same statement could be verified

indirectly if one knows a more general statement from which the statement in question can be derived following Coherence theory. One could also try to establish the truth of the statement by manoeuvring the fact stated in the sentence and testing the expected result. Any of these theories and any version of them can be taken as an independent criterion for establishing truth of a statement. It seems inevitable that this relationship can only be internal as was conceived by Wittgenstein and svatāhpramānyavādins.

NOTES

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented in *International Conference on Comparative Philosophy : East Meets West* jointly sponsored by University of Mysore and California State University, Long Beach, 6-8 June 1991 at Mysore.

2. Wittgensteinian position on the relationship between language and reality is elaborately discussed by G.P. Baker, and P.M.S. Hacker, in *Rules, Grammar and Necessity*, An Analytical Commentary on Philosophical Investigations, *AERONA* Vol. 2, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1985. They are of the opinion that this relation is *internal* in character. N.Malcolm criticises this position of Baker and Hacker in his article 'Wittgenstein on Language and Rules' *Philosophy* Vol. 64, 1989, pp. 5-28. Reply to Malcolm by Baker and Hacker can be found in 'Malcolm on Language and Rules', *Philosophy* Vol. 65, 1990, pp. 167-179.

3. See Wittgenstein, L. *Philosophical Investigation (PI)*, Trans, G.E.M. Anscombe, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1974, 496. Note here that Wittgenstein is emphasizing the fact that one cannot justify a use of a rule. One can only describe. Also see *Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge 1930-32*. From the Notes of John King and Desmond Lee (*LWL*) Oxford : Basil Blackwell, 1980, p. 115.

4. See Wittgenstein, L. *Philosophical Remarks (PR)*, Ed. R. Rhees, trans R. Hargreaves and R. White, Oxford : Basil Blackwell, 1975, p. 85/54. Also see *LWL* p. 66.

5. See *LWL* p. 34. Also see *PR* p. 84/54.

6. See Wittgenstein, L. *Philosophical Grammar (PG)*, R. Rhees (Ed.) and Trans. A. Kenny, Blackwell, 1974, p.184/133.

7. See *PG* pp. 184-185/133. Also see *LWL* pp.86, and also see pp. 49, 57, 58,59, & 111. Mathematical statements and metaphysical statements can be called 'rules'. See *Rules, Grammar and Necessity*, p. 57.

8. If grammar and language are not distinguished from the point of view of their function, then grammar is identical with language. See *PI* 497.

9. See *PR* p. 74/38, and also see *LWL* p. 116.

10. See *PR* p. 54/7, and also see *LWL* p. 13.

11. See *PI* 570. Also see *PI* 569.
12. See Wittgenstein, L. *Remarks on the Foundation of Mathematics (RFM)*, Ed. G.H. Von Wright, R. Rhees, G.E.M. Anscombe, trans. G.E.N. Anscombe, Oxford : Basil Blackwell, 3rd Edn. 1978, p. 431/67.
13. See *PI* p.56.
14. Concepts play a crucial role in determining what is our notion of a physical object. See *PI* 401. Also see *LWL* p. 106.
15. The object of observation cannot be stated in language. The object of observation is not part of a language. See *PI* p. 187.
16. 'Arbitrary' is defined in opposition to what is 'natural.' When someone has made an arbitrary choice, he has acted freely with some practical end. See *LWL* p. 60.
17. A word only has meaning in a grammatical system, and what characterises it is the way in which it is used. *Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge 1930-2*, from the notes of John King and Desmond Lee, Oxford : Blackwell, 1980, p. 36.
18. Word, as a unit in language, has some meaning. And that is possible only when the rule for the use of the word is already a part of the grammar. See *LWL* p. 36. Inter-subjectivity is established through rules. It is a fact of great importance that human beings agree on most of the things in action. See *RFM* p. 342/39. One needs to stick to a rule, otherwise the use of a term is not understood in a social framework. See *PI* 198 for this point. Also see *LWL* p. 39 for a similar remark.
19. See *LWL* p. 57. Also see *RFM* p. 65/74.
20. See *RFM* p. 50/32.
21. Something with which comparison is made is a paradigm in our language. See *PI* 50.
22. The connection between language and reality is achieved in two ways, one is by defining words, another is by converting an empirical proposition into a rule. See *PG* p. 97/55 and also see *RFM* p. 356/2. Wittgenstein believes that the sharpness in the boundaries between an empirical proposition and a rule is lacking. See L. Wittgenstein, *On Certainty (OC)*, Ed. G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. Von Wright, trans. D.Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe, Oxford : Basil Blackwell, 1974, 319. By fixing an empirical proposition and making it immovable like a part of a machine so that the whole representation turns around it, one can convert the empirical proposition into a rule claims Wittgenstein. See *RFM* p. 437/74. Also see *PI* 239, 444.
23. See *PI* 199, 201, and 202. Also see L. Wittgenstein, *Zettel (Z)* Ed. G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. Von Wright, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, Oxford : Basil Blackwell, 2nd Edn., 1981, 24.
24. See *RFM* p. 342/39. Regularity in practice is emphasized by Wittgenstein.

Also see *OC* 139.

25. See *PG* p. 162/112 and *Z* 55. Also see *PG* p. 135/88.
26. See *PR* p. 80/47.
27. See *PG* p. 89/46.
28. *PG* p. 184/133.
29. *LWL* p. 92.
30. See *PG* p. 186/134, also see *PR* pp. 55-7. To claim that the representation agrees with reality is not much different from buying several copies of the morning paper to make sure oneself that what is said was true. See *PI* 265.
31. See *LWL* pp. 18, 49, 58.
32. See *PG* p. 246.
33. For a detailed discussion on the topic of internal relation please see G.P. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker. *Scepticism, Rules & Language*. Blackwell, 1984, pp. 106-115. Also see *RGN* pp. 86-97.
34. See *LWL* p. 114.
35. See *OC* 94.
36. See *PR* p. 71/34.
37. See *RFM* p. 96/156. Also see *LWL* p. 7, *PG* p. 130/84 and *PR* p. 78/44. Kripke makes an important move in this direction. He writes: "(W)e can say that Wittgenstein proposes a picture of language based, not on *truth conditions*, but on *assertability conditions* or *justification conditions*: under what circumstances are we allowed to make a given assertion?" See *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language EWRPL* by S. Kripke, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982, pp. 73-74. And Baker and Hacker write: If it is claimed that semantic rules assign meanings to sentences by specifying their truth-conditions, and assign meanings to sub-sentential expressions by specifying their contributions to the truth-conditions of sentences in which they may occur, it is obvious that this is not Wittgenstein's conception. *RGN* pp. 58-59.
38. When rules are tried to be replaced by empirical propositions which are said to be true, one is doing nothing but giving an ethnological account of this human institution. According to Wittgenstein now this account would take over the function of a rule. See *RFM* p. 356/2. Also note that the boundary between the empirical proposition and a rule is not very sharp. See *OC* 319.
39. See *LWL* p. 50.
40. See *OC* 204.
41. See *OC* 110.
42. An interesting discussion on scepticism of this form can be found in Kripke. See especially the first chapter of *WRPL*.
43. See *OC* 16.
44. See *OC* 23.

45. See OC 94.

46. See OC 95.

47. We limit our discussion only to sense perception. 'Svatāhpramāṇyavāda' is a wider concept which is applicable to any knowledge derived from any source including authority. A fuller discussion on the issue is beyond the scope of this paper.

48. See Dasgupta, S. *A History of Indian Philosophy*. Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1975, Vol. I, p. 416, and also see B.K. Matilal *Logic, Language & Reality*, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1985, pp. 203-204. Also see Chandradhar Sharma. *A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy*. Motilal Banarsidass, 1976, pp. 213-218.

49. Sharma. p. 213.

50. Matilal. p. 204.

51. Kripke. p. 86.

52. Sharma pp. 215-6. Meghanadari, a follower of Ramanuja also argues in favour of self-validity. He is of the opinion that if self-validity is not admitted, then the whole idea of validity has to be given up; for if validity is said to be produced from a knowledge of the proper connotations of knowledge or the absence of defects, such a knowledge has to be regarded as self-valid, for it would have to depend on some other knowledge and that again on some other knowledge, which would mean a vicious infinite. See Dasgupta Vol. III, pp. 347-348. Dignaga refuting Nyaya concept of external validation argues in favour of the 'self-cognition' theory. According to Naiyayikas a cognition is not self-cognized, but cognized by another piece of cognition. According to Dignaga, this theory leads to an infinite regress because to make recollection possible the second piece of cognition must be cognized by a third piece of cognition and so on *ad infinitum*. Matilal p.243.

53. Musgrave, A. *Common Sense, Science and Scepticism*. Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 13-14.

54. A criterion is supposed to be a sufficient condition for the use of a word and not a necessary one. There could be many criteria of truth each one being sufficient condition in itself.

LOGICS AND LOGOS COMPARATIVE PHILOSOPHY AND LOGIC : MAPPING HUMAN AWARENESS

Walter Benesch

“The answer to the question “What is a *human* being?” is our ability to pose the question itself. Beyond this, it is unanswerable. This is the Great Paradox of being *human*. . . and it is our beginning. But we do try to answer this unanswerable question in our public and private lives. We answer it in economics, religion, science, philosophy, politics, and we institutionalize and memorialize and monumentalize our answers. Some of them trivialize us, others terrorize us, many dehumanize us. This is the little paradox of being . . . and it is our end.

Between beginning and end, we wonder and wander within a world that also wanders and wonders within us. . .”¹

Using a synthesis of Oriental and Occidental insights into logical processes, I am proposing in this paper a comparative mapping of human awareness as *functioning consciousness*. I use the terms functioning consciousness for a number of reasons : First, I want to avoid traditional temptations to dichotomize awareness hows and whys as *mentalistic* or *materialistic*, *subjective* or *objective*, *perceptual* or *conceptual*. Karl Jaspers in discussing the subject/object dichotomies that are implicit in Western philosophy and science, notes the paradox of a “thinking I” which cannot itself be objectified because it “determines the objectness of all objects.”²

Second, I want to avoid the categorical and causal *tar pits* of naming “consciousness”, and propose instead that we consider *naming interpreting, explaining, etc.*, as functional possibilities of consciousness. Definitions, even as we think about them, are the products of thinking processes not their sources. No definition terminates the possibility of defining or re-defining and no answer

ends the questioning process. This, it seems to me, is the implication of Nagarjuna's comment in the *Vigrahavyavartani* in response to the criticism that his discussion of *voidness of intrinsic nature* was itself *void* and therefore *invalid*.³ Nagarjuna saw his position only as useful for conveying his insight just as a pot is useful for carrying water. The proposition is not the insight, the pot is not the water. This functional approach will keep us honest and preserve us from the epistemological absolutes that unreflective formalism and naive realism produce.

Third, hopefully, this approach will enable us to treat *perceptions* and *conceptions* as variables of consciousness so that, just as the Galilean $d=16t^2$ expresses a functional relating of time and space, we can view various logics as representing descriptive not explanatory relationships between and among conceptions and perceptions in the mapping of awareness whether one considers the *domain* of functional consciousness to be conception and its *range* perception or its domain perception and its range conception.⁴ Such comparative *mapping* using different logics as *consciousness fields* would facilitate the drawing of specific inferences within systems as well as provide critical perspectives into the possibilities and processes of *inferring*.

No map is the territory which it maps, but a map can be said to be *functional* in two senses: (1) It reflects formulated, functional positions and connections within its field, e.g., maps of the heavens or topographic and demographic maps of the earth etc. (2) And a map as a field serves a function for a map *user*. In these two senses, I would propose that it is both necessary and possible, using logics, to map *awareness* as *functioning* consciousness and to employ such maps in a basic, comparative approach to philosophy and science.

Finally, our ideas and concepts possess two related but different aspects and any mapping of *awareness* as *functioning consciousness*, must accommodate both of these: Our concepts reflect our experiences, as individuals and cultures, of our selves and the world this is their *mirror* aspect. But at the same time, as ideas and concepts, they connect us with our surroundings and are the definitional and descriptive channels for our observations, this is their *window* aspect. One of the most important concerns in any interpretation of experience is that of the relation of

mirror to *window*. It is a mirror/window synthesis which in human knowledge is the basis of theorizing, observing, questioning, answering, interpreting, affirming, denying, explaining, etc. This is the *feedback loop* of human understanding which I propose we chart in comparative philosophy by using different logics as dimensions of what I will call *logical space*.

PART I: MAPPING AS NECESSARY

At the end of the 20th Century in the midst of our technological advancements and in great part because of the precision and consequent abstractions of experience into the purely symbolic contexts that these instruments have made possible, the questions of *mirror/window* relationship have taken on new significance. In scientific and technological systems these relationships are the source of questions as to how observers relate to and influence observations. In the physical and social sciences as our theories become increasingly *formal*, we sometimes fail to realize that any *formula* both isolates an aspect of the *world* and conceals within itself a perspective in which this isolation is grounded. This latter is particularly important as we try to accommodate the *world of experience* with computer models of it.

Abstractions are aesthetic constructions created in the thinking contexts of observers. *Harmony, balance, chaos, order, symmetry, true, false, right, wrong* are aesthetic and ethical values and concepts within which we view ourselves and nature and within which we must decide what aspects in an observation are of the *world*, and what aspects belong to an *instrument* designed within an interpretative system to observe the world? If there are no observations without observers, does observation effect and alter the observed and vice versa? Thus, the first necessity for *mapping* is that of understanding and relating the observer and observed in some perceptual/conceptual context both *within* and *beyond* language.

A second condition in which mapping of mirror/window relationships is of critical necessity is encountered in the process of *deciding* and *choosing* what is of *value*—*what* should or should not be done or preserved, aesthetically and/or ethically? These are questions applicable to any act or process. They

cannot be answered by our ability either to know *scientifically* or to successfully carry to completion various technical procedures. These are questions that technology can no more address than a lobotomy can address the ethical implications of administering lobotomies, or a container of red paint determine how much red should be used in the painting of a sunset.

It is the necessity for exploring the thoughts of observers *observing* and choosers *choosing*, rather than the things observed or chosen, that has shaped my proposal that we attempt mapping of awareness as functioning consciousness and that we can employ Oriental and Occidental inference methods to do so. If we successfully chart a *mirror/window* synthesis which provides us with both technique and understanding, I believe we can create and maintain a spiritual mastery over the social and technological products of our intellects, while furthering our quest for knowledge and this to the end of such knowledge's enlightened and co-operative use across all cultural boundaries.

PART II : MAPPING AS POSSIBLE

Human Experience : Physical, Mental, and Logical Space : For the sake of clarity, I am going to use a three part analogical and *spatial* division of thinking and experience. I have selected the term *spatial* here in a *positional* sense, i.e., just as we conceive of objects as located in relation to other objects in a *physical* world, so are concepts and ideas themselves *located* in thought contexts. These three *spaces* I will label *physical*, *mental*, and *logical*, and will consider them as functions of one another.

Physical Space : Human *being* is always in place in the world, on the train, at the airport, late for there, early for here. We sense ourselves and others in spatial relationships. Our languages are replete with spatial references, e.g., in English ideas are often referred to as *concrete*. *To prove* empirically is *to show*. We have sacred places and profane ones. Most of our ordering is spatial and the amalgamation of space/time in modern physical theory illustrates how basic the experience of space/place is to our abstractions in general. Thus my first metaphor of human experience reflects our experience of being in place and space. We begin life by experiencing the sensual parameters

of *our* places, and grow into the increasingly abstract and symbolic spaces of our cultural and historical collectives.

Mental Space : In early traditions thinking was related directly to the physical place where speaking seemed to originate. For the Greeks, thought was *breath* and *speech*, centered in the chest and produced from the lungs and diaphragm. Some of the Pythagoreans believed the *logos* was the “winds of the soul.”⁵ Hearing was accomplished via the head which provided passage ways for the air produced by others, to flow through the ears into the lungs where what had been said was then understood. Wisdom was associated with dry air, foolishness with moist. The Greek term for lungs/diaphragm is *frenes*. When people are confused, disturbed, insane, we may refer to them as *frenetic*. One who is frantic from the same root is one who is very upset and whose breathing is apt to be intensified and irregular. The Chinese Taoist, Chuang Tze, held that the knowledge of man, as well as of all other creatures was dependent upon his breathing. He, like Heracleitus, was amazed that that which is both so essential and so near, could be neglected, and people could “close their pores to it.”⁶ Wing tsit Chan in defining “Ch’i” in his explication of Chinese philosophical terms, notes that in its earliest usage it too referred to the *vital force* and was associated with blood and breath.⁷

The Chinese *hsien* which is often translated with *mind* was in the heart and chest. *Atman*, the Upanasadic term for the *self* or *soul*, relates to breath, and in most forms of meditation, in order to calm the thoughts, there must be a controlling of the breathing. All of these are remainders of the associations for the early Greeks, Chinese, and Indians of thinking with breath, speech, lungs, and heart. The earliest experiences of mental events or *mental space* is closely related to *being* in physical space except that there can be a more immediate awareness that this space is in the human body and has to do with the functions of breath and blood.

In mental space we construct systems of concepts and statements about the world. We become organizers, interpreters, controllers, victims in physical space, as we seek in mental space to explain and manipulate the world in which we find ourselves even perhaps to destroy it as Werner Heisenberg cautioned at the end of World War II.⁸ Although physical space

and mental space are inseparably related, they are not the *same*, and with their differences and distinctions, the first paradoxes and discrepancies arise. For example, the ideas of true/false, real/apparent, object/subject are aspects of mental space. But they are also the value dichotomies with which we claim to understand the physical world. As we create theories **about** the world, to stabilize our experiences, the problems of *correspondence* between concept and world conceived begin to arise. How do thought and sense data relate, can we conceive the imperceivable, or perceive the inconceivable? Does number map the world, the mind, both, neither? This life in two spaces at once can be fascinating if we view it as a creative source of endless challenges. It can be frustrating if we insist on making the approximations of physical space fit the certainties of mental space.

Logical Space : I believe that historically, the discrepancies between being in the world and living in a thought version of it, were the beginning of logical space, for in striving to accommodate these discrepancies and to resolve the paradoxes and insecurities they produced, it became necessary to examine more closely the nature of thinking itself. In the west this produced the Pre-Socratic paradox of the real and the apparent. With Plato it was the juxtaposition of knowledge and opinion, the forms and appearances. Aristotle and the Megarians/Stoics saw it as the creative force behind what we call *class* and *propositional* logics. In India the desire to clarify the relation of mental to physical space produced theories and techniques as varied as the Jain logical systems of *Nayavada* and *Sayadvada* the former a logic to *eliminate ignorance* and the latter a logic to *facilitate knowledge* and Nyāya and Buddhist logic which stress both the *situational origin* of knowledge and its *situational application*.

In China this same concern with clarified thinking raises questions as to the relationship of names and distinctions to the world. The sage, in Confucian *sincerity*, sees and understands clearly. The 56th Chapter of the Book of Tao suggests that one who is wise does not speak and that he who speaks isn't really wise.⁹ And it is certainly the recognition of a need for clear thinking that is responsible for the Neo Confucian concern that students must begin their studies by learning how to doubt.¹⁰

In the Greek idea of logos as essence or in the sense of the Chinese term Chi as a subtle, inner, activating force,¹¹ logical space is the space of functioning consciousness, the *field* of thinking as inferring. It is within this space that systems and/or rules for thought are devised, followed, or rejected. Formal systems are but one possible approach to one aspect of logical space, and, as J.M. Bochenski points out in his *Methods of Contemporary Thought*, the limitation of any formal system is that as a formal system it cannot *formalize* or *account* for itself. An *axiom* does not become the statements *derived* from it.¹² In logical space we try to provide ourselves with the checks and perspectives upon the ideas in mental space within which we manipulate the world. In logical space we begin thinking about our concepts and interpretations and explanations as *ideas*, i.e. we start *reasoning about reasoning*. The physicist and philosopher, David Joseph Bohm called this sort of *reasoning about reasoning* "perception through the mind" it is that dimension which logical space in the sense of logos provides to *reflective* mental space.¹³

PART III : MAPPING AS FUNCTIONING CONSCIOUSNESS THE DIMENSIONS OF LOGICAL SPACE

Having made the distinctions between and among physical, mental and logical space, and on the basis of these distinctions, I would now propose we examine the dimensions of *logical space*: Heracleitus believed that even though the logos was everywhere and governed all things, human beings still did not understand it.¹⁴ Dharmakirti, a Buddhist logician of the 7th Century A.D., began his treatise on logic with the proposition "All successful human action is (necessarily) preceded by right knowledge, therefore we are going to investigate it."¹⁵

Logical space in the broadest sense of functioning consciousness is the relating of knowing techniques of different cultures to one another in the creation of the totality of logical thinking. In the spirit of Dharmakirti and Heracleitus, I would propose that there are at least four essential dimensions to *logical space*. Although in the following discussion these dimensions may appear separable, this is ultimately not the case, for they

complement and supplement one another in awareness. Each provides a particular perspective upon the others. Each has its origins in the insights of a great tradition, East and West. Each has its contemporary significance for meaning and reasoning. For example, most if not all of our statements are about the objects and events of our experience and it is to the things and conditions of experience that most of our symbols apply. This is the *object dimension* of logical space. However, all statements and observations require subjects to make them. Without subjects and their points of view there is no awareness of objects. This is the *subject dimension* of logical space. All encounters between subjects and objects as well as thoughts of subjects about objects occur in particular situations, thus knowledge and understanding are always situational as well. This is the *situational dimension* of logical space. Finally, objects, subjects, and situations are aspects of experience, never the totality within which names and distinctions represent isolation from the *whole* which contains not only these aspects but also perspectives upon them as perspectives upon naming and distinguishing. This is the *aspect/perspective dimension* of logical space.

Each of these dimensions brings into focus a different aspect of awareness. Each charts a path in functioning consciousness and permits a different pattern and part of the entire to emerge. To utilize the whole map would be to take any proposition or concept and chart it in each dimension. I believe this can be practically and methodologically accomplished in a four stage procedure. To illustrate and at least indicate the nature of each of these stages, I have selected inference systems from different logics. Each represents a mapping of awareness in what I would call a functioning consciousness field. The selection of examples that follow is neither inclusive nor exclusive and is intended only to illustrate the comparative mapping I am suggesting.

Dimension One : Object Mapping

Every statement can be viewed as an object in at least two senses: (1) As an expression of objects and events encountered in experience, a statement semantically refers to this encounter and its attendant relationships. This objective reference is assumed

to be the case even when statements may express apparent absurdities as in the case of propositions about the habits of *centaurs*. However, though we may not, when sober, encounter centaurs as wholes, we encounter them as parts in human and horse bodies. In the object dimension, it is a basic presupposition historically that answers exist prior to questions and carry their own identities, i.e., are what they are and mean what they mean. Answers determine the relevance of questions and their validity. Here one might view the history of science as the "history of learning to ask the right questions", i.e. those questions which will elicit *real* or *correct* answers. In subject/predicate languages, this stage involves identifying the *objective* assertion of some subject/predicate relationship. This dimension provides an empirical focus for the questions "What does *this* mean (semantics)?" "How is *this* expressed (syntactics)?" (2) For the speaker or writer, listener or reader, the statement itself is an object expressed analyzed, understood. It is the culmination of a syntactic/semantic axiomatization of meanings which are not verbal but must be verbalized as nouns, quantifiers, meaning variables, etc. in formal structures for expression.

In this dimension, facts represent both statements in which subjects and predicates are linked, and a contextual field within which such statements can be given meanings as reflections of potential or actual experience. In this stage of mapping it is important to identify what it is that one claims to know and to render as precise as possible both the processes involved in knowing it and the symbolic forms for expressing it. This precision will require the formal and contextual relationship of a given set of statements to other statements, statement types, and truth values.

The *object dimension* of logical space focuses upon the objects of experience and/or upon reasoning itself as an *objective* process, and assumes a clear distinction between *observer* and *observed*. This distinction also holds when one observes *observers* as objects or observes formal logic structures that are held to be as objective as the study of physical objects. In this dimension, one seeks to isolate and analyze both the contents of observation and conceptualization as well as the symbolic formal containers used to express these contents. This approach becomes clearer perhaps if one contrasts it with the Buddhist idea of *emptiness* or *sūnyata*.¹⁶

In a very important sense a *fact* is an awareness state isolated for analysis and its isolation is a critical element in its analysis whether this isolation occurs in a laboratory or in a public opinion poll. Both objects and reasoning in this dimension can be translated into formal, syntactic structures including grammatical orders and arranged as concepts and terms into objective thought sequences. This was the great achievement of Aristotle in his class logic which was a synthesis of *form* and *content*, a synthesis that holds even in modern symbolic logics where the form of one system becomes the object content of a meta system. The Megarians and Stoics developed a propositional logic to enable them to link past experience to future events. In both cases, the primary concern is with objects, events, and formalized *reasoning*, and not the points of view and positions of subjects who reason and understand *per se* or with the situations in which inferences have their sources and applications. Examples of *object logics* would be class and propositional logics which attribute to classes, proposition types, and propositional connectives as well as their inter relationships absolute and *objective* identities. The tools of objectification range from the Aristotelean syllogism to modern truth tables, trees, and symbolic logics, etc..

Dimension Two : Subject Mapping

Every statement reflects the subject's point of view within and from which it is made. The change from object maps to subject maps begins with the nature and position of the subject as *consciousness* in statements as opposed to the *objective* nature of form and content irrespective of consciousness. Here the critical identity is that of consciousness and not the object of consciousness. In Advaita Vedānta, for example, this is the identity relationships of *Brahman/Ātman*.¹⁷ And in most Indian systems this identity is expressed in some theory of the *conservation of consciousness* as expressed in *transmigration* and *rebirth*.

In the subject dimension, questions predetermine answers and determine their identities. Understanding an answer or statement is understanding the *point of view* of the subject that posed the question. In the subject dimension, the isolation and 'objective' analysis discussed in the first dimension, are possible only from metaphysical, epistemological, and axiological points of view. These

points of view permit us to conceptualize and then see wholes, parts, forests, trees. As there are many subjects, there are many points of view. These are represented in different definitions, descriptions, and explanations, no one of which is the *only point of view*. As in the mathematician's use of the term, the conscious subject is the source of the *axiom of free choice*. In mapping this dimension, we identify as completely as possible the observations and choices we make and the assumptions upon which these rest. In order to do this, we explore the ways in which other choices and assumptions might change or expand what we know.

The subject dimension is one of points of view, i.e., the dimension of logical space provided by a system of inference and judgments in which assumptions, insights, experiences, and presuppositions in the thinking of the reasoning subject give both form and content to thought orders. An excellent illustration of a system mapping the subject dimension of logical space would be the Jain logics of *points-of-view*, which reflect the Jain perspective of *anakantavāda* or concern with non absolutism and the connection of empirical knowledge to the subject who claims to know. In fact, the Jains developed two related logics, *nayavada* which assists in eliminating ignorance by identifying the points of view from which statements and observations are made. And the logic of *sayadvada* or the seven stepped *saptabhangi* which facilitates the acquisition of knowledge. The implication of these two systems is that one must eliminate ignorance in order to know. Any modern college student should profit from this insight.

SUBJECT LOGIC : The *Saptabhangi* Example

1. Syadasti

from a point of view X is the case (sayat), e.g.,
 "consciousness can be viewed as physical electro
 chemical, non mental processes."

2. Syannasti

from a point of view X is not the case (sayat), e.g.,
 "consciousness can be viewed as mental, non physical
 processes."

3. Syadasti nasti

from a point of view X is and is not the case (sayat),

- e.g. "consciousness can be viewed both as physical and mental processes."
4. Syadvaktavyam
from a point of view X is indescribable (sayat), e.g. "consciousness is the process of defining and describing consciousness and is thus indescribable as its own source."
 5. Syadasti cha avaktavyam
from a point of view X is and is indescribable (sayat), e.g. "consciousness is physical electro chemical processes, and is indescribable as the electro chemical source of this assertion."
 6. Syannasti cha avaktavyam
from a point of view X is not and is indescribable (sayat), e.g., "consciousness non physical, mental processes and is indescribable as the mental source of this description."
 7. Syadasti cha nasti cha avaktavyam
from a point of view X is, is not, and is indescribable (sayat), e.g., "consciousness can be viewed as both mental and non mental, physical processes and is indescribable in both cases as the source of all of its definitions and descriptions."

(NOTE : In each step one should be clearly aware of the point of view from which the statement is made. In the illustration used here, one might in the first sayat explore physical functioning of brains and behaviour stimulus responses. In the second sayat one might view consciousness as the mental possibility of the first sayat. In the third sayat one might see that both are necessary for a fuller accounting of consciousness. The fourth step is particularly important for it requires that one develop insight into the nature of *indescribability*.)

Dimension Three : Situational Mapping

Every statement or concept represents the relationship of subjects and objects to the conditions and situations in which subjects and objects encounter one another. Knowing and reasoning, defining and describing are not just objective or subjective, they are situationally determined. In this dimension, from the Buddhist

perspective expressed in the 63rd Sutta of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, questions which seek answers beyond situations are considered irrelevant and unedifying even as an individual wounded by an arrow would find questions as to the maker and make of the bow and its owner's family name irrelevant to the removal of the arrow shaft and the treatment of his wound.¹⁸ Thus in mapping awareness as functioning consciousness, this situationality must be charted both in the definitions of *logical processes* and the design of *logical methods*. An example of situational mapping would be the system of the Indian Nyāya in which the philosopher Gautama expounded a syllogism with five steps at least one of which was an *example step* and identified the situation(s) in which experience had been acquired, and an *application step* which connected these examples to a present situation. This system was later expanded to include both negative and positive examples and negative and positive situational applications.

SITUATIONAL LOGIC : The Nyāya Example

A. 5 Part Syllogism

1. Pratijna — *Thesis* : "There is fire upon the mountain."
2. Hetū — *Reason for thesis* : "Because there is smoke."
3. Udāharana — *Explicatory example* of reason and/or its source : "Where there is smoke there is fire, as in the kitchen or in a pile of burning leaves."
4. Upanaya — *Application of example* to the present situation : "The smoke on this mountain is like the smoke produced in the kitchen or from the leaves."
5. Nigamana — *Conclusion* : Therefore there is "fire upon the mountain."

(NOTE : If one requires of this syllogism, as the later Nyaya did, both an affirmative and a negative example, e.g. "where there is no fire there is no smoke as in a lake", this will expand both the example and application steps. The application too will now require a negative as well as an affirmative application to the present situation.)

There was a disagreement between the Buddhist, Dinaga, and the Nyāya philosophers as to whether the example step was explicatory or justificatory.¹⁹ The Nyāya, who were *universalists* assumed the existence of a pre-experiential and pre-situational self or ātman, viewed the example more as illustration than

justification.²⁰ The Buddhists, who rejected the idea of self or *ātman*, would see these steps as more justificatory.

I would suggest that if one considers the example step as *justificatory*, then any situational syllogism essentially requires a secondary situational syllogism in which the *situational source* of the criteria for justification have been established. To overlook this secondary syllogism would be to overlook the situational nature of standards and criteria for acceptability of evidence including sample sizes. In this stage the situation of an observation or a statement, takes on particular significance in two senses: (1) Since no situation is ever the same and no situation possesses its own identity but is instead dependent upon all other situations in its origination, the similarity and dissimilarity of situations is critical to understanding the background interpretations of experience which permit one to recognize both that which is observed in experience and that which is intended by any symbolization. (2) However, it is also important to determine what inclusive and exclusive limits have been set in any present situation and what has been excluded as irrelevant or insignificant. This setting of limits too, of course, will also reflect past situational experience and cultural meanings and interpretations. This dimension can, at least in part, be mapped by clearly identifying situational similarities and dissimilarities as well as the assumptions implicit in determining in any situation what is relevant and irrelevant.

Dinaga reduced the number of steps in the Nyāya syllogism, by including the example and application within more comprehensive premises.²¹ In addition, the Buddhists developed a very important additional situational *distinction* in their "*logic for self* and their *logic for other*." For the Madhyamika Buddhist there is a four part hierarchy of situational logic or *catuṣkoti*. (1) This hierarchy begins with the logic for self in immediate experience of the world as *suchness* or *tathata*. (2) When suchness is combined with memory in a situation, one begins to recognize similarities and dissimilarities these are *non suchness* and as remembered similarity or dissimilarity they replace the immediacy of sensation. (3) Similarity and dissimilarity in turn are converted into *sameness* and *difference* in a *logic for other*. Now a conceptual situation composed of universals is created to facilitate understanding of an inference for another. Here the example step is either

illustrative or justificatory for the sake of analysis and/or communicating a situational relationship to someone else. In this situation abstractions as universals become the *suchness* of immediate experience which is now experience of terms, and one may begin to believe in the immediacy and reality of concepts which have replaced similarity/dissimilarity as remembered specifics. This is now the suchness of concept and term and the non suchness of experience, i.e. both *suchness and non suchness*. Finally one realizes the emptiness of the concepts and the emptiness of the experienced situation which is now memory, and one has *neither suchness nor non suchness*.

SITUATIONAL LOGICS :

1. Five part Nyāya syllogism with example and application steps.
2. Buddhist Reduction of 5 part syllogism to 3 parts, distinction between inference for self vs. inference for others.
3. Buddhist four part *catuskoti* : X is, X is not, X both is and is not, X either is nor is not.

Dimension Four : Aspect and Perspective Mapping

Every statement reflects both an aspect of experience and a perspective upon this aspect. In this fourth dimension, one presupposes a unity of the observer and observed, of intention and attention prior to the object, subject, and situation of knowledge each of which represents an aspect of this totality. Then as one experiences aspects of self and world, one develops perspectives upon these. These perspectives in turn are aspects of experience, and in grasping this one develops perspectives upon one's perspectives. This leads to an infinite and non contradictory regress of aspect and perspective. In this dimension, both questions and their answers are aspects of experience of *self* and *world* and are the results of the making of distinctions. Knowledge and understanding, action and non action in turn reflect perspectives upon *distinguishing*. As I have suggested in a number of papers on "comparative philosophy and logic", the classic model for an *aspect/perspective logic* is to be found in the Chinese philosophical tradition where one can view Confucian, Taoist, Mohist, and Buddhist positions as

they represent differing emphases upon aspects of nature and corresponding values and varied approaches to the making of distinctions within the totality of *heaven/man/nature*.

In aspect/perspective mapping, one not only identifies as far as possible the aspects of *what* one claims to know, and ones perspectives upon it, one also develops a perspective upon these aspects of *knowing* as process and presuppositions implicit in ones knowledge claims. To view knowledge as aspects presupposes perspectives upon knowledge itself, especially knowledge as an aspect of human experience. This is understanding. And when one develops a perspective upon understanding as an aspect of human experience, one attains an attitude from which one's actions follow and can be evaluated. For example, every statement reflects both a distinction aspect and a perspective on distinguishing, a named aspect and a perspective upon naming. The distinction and/or named aspect is a limited one, set in a potentially *ongoing regression* of distinguishing and naming. It reflects both an aspect of limited awareness, and an unlimited awareness of limiting. This is the diversity of knowledge within the unity of *empty mind* which as *containe* is never that which is contained.

One might illustrate this aspect perspective sequence in Western philosophy with David Hume whose emphasis upon the sense experience of events in sequence led to his perspective upon causality. Kant in term develops an additional perspective when, inspired by Hume, he focuses upon both the empirical aspect of events and the mental aspect of distinguishing. This Kantian perspective in turn becomes aspect of experience of self and world for Hegel and Schopenhauer who in turn develop their perspectives upon it, followed in turn by Marx and Kirkegaard and Nietzsche.

The aspect/perspective dimension is a dimension of logical space which treats knower, known and knowing as aspects of an inexpressible totality. The Neo Confucian philosopher, Wang Yang ming, held that the innate oneness of man and nature was the source of our ability to recognize the different aspects which nature presented to us as heaven, earth, trees, tiles, stones, wind, rain, dew.²² It is this unity pervading all aspects of nature and thinking that is the source for him of perspectives, understanding, and action.

The aspect/perspective dimension of logical space relies upon process and change in a *mindng/nature* synthesis. It seems to

generate at the same moment both paradox and reflective insight. With its emphasis upon the complementarity of the subjects and objects of thought and its stress upon the continuity and change in the situations in which man and nature emerge as aspects of a single process (*Tao*), the Chinese tradition has produced a profound logic of aspect/perspective which has influenced thinkers from the various Confucian and Neo Confucian movements to the Taoists and Buddhists to contemporary occidental physicists like Neils Bohr who placed the *yin/yang* symbol upon his coat of arms. Chuang Tzu provides an excellent illustration of such a logic of aspect and perspective with his discussion of arguments in the chapter on "Making all things equal." In the chapter, he posits a disagreement between two individuals and then explores the possibility for resolving it in favor of one or the other. If one side convinces the other does this make one of them right and the other wrong and vice versa? Should a third party be brought in? If this party agrees or disagrees with one or the other, the problem of right and wrong is still there. Should one then call in a fourth person to arbitrate the two person + one dispute? This same problem is also implicit or explicit in all attempts to resolve any value dichotomy. Who has the *true* definition of true? Can one prove the axioms and assumptions upon which *proofs* rest?²³

ASPECT/PERSPECTIVE LOGICS :

A. SOME CHINESE USES OF ASPECTS/PERSPECTIVES

Naming : Perspective upon naming as well as the aspects of experience *named*.

Distinguishing : Perspective upon distinguishing as well as aspects of experience isolated in *distinctions*.

Negation : Perspective upon negating of positions, actions, distinctions, etc., as well as aspects of name, concept, etc. *negated*.

Minding : Perspective upon conceiving, thinking as well as aspects of experience about which one thinks or which one paints, etc.

B. EXAMPLES

"A chicken has three legs." This is a paradox attributed to the Fourth Century Logician, Hui Shih, or one of his contemporaries. The third leg in the paradox is the mental leg which makes perception of chicken legs possible. No third leg, no two legs, no two legs no third leg and the paradoxical statement reflects this combination of aspect/perspective.

"A wheel does not touch the ground." This is a proposition from the same period as the 3 legged chicken, and it too illustrates a perspective upon the synthesis of *thought, thing, description, definition, perception, and conception*. There is an aspect of a wheel that touches the ground, there is no wheel without that aspect, there is no aspect without the greater wheel, and the proposition represents the array of perspectives that are implicit in the synthesis of wheel whole and part, conception and perception.

Chuang Tzu's dream that he is a butterfly. In this famous example there is a *dream* aspect and a *dreamer* aspect and the question is from the aspect of either the waking state or the dream can one decide whether one is a man who dreamt he was a butterfly, or is a butterfly who dreams it is a man? This paradox reflects a perspective upon the source and possibility of any dichotomous *certainty*, e.g., true/false, subjective/objective, real/apparent, etc. One might translate this aspect/perspective synthesis into modern science where one could as easily ask whether the physicist is sub atomic particles or energy fields dreaming they are a physicist, or a physicist dreaming of sub atomic particles and energy fields.

The mind (or minding) is empty (or humble). This proposition by the Third Century BCE Confucian philosopher, Hsun Tzu, contrasts the aspect of minding or thinking, with the aspect of thought content, knowing with known, and thereby expresses the perspective that the latter never replaces the former and so we can continue to learn and interpret and understand. In a modern context one might note that the definer never terminates *defining* with the acceptance or rejection of any particular set of definitions.²⁴

Conclusion

Each one of these philosophical and logical dimensions maps an element of human thought and reasoning that the others may reject or ignore. However, the understanding of all of them and the nature

of knowing developed in each facilitates our understanding of ourselves and the thought systems within which we create our worlds in religion, science, philosophy, etc. Though these four systems certainly do not comprise all possible logics or philosophical systems, they are representative of different mapping approaches to our awareness as functioning consciousness, that the human intellect encounters, no matter where or how we do our thinking. And I believe taken together they can provide a most insightful basis of comparative philosophizing!

NOTES

1. Benesch, Walter. and Krejci, Rudolph. *The Three Legged Chicken's Travel Guide to Logical Space (An Introduction to Comparative Philosophy)*, Ms. in prep. University of Alaska 1992. p.i

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3. Kamaleswar, Bhattacharya (trans). *The Dialectical Method of Nagarjuna: Vighrahavyavartani*, (E.H. Johnston and Arnold Kunst critical editors), Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1986 ed, XXII p. 108.

4. Kurt Goedel's distinction of the *given* and the *real*, is also an expression of functioning awareness: "The illusion of the passage of time arises from the confusing of the *given* with the *real*. Passage of time arises because we think of occupying different realities. In fact, we occupy only different *givens*. There is only one reality." Rudy Rucker: *Infinity and the Mind*: Birkhaueser, Boston, 1982. p. 171.

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8. Werner, Heisenberg. *Philosophical Problems of Quantum Physics*, Pantheon Books, 1952. p. 116.

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13. David Joseph Bohm, in *A Question of Physics, Conversations in Physics and Biology*. Paul Buckley and David Peat, University of Toronto, 1979. p. 134.

14. Phillip, Wheelwright. *The PreSocratics*. Odyssey Press, New York, 1982. p. 69.

15. Stcherbatsky, Theodore. *Buddhist Logic*, 2 vols, Dover Reprint Ed., New York, 1962. vol I, p. 59.

16. "... form is emptiness and the very emptiness is form; emptiness does not differ from form, form does not differ from emptiness; whatever is form, that is emptiness, whatever is emptiness, that is form, the same is true of feelings, perceptions, impulses and consciousness." Edward Conze, *Buddhist Wisdom Books The Heart Sutra*. George Allen and Unwin Ltd, London, 1958.p. 81

17. "By far, the most important identity proposition recognized in Advaita Vedānta is 'That thou art' which expresses the relation of identity between the self and Brahman." Jagdish Sahai Srivastava, *From Logic to Metaphysics*. Horizon Publishers, Allahabad, 1992. p 59-60 Henry Clarke Warren. *Buddhism in Translations*. Atheneum, N.Y., 1963. p. 117,128.

18. Vidyabhusana, S. Chandra. *A History of Indian Logic*. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1978. p. 295 fn 2.

19. Ibid.

20. For example, Prof. Srivastava lists the Nyaya Vaisesikas along with Plato and Aristotle as examples of universalists. Jagdish Sahai Srivastava, *From Logic to Metaphysics*. Horizon Publishers, Allahabad, 1992. p. 19.

21. Ibid p.290.

22. Wing tsit Chan trans., Wang Yang ming, *Instructions for Practical Living*. Columbia University, New York, 1963. p. 221.

23. Watson, Burton trans. *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*. Columbia University, 1968. p. 48.

24. Watson, Burton trans. *Hsun Tzu, Basic Writings*. Columbia University, New York, 1963. p. 128.

COMPARATIVE METAPHYSICS : MEANS OR END?

Srinivasa Rao

There is no doubt the field of comparative metaphysics has come to stay as an area of active studies both in India and the West. The focus of this area of study is on a *comparison* of concepts, schools, or thinkers of different metaphysical traditions. This area appears to have been an arena of “free thinking” in the sense that, even after decades of such activity of comparing, no set of distinct and uniformly adoptable norms of comparison have emerged. As a consequence, the topics or thinkers or schools chosen for comparison sometimes have tended to become a little bizarre, as, for example, “A Comparative Study of the Philosophy of Jaspers and Śaiva Siddhānta.” But more often the topics of comparison are very bland. In any case one has to wonder about the rationale behind all kinds of comparative studies in philosophy as well as religion and this paper aims at giving expression to some of my thoughts and misgivings on this subject. At the outset I want to make it very clear that I am not at all against a person studying one tradition from within the perspective of another tradition, which is what I suppose all comparative philosophers do. I do believe that such studies are quite important and essential. Even within a single major tradition there will often be many sub-traditions that are actively interacting, and the growth and development of the tradition as a whole will be largely determined by the quality and the intensity of these interactions. For example, within the Indian philosophical tradition, there have been the āstika and the nāstika traditions, and, even within these, there have been different traditions like the Nyāya and the Mimāṃsa or the Bauddha and the Jaina, not to mention the further distinct developments within the Buddhist tradition like the Sautrantika, the Vaibbasika, the Yogācāra and the Mādhyamika. The same is true of other schools like Purva- and Uttara Mimāṃsa or Vedānta. The development of Nyāya metaphysics and epistemology is greatly indebted to its interactions with

the Buddhists and the Mimāṃsakas. Equally, the Buddha and Mimāṃsā theories would never have become what they are had they not interacted with the Naiyāyikas and their theories taken seriously. Therefore, investigations into a tradition from within the framework of a different tradition is a philosophical activity which should not be dismissed as fruitless. It follows from this that investigations into topics, schools, or thinkers of the Western tradition by thinkers belonging to the Indian tradition (and vice versa) also should not be ruled out as fruitless. But whatever cannot be ruled out as fruitless cannot, for that reason, also be regarded automatically as fruitful. It is perfectly possible to compare the schools, concepts, or thinkers of another tradition with those of one's own tradition in such a way that it never results in any kind of philosophical insight. This is not a mere logical possibility. It can become frightfully actual and, in my opinion, it has been so in a large number of cases. Since fruitless comparative activity has to be avoided in order to genuinely philosophize, there arises the question as to whether there have been fruitful results of comparative activity, and there have been, in what significant way they have been fruitful.

In India there are three groups of people engaged in philosophical activity. The first group, whom I call "traditionalists" for want of a better term, have their roots in the classical Indian tradition. They have little exposure in the Western tradition or English education and, even when some of them have it, it has no impact on their philosophical thinking. Some of them write entirely in Sanskrit or in the regional language of India. Others use English to express their thoughts, and they sometimes even use Western philosophical terminology or jargon in explaining their concepts or systems of thought. Still, the manner of their thinking as well as the content of their thought is entirely classical in character. The problems they recognize as philosophical are just those that are recognized as problems in classical Indian philosophy.

In fact, as a rule, the "traditionalists" cannot even perceive any fresh problems arising within the systems to which they adhere. Their systems are essentially closed, and they perceive them as closed ("siddhānta" which means "as finally proved"). For example, the post-Śāṅkarite Advaitins hold that the physical world is a superimposition (on nirguṇa Brahman) caused by māyā and when this māyā is dispelled through Brahman-realization, the superimposed world also disappears. Just as the realization of the true nature of the rope sublates the illusory snake that had been superimposed on that rope in the rope-snake illusion, the realization of the true nature of Brahman (as nirguṇa) also sublates the empirical world

that had been superimposed on Brahman by māya. Thus, there is no world after Brahman-realization.

But these Advaitins also admitted that Brahman-realization can be attained here and now, in this very life; they called it "*jivanmukti*." The *jivanmukta* is freed forever from the cycle of births and deaths, and all his karma, which is the seed of all births and deaths, is destroyed. But they also thought that one type of karma that had already begun to fructify (*prārabdhakarma*) in this life could be destroyed only through reaping its consequences and that there was no escape from it for anyone. Then the problem arose as to whether even the *jivanmukta* was exempt from *prārabdhakarma*. The Advaitans did not choose to make any exception in the case of the *jivanmukta*. They argued that even after Brahman-realization the *jivanmukta* continued in his physical body just to reap the results of his *prārabdhakarma*, and, when it was fully reaped, the *jivanmukta* attained ("*videhamukti*") liberation from the physical body.

But what was not clearly realized was that in order to reap the results of *prārabdhakarma* not only was a physical body needed but a physical world as well. If, for example, it is the *prārabdha* of the *jivanmukta* to suffer from viral fever for a week, then there must be viruses around to cause it. If, due to his *prārabdhakarma*, the *jivanmukta* is to be injured in a car accident, there must be a car to cause it. But if the *entire* world has disappeared after Brahman-realization, it is hard to see how experiencing the results of *prārabdhakarma* can happen to a *jivanmukta*. Some Advaitins did see the problem and they tried to solve it by suggesting that there was a reappearance of the world ("*vyutthāna*") that accounted for this special phenomenon. But this solution has never been accepted by a large majority of Advaitins. Thus, the problem of how the disappearance of the empirical world after the Brahman-realization of the *jivanmukta* can be reconciled with the experiencing of *prārabdhakarma* by the *jivanmukta* even after such realization (which experiencing requires very much the existence of the physical world) has remained in Advaita for centuries. But the "traditionalist" hardly sees this problem. When it is so, the problems of the Western tradition (such as whether or not there are other minds; whether a private language is possible) can hardly appear to them to be basic questions in philosophy. Therefore the "traditionalists" have not been productive as a philosophical community, for they hardly see any problems either within or without their own well-accepted traditions.

There is a second group of thinkers engaged in serious philosophical activity whom I call, again for want of a better term, "modernists." They

derive all their paradigms from Western thought. Some of them look upon Indian philosophy as either mystical or theological and therefore regard it as lying outside the range of philosophy proper. Other modernists are just uninterested and indifferent. The problems that are typically philosophical for this group are precisely those that are typically philosophical for Western tradition philosophers. Thus, while the "traditionalists" are the practitioners of the classical Indian tradition, the "modernists" are the practitioners of the classical or contemporary Western tradition. Who the leading philosophers in these two groups are is a question that I would not like to raise now since it is a third group of thinkers who are directly relevant to my purpose here.

This third group of thinkers are familiar both with the Indian and Western traditions, and we can find the practitioners of comparative philosophy only in this group. Since comparative philosophers have access to the basic insights of both these traditions, we should naturally expect the most significant contributions to philosophy from this group. But in my opinion, barring certain exceptions, the contribution of this group to the fund of original philosophical ideas or metaphysical insights has been very disappointing.

I must point out here that it is not just the case that many who have attempted comparative philosophy and metaphysics have fared poorly. It is equally the case that the comparative task is one of the most difficult and challenging ones. The enterprise becomes even more difficult to appreciate when its practitioner pursues that enterprise too literally, i.e., when the practitioner resorts to "comparing" in the literal sense of the word.

Whoever is familiar with the history of metaphysics—Western or Indian—knows well that a few basic questions are common to both the traditions although very different answers have been provided to those questions in the two traditions. But metaphysical questions are notoriously complex and most often the similarities they exhibit are superficial and merely linguistic. Take, for example, the question: What is Being? Parmenides asked this question several centuries ago and recently Heidegger also asked the same question. They both have tried to answer this question and their answers, though produced within a common Western tradition, differ widely. While Parmenides perceived the need to dismiss the notion of "nonbeing" or "nothing" in finding a satisfactory answer to the problem of Being, Heidegger perceived "the nothing" as vital to the resolution of the same problem. This difference arises because, although Parmenides' and Heidegger's questions contain the same words, they are

not identical questions, for the background and presuppositions of Parmenides are (totally) different from those of Heidegger. While Heidegger asks this question against the backdrop of the newly emerging scenario of phenomenology, Parmenides asks the question in a context devoid of phenomenology. This makes all the difference in the answers they provide. If we do not keep in mind such vital background differences informing out metaphysical questions, the similarities that we might perceive in those questions may come to be more significant than is warranted. Thus, we may go on comparing where, strictly speaking, no comparison or only very trivial comparison is possible. From such exercises in comparative thought there will hardly be any philosophical gain.

For example, it is perfectly possible to embark upon an elaborate comparison of Bradley's metaphysics and Sankara's metaphysics; in fact, such enterprises have been undertaken. But what the new metaphysical insights that we have derived from such comparative enterprises? : What net additions do such comparisons make to the fund of our philosophical knowledge? Has any new school of metaphysics arisen as a result of such comparative enterprises? No doubt there has been a considerable amount of cross-cultural appreciation of alien traditions achieved through such comparative activity, and it has also led to better understanding and appreciation of different philosophical traditions. But that is about all that even the best of comparative work in philosophy has been able to achieve. Certainly, some of the Indian and the Western thinkers of this third group have brought about a new environment in which fresh philosophical thinking is possible. Twenty years ago I found a new environment in the writings of Ninian Smart, Karl Potter, K. C. Bhattacharya and Daya Krishna. I had expected a great deal of new thinking—or at least a considerable amount of rethinking—in Indian philosophy as a result of their stimulus. But this expectation has remained, largely, just that : an expectation. A new environment was created, but not much that is new grew there. What is the reason?

The reason is that comparative activity has been conceived by many to be the end and not the means. When it becomes one's end, its failure to lead one to new metaphysical concepts or systems, or at least to a meaningful realignment of one's own inherited conceptual structures, creates no bother. Many are so carried away by their discovery of "parallels" between Western and Indian thinkers or concepts that they have never bothered to stop and ask : "What philosophical insights did I derive by discovering these parallels?"

A person with a capacity and thirst for philosophical insights always goes beyond the parallels which are all too often accidental or insignificant. Since a good lot of comparative work I have come across heavily depends upon noticing such "parallels," I have to examine this phenomenon of comparison based on parallels in some detail. Parallels may get noticed either naturally or because one has looked for them and found them. Whether the comparative philosopher merely "notices" the parallels or "finds" them depends upon the manner in which he pursues his comparative enterprise. This enterprise may be pursued as an end in itself or as a means to some other end. When it is an end in itself, comparisons between concepts, thinkers, or schools of another tradition with those of one's own tradition are made for their own sake. Comparisons are discovered by looking for them on the supposition that they are there. That is how one may end up discovering comparable elements between Jasper's thought and Śaiva Siddhānta metaphysics or between the Indian scheme of varnāśrama dharma as found in the Gita and Bradley's conception of "My Station and its Duties." The 'paśupati-pasa' triad of Śaiva Siddhānta has no natural equivalent in the system of Jaspers. Still, since he conceives of each man as a distinct and separate being endowed with consciousness, there is a slender foothold with which to start a comparison of it with the self of Śaiva Siddhānta. Furthermore, if natural resemblances are not available, they can be forced out of Jasper's system if the comparative philosopher is sufficiently determined to achieve a significant number of comparisons.

The case of comparing Bradley and Gita fares no better. The varna doctrine of the Gita bears no essential similarity to Bradley's "My Station and its Duties." The varna-status of any individual has its origin in the Vedic cosmogony¹ and, even in the Gita, the four varnas are said to be created by the Lord of the Cosmos, Śrīkr̥ṣṇa. Bradley's "My Station" has no such cosmogonic roots. While varna is essentially a cosmic and metaphysical category, Bradley's "station" is a purely social category, and it is hard to see any serious resemblances between the two. Moreover, the most central teaching of the Gita is the doctrine of *niskāmakarma*, and the varna doctrine is brought in to point out that Arjuna's duties are cosmically ordained as he is a *ksatriya* and that his duty is to fight in the battle. Arjuna is asked to fight because it is his duty which he must do for its own sake, without the expectation of any reward. Thus, doing one's duty for its own sake is central to the Gita. But, for Bradley, "duty for duty's sake" is an "unsolved contradiction."² In fact, Bradley proposes his concept of "My Station and its Duties" in such a way that it avoids the

insoluble contradiction of "duty for duty's sake." Thus, neither the concept of varnadharma nor the manner of its practice in a niskāma-way has any essential resemblance to Bradley's "My Station and its Duties." This does not, however, deter writers from finding "amazing" similarities between the two, resulting in comparative studies which appear and remain to inspire further such work.

Such sterile comparisons result only because the comparative enterprise has been looked upon as an end in itself. But *significant* resemblances do exist between metaphysical traditions that have coexisted in the same environment or have even been separated by vast stretches of time and space, and at least some comparative philosophers have produced considerable illumination regarding them. But, then, invariably, the comparative enterprise has not been an end in itself for them. They have also noticed resemblances like the others, but the resemblances is what distinguishes better investigators from the vast majority of others who merely look for resemblances and find them plentifully.

The activity of comparing is not the same as the activity of philosophizing and, therefore, it is not justifiable to indulge in the activity of comparing unless it can yield philosophically significant results.

When comparative activity is not made an end in itself, beneficial consequences emerge. That means comparative activity must be made a means to an end. What is this end? It is nothing but philosophy or metaphysics itself. When metaphysics is the end, the discovery of even the most breath-taking comparisons does not prevent one from reaching his own metaphysical goals. In fact, comparative metaphysics is not comparative in the trivial sense of a kind of study based on, or looking for, comparisons between ideas, schools or thinkers of different metaphysical traditions. True comparative activity is really *interactive* in nature. Meaningful comparative activity involving two different traditions is really nothing but a creative interaction between those traditions, and only a genuine metaphysician or philosopher can be involved in such an interaction. Therefore, one who does genuine comparative metaphysics is himself a metaphysician. The comparative enterprise he engaged in is a means to the attainment of his own metaphysical ends. The exposure to other traditions of metaphysics and also to the varied answers provided to metaphysical questions in those traditions enables him to formulate his own metaphysical stance. He *interacts creatively* with other traditions and his own metaphysics evolves. I would offer here K. C. Bhattacharyya's thought as a brilliant example of such creative interaction. There are elements in it which can be admired from a Kantian-Hegelian angle of

vision as well as from a Vedāntic perspective. It is Vedānta, yet is very different from whatever has been there before as Vedānta. Genuine comparative activity is thus not at all "comparative" in a literal sense but is of the nature of a creative interaction with another tradition.

Any comparative activity that does not finally lead to, or cannot be of cognitive assistance in leading to, the formation of a new metaphysical concept or system has to be regarded as philosophically sterile activity. Any thinker who merely compares, however good he may be, may at best only enrich or deepen our understanding of different traditions. But he does not thereby make any kind of first-order contribution to those traditions. When employed as a means, comparative activity does not show itself as resulting in "comparisons" but in informing newer metaphysical insights or systems.

Resemblances, even family resemblances, could be very misleading, and one has to overcome their bewitchment in order to make any meaningful contribution to metaphysics. Some have indeed made such contributions and may their tribe increase.

NOTES

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2. Bradley, F. H, *Ethical Studies*, Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1962, p. 176.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN UNDERSTANDING HUMAN NATURE AND THE RAMIFICATIONS IN AMERICAN AND CHINESE CONSTITUTIONS

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Heuristically, one distinguishes the instrumental or social contract theories from the organic, but that difference rarely occurs in pure form in practice—contractarians usually ground the social contract in some organic natural right, and organic theorists will describe natural ties in terms of divine or natural contracts. I argue for a syncretic approach to political philosophy based on a synthesis of the Kantian social contract and the Confucian organic theory. Explicating some of the major differences between traditional Chinese, Confucian, and Euro-American, Kantian, perspectives on human nature, I argue that these philosophies perpetuate different social and political values which are reflected in the respective theories of human rights, grounding the political constitutions of the People's Republic of China and the United States of America. It will prove advantageous to draw upon the pre-Ch'in Confucian organismic approach, rather than Euro-American organic theories, because the pre-Ch'in (before 221 B.C.E.) Confucian tradition was not biased toward monotheistic or absolutistic ideas. As I argue below, Confucian insights can be employed to dissolve some fundamental problems in social and political theory. Out of the variance and diversity of Kantian and Confucian philosophy, I distill a potent blend to provide a refreshing perspective. I show that a new theoretical justification for political constitutions, the "organic contract," can be developed out of these two traditions.

I. Human Nature

Liberal democratic theory features individual realization as an end and social relations as a means to that end; collectivism emphasizes the priority of social realization over individual attainment. The traditional Confucian model of human nature maintains that personal and political

realization are coextensive. One's attainment in self-cultivation sets the pace and tone for the achievement of social harmony. Speaking generally of Confucianism, it is especially the ruler's self-cultivation which not only orchestrates social order, but the ruler's personal achievement in ritual action also harmonizes the cosmos. We must keep in mind that the weight of the ruler's position is partly due to the fact that the ruler reflects and represents the concerns of the community.

In most Confucian thought an analogy is drawn between cultivating one's character and the appropriate nature of the state, especially the fulfillment of life and political administration. For the organismic elements in Confucian thought, the means of promoting life permeate the world, and so personal attainment, in general, and the ruler's self-cultivation, in particular, can be assisted by social, especially political, institutions. The fulfillment of life occurs within the natural environment and simultaneously enhances those environs, promoting further cultivation. The consummate exemplar of humanity, embodied in the ruler, is the person who holds that pivotal position between the heavens above, and the masses below. The ruler is expected to integrate with the environs and set a model for the people to follow, and the ruler should comply with the opinions and hearts of the masses, creating an atmosphere which complements nature. For Confucian thought, an individual achieves personhood (*jen che*) through the creative performance of ritual action (*li*), and other modes of self-cultivation such as study (*hsüeh*), virtuous action (*te*), and so on. The ruler as consummate model of humanity is not a given but an attainment; this is not an indivisible personal attainment, but a creative act of integration which is conducive to the fulfillment of life in others. I suggest a hypothetical thought experiment namely that we entertain the possibility that these traditional values of the Confucian ruler can be transferred to the citizen as law maker or citizen-ruler.

Conservative, and liberal democratic political theories generally hold a different conception of persons from that of the Confucian. There is a tendency in contemporary political theory to emphasize individualism, freedom, equality, and independence. Since Immanuel Kant set the groundwork for much of contemporary political theory, let us use his thought as an example. Although Kant usually refers to rights as civil rights created under the social contract, he does allow for one innate right, namely, freedom, which contains innate equality, and independence—that is being one's own master (*sui juris*) and irreproachable (*justi*).¹ Actually the classic contractarians (Hooker, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau) give the inalienable rights of freedom, equality, and independence to pre-

contractual individuals.

When Kant and others refer to "individual," or "person" the reader reflects on such notions as rationality, autonomy, freedom, inscrutability, and so on. When the term "person" (*jen*) occurs in the Chinese context, the reader should reflect on such alternative images as parity, integration, human exemplar, and creative achievement through self-cultivation, especially through the performance of ritual action.² Philosophy, especially comparative philosophy, requires not only a comparison and contrast of theories, but also a critical reformulation such that new ideas and theories are put forward in the pursuit of wisdom or justice.³ Synthesizing Kantian and Confucian theories, I develop a dynamic conception of human nature to ground political constitutions. This comparative philosophical understanding of human nature in part responds to the Feminist, "ethics of care," critique of Kantian thought by fusing the abstract Kantian duty ethics with the concrete Confucian person-to-person ethic of care.⁴

Many conceptions of "equality," especially mathematical equality, accept a static, non-temporal, and substantialistic approach. "Parity" is based on a dynamic understanding of an interactive articulation of social context and history. For the sake of limiting the discussion, I will focus on three different interpretations of "equality" in political theory—they are not necessarily exclusive. They can be interrelated, and parity can justify an equal consideration of interests theory.

First, let us consider what can be called the "identity theory of equality" which is the classic interpretation that equals are equal under a principle of identity. This view is usually drawn from Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* (5.6), and the *Politics* (1.2; 3.1) to establish a theory of justice which requires equal treatment of citizens under the law.⁵ Even if one could establish a totally just constitution and law with a proper definition of "citizen" which did not unjustly exclude groups or individuals, nevertheless a political order based on the idea of the identity theory of equality runs the risk of not properly providing for its citizens. Although it provides equal civil rights, it does not provide for a just distribution of other social goods. The identity theory of equality does not allow for, what John Rawls called the difference principle, the just distribution of goods. The identity theory of equality lacks a temporal understanding of human life; it does not account for change.

A second theory of equality, "equal opportunity," attempts to resolve such shortcomings. Equal opportunity seeks to provide social goods not properly distributed by ensuring that all members of society, especially

those not well-off, have the same opportunity to earn those social goods. Although the equal opportunity theory is built on the assumption of a basic difference between humans and provides an opportunity to ameliorate those differences, nevertheless there is a serious flaw with this kind of thinking in that it subtly begs the question. It assumes that every one, including the impoverished, are equally prepared to take advantage of their "equal" opportunity. The theory of equal opportunity does not fully take into account the temporal character of humans—if given appropriate training in early childhood development, individuals might be in a better position to not only take advantage of but also to create opportunities.

The third and perhaps most defensible theory of equality, "equal consideration of interests," acknowledges that people, having different interests, require different kinds of social goods to be treated, on balance, as legal and social equals, and to be properly prepared to take advantage of equal opportunities, again on balance. Equal consideration of interests has problems of its own. Conceptually what counts as an "interest" is not always clear, and the means to be employed and to what extent the state is supposed to cultivate and safeguard those interests is equally ambiguous. The execution of the theory of equal consideration of interests may appear to run counter to self-interests, but this can only be true in immediate terms because equal consideration of interests would in the long run, at least in theory, fulfill one's own self-interests. The equal consideration of interests theory takes into account the long-term, temporal, aspects of human life. Although Rawls is noted for his theoretical atemporal approach, there is a practical side to his theory which draws one's attention to the significance of timing. On the practical side, the self-esteem one achieves by fulfilling one's life plan is a good, for Rawls, which grounds one's sense of justice. Rawls does not fill in the details of such a life-plan, but he does note the importance of fulfilling one's life-plan in a timely fashion.⁶

Rawls acknowledges the historic and diachronic nature of institutions. Rawls argues that humans can control, to some extent, the changes that occur in and among social institutions.⁷ Rawls' theory has a practical element which acknowledges the temporal and developmental context of human life.

What seems to be needed is a worldview in which self-interest and other-interest are mutually determined and co-terminus. The organismic elements in early Confucian philosophy coupled with the above Kantian and Rawlsian considerations provide such a worldview. In the Confucian

world, each particular is on an existential parity with every other where parity is a temporal concept. Particulars as different as they are, because of their temporal interaction with each other, ameliorate those differences, and simultaneously enhance those differences in a dynamic harmony. Parity does not mean identical sameness; it means that each particular contributes its uniqueness, but the particulars are not equal. Parity is not an equal opportunity; some individuals will naturally take advantage of opportunities more skillfully than others, and they should be the leaders and rulers. Parity provides the existential perspective from which equal consideration of interests could be reconceived and defended.⁸

This concept of existential parity develops a moral corollary—what I call the **existential commitment**. The existential commitment is the moral attitude of responsibility and obligation to show concern and provide care for the life of others.⁹ The ontological and cosmological understanding of the interrelatedness of particulars leads one to acknowledge one's moral obligation to promote the interests of another. Within the perspective of existential parity, the value of others must be understood as having significance for one's self.¹⁰ The existential commitment is informed by the "respect for persons" concept developed from Kant through Ronald Dworkin—one of the most basic forms of social responsibility is to respect others. The existential commitment is a stronger position. It is not merely a social convention, agreement, or a theoretical starting point; it is a fundamental characteristic of existing in a world of interrelationships. The mutually defining self/other relation can also be understood in terms of the part/whole or individual/society relationship.

The problem of the one and the many has been a distinctive feature of Western metaphysical theories, leading many philosophers to discuss the individual/society relationship in terms of the part/whole relationship: either some subsume the part under the whole (conservatism and collectivism), or others (usually liberals) violate the traditional part/whole relationship and are accused of committing the fallacy of composition—by proposing that what is good for the individual's part is good for society as a whole. I am contending that principles of logic have led us to a biased view of the individual/society relationship.

Aristotle's organic and holistic thinking induce him to argue for a holistic principle—a preference for the whole which is greater than the sum of its parts. Aristotle has a strong bias for self-sufficiency; and he believes that such wholes are a mark of the self-sufficient.¹¹ The whole of society takes precedence over the individual.¹² Aristotle can be criticized for confusing logical priority with temporal priority; because

the whole as a logical concept must precede the part, he takes it to be a temporal order also. Thus, he commits a category error by confusing logical, and existential priority. Aristotle, like Plato, argues for an organic theory that places the individual in service to the whole—a caste system, slavery and other abuses are contained therein.¹³ Aristotle may well be guilty of a fallacy of division in imposing perfectionistic qualities of the whole on to the individual citizen. The fallacy of division clearly underlies the problem in Rousseau's "general will" theory: that is when I learn that my vote dissented from that of the "general will," I discover that I did not even know my own opinion on the matter.

On the other hand, political liberals like Jeremy Bentham and J.S. Mill, can be criticized for committing a fallacy of composition when they claim that the total of individual pleasures or goods is that of the society's at large.¹⁴ If we give the individual/society relationship serious reflection, the logical model of the priority of the whole does not ring true to human experience on the temporal and existential levels.

This is where some insight from pre-Ch'in, especially Confucian, social philosophy can assist. From the organismic perspective of Confucian thought the whole is not conceived of as prior to the part; rather the part whole relationship is one of integration, interdependency, interpenetration, and co-extensiveness.¹⁵ For the pre-Ch'in organismic perspective just by changing one part, the whole has been changed. The concept of the "whole" is an abstraction. This is not to say that there is no "identity," but that identity is defined in terms of continuity in relationships. For the Confucian *Book of Changes (I ching)*, all things are interconnected with each and every other thing—a unity in diversity and diversity in unity wherein all is one and one is all.¹⁶ For many of the pre-Ch'in Confucian thinkers, the "whole" is an abstraction or generalization about the overall interconnectedness and continuity of particulars. Their world is a plurality of co-extensive interrelated dependency of particulars; it is best described in terms of field and focus. The focus is any particular constituting the environment as field; the field is the dynamic processes of the interrelated foci.¹⁷

Society from the pre-Ch'in Confucian organismic perspective is a dynamic unity in the diversity of the various social roles in their harmonious interconnectedness or to paraphrase Rawls society is a dynamic union of diverse social unions.¹⁸ Confucius (Kung Fu Tzu) was faced with the practical problem of adjusting social disorder which was running rampant, and so he was not overly concerned with abstract social theory. He sought a person-to-person directly applicable approach which could be practiced

and instituted simply, through education. For Confucianism, society is defined in terms of the quality of the self-cultivated person's performance of one's social roles.¹⁹

It will be difficult to accept this unique perspective of the focus/field relationship because it is based on a so-called deviant logic, but the ethnocentric presuppositions of logic cannot be overlooked. Here it is enough to grant that it might be possible to dissolve the traditional priority of the whole over the sum of the parts—to acknowledge from the perspective of existential parity that: particular human existence precedes the species and/or society as a whole. If one adopts such a view, as the ancient pre-Ch'in Confucian organismic philosophy suggests along with a gender neutral interpretation of the Confucian social role theory, one can unravel the Gordian knot of the individual/society problem, and dissolve with it the problems of the priority of the whole and the fallacies of composition and division.

I further argue that once one accepts a worldview which does not assert the holistic priority of the whole over the sum of its parts by adopting a worldview of interrelated foci and once one accepts an existential priority of the interdependent *particular*, one sidesteps the problem of perfectionism.²⁰ For example, the Confucian *chün tzu* (consummate or authoritative person, often translated as "gentleman") is not a type of perfectionistic personality because the *chün tzu* is not a teleological product. The *chün tzu*, like any other social position or role, is defined in terms of its interrelationship with others; there is no pre-given model of the consummate person in Confucianism. The Confucian consummate person is not the perfection of an ideal, but the completion or achievement of one's expression of humanity (*jen*) and appropriateness (*yi*) in one's interpersonal relationships.²¹ These interactions never occur between bare entities of rights and liberties, abstract individuals, rather it is the interaction of persons, people fulfilling certain social and political roles, like family member, citizen, friend, and so on. These roles and interactions are always changing in a temporal context.

Generally, much of contemporary political theory begins with the assumption that the individual is discrete, atomic, and indivisible. The discrete individual is a rights bearer, predisposed as a rational self-interested agent endowed with freedom, equality and independence to govern one's own life both personally, in private, and as public legislator. Although most of the pre-Ch'in conceptions of the person are biased by a kind of feudal economy and male dominated social institutions which tend to devalue the commoner's political position and civil rights,

nevertheless two points must be kept in mind : first, that the notion of “parity” does not allow one to discredit the significance of the unique particular; and second, many pre-Ch’in political thinkers are well aware that the commoner *en mass* is the seat of political power. As the *Lü-shih ch’un-ch’iu*’s “Venerating Impartiality” (*kuei kung*) chapter is noted for stating : “The empire is not one man’s possession, but belongs to the people of the empire.”²² Thus, the pre-Ch’in perspective need not necessarily conflict with the modern worldview.

To extract the full importance of the pre-Ch’in Confucian worldview I suggest that we take seriously, at least as a thought experiment, the notion that with democracy the common person becomes king, and so we the people take the position of ruler, or law maker, acknowledging that our self-cultivation makes significant and meaningful contributions to the ambience and harmony of our society—where the person as citizen-ruler is an achievement of self-cultivation which has political significance. The achievement of citizenship assumes that the self-cultivating person attends to her or his existential commitment and behaves responsibly. There is always the threat, from the Kantian perspective, that when people see themselves as discrete, equal, and independent actors that they will act solely out of self-interest, instead of disinterest as Kant intended, in such a manner that they harm others or the environment though without violating any legal code. In a society where people understand that one’s actions, enlightened or not, have sustained and broad impact, there would be a wider moral base in society at large in which one could secure the integrity of the individual person within political institutions. That is, where the majority of people are sensitive to the necessity of each particular contributing to social order, then, the minority interests—even the individual person’s interests—will be guarded. Fairness and due process would be bolstered in a society which orientates itself toward the achievement of person-making.

Elements of both conservative and liberal political theory focus on the “atomic individual” who is discrete, independent, and self-contained in reason and self-interest (Utilitarian) or disinterest (Kantian) which stands in marked contrast to the pre-Ch’in Confucian view of the person as a social moral achievement, where “person” is defined in social and environmental terms. The general conception of the person in Confucian, Mohist, and Taoist thought is that one must practice different forms of self-cultivation to attain a degree of authoritativeness or genuineness. One’s person-making is not a natural given, rather one must work at achieving and maintaining it through self-cultivation. This pre-Ch’in

conception of person is not that of an "atomic individual," but one of achieving a level of person-making in which the person is organismically interrelated to all other particulars. To be engaged in the process of person-making is to place oneself at the pivotal point of morality both social and environmental. Finding a balance and harmony between these two diverse theories to syncretize the uniqueness of the abstract individual and the homogeneity of integrated persons offers a new position which is both rationally and practically powerful, and harmoniously and symmetrically beautiful.

There is an emphasis on the rational aspect of human nature within the Euro-American philosophic traditions. This is especially true for Utilitarian and Kantian sociopolitical thought; whether humans are seen as self-interested pleasure maximizers, or as self-disinterested individuals bound to adhere to their duty in both cases humans are rational agents. In Kant's moral theory the rational agents follow universal principles of logic; the rational logical agent is the moral agent. In daily non-moral affairs, for Kant, practical, hypothetical, reasoning is employed. In Utilitarianism, by maximizing self-interested pleasures, the agent is fulfilling its rational dispositions. Most pre-Ch'in Confucian and Taoist philosophers emphasize a non-systematic aesthetic model of people achieving person-making through creative actions, especially ritual actions for the Confucians. This creative achievement occurs on both a personal level of creative appropriation of one's culture and environment, and an historical level of maintaining and renewing cultural tradition. A complete and comprehensive theory of human nature represents humans as creatively rational.

The challenge both theoretically and practically is to synthesize with reason and aesthetic creative quality the Euro-American conception of the individual as "indivisible," and the pre-Ch'in understanding of the consummate model of person-making as one who is an integrated and interconnected "administrator" of cosmic, historical, and social order. The achieved person is in a sense extraordinary not just because she or he is self-contained and inscrutable, but also because such a person has embraced the social and environmental context in such a way that one is consciously and intentionally aware of one's interdependent and co-creative relationships with social and environmental conditions.

The citizen as law-maker, like the traditional Confucian ruler, or consummate model of person-making, holds the highest and most powerful position of authority and majesty in the state, and yet it must be clear that one does not rule by coercion alone or even in the main. Although the

citizen-ruler is a person of authority, one is not an authoritarian. The citizen-ruler sets the example of self-cultivation and person-making, but does not dictate it. Such a person is the authoritative "author" of both social and political order, but is neither the strong arm or the big man. The citizen-ruler provides for the people, but does not "possess" them or "steer" (*gubernare*) them. It is through the citizen-ruler's achievement of self-cultivation that one is able to attract and employ adequate public servants—what the classical Chinese texts referred to as "the knights of the way" (*yu tao chih shih*)—who will administer law and order for the people. The consummate person, or sage citizen-ruler, provides the authoritative model for others to emulate on the social level, and generates the atmosphere in which others may benefit from the bounty of the cosmic environment.²³

Where the traditional Euro-American theories focus on the independent inscrutable individual as rights bearer, and the pre-Ch'in Confucian model focuses on developing an authoritative exemplar or a sage ruler, the syncretic and holistic approach I am developing here seeks to integrate both perspectives. Like the ancient sage rulers, the contemporary citizen holds that pivotal position which influences social cultural and environmental conditions. The individual's political rights need to be legally safeguarded by values such as independence and inscrutability, but on the social moral level the person must take responsibility for her or his own achievement of person-making by maintaining awareness and the proper intentionality concerning both one's interdependency, and one's responsibility for environmental, and especially, social conditions. The sage citizen is able to maintain awareness of one's pivotal position in co-creating self, others, and the world. Thus, it is not so much a question of a person's inscrutability which counts on the social moral level. The sage citizen-rulers are the most scrutable persons because their actions have far reaching and long lasting social and cosmic effects. This type of sage citizen-ruler is not independent and inscrutable, but rather is totally interdependent and must be open to scrutinization and remonstrance from others. Because the citizen-rulers are author of social, legal, and political order, and hold the crucial positions of responsibility, being open to scrutinization, they stand as authoritative historical moral exemplars for the tradition. Because the citizen-rulers are scrutinizable, they leave their mark through historical transformations either as a positive exemplar, a sage, or as a negative one, a criminal.

Euro-American philosophers and theologians, generally speaking, have devoted much attention to the question of human freedom. Within the

Judeo-Christian tradition, since Augustine at least, the concept of free will has played a central role; and many moral philosophers, from Plato to Kant, have argued that people are predisposed to behave freely, at least, when they act morally. As we saw above, Kant argued that freedom was the one and only given, innate, or natural right which grounds all moral and political actions.

It is significant that in the pre-Ch'in literature the concept of "freedom" is not explicitly discussed. We can, however, explicate the implicit pre-Ch'in position on freedom. In the pre-Ch'in philosophies a person's "freedom" is directly correlated with one's ability to act spontaneously and creatively. One attains freedom *from* a naive unreflective understanding of how one's social and environmental context conditions one's life *to* achieve a sustained awareness and intentional understanding that one's context is just as dependent on one's own life as one is dependent on the environment. One achieves this freedom through the recognition that one's spontaneous and creative actions generate an aesthetic moral context. For the pre-Ch'in philosophies, the ruler, as one engaged in person-making, achieves a deeper realization of freedom through one's more highly developed expression of self-cultivation and refinement in ritual action. The free person is one who can cultivate the sense organs, biological drives and desires to fulfill life in a spontaneous and creative fashion. Therefore, we should distinguish our political and legal freedom which is natural, innate or biological from our moral and aesthetic freedom that is a human achievement gained through the quality of one's actions.

II. Political Ramifications

Above I noted the developmental achievement orientation in early Confucian sociopolitical thought—individually and socially humans are what they make of themselves. This kind of constructivist thinking emerges in the modern Chinese constitutions most notably in regard to human rights. Andrew Nathan has noted six points of commonality among the diversity of the twentieth century Chinese constitutions: first, rights are not derived from human dignity but political membership; second, rights change over time; third, rights are programmatic; fourth, the government has the power to limit rights; fifth, there is no check on the government's power; and sixth, the constitutions do not provide for an effective exercise of popular sovereignty.²⁴ In the Chinese constitutional tradition, rights themselves are constructed and constituted within the sociopolitical context. Ronald Dworkin's constructivist approach to constitutional

interpretations bears some resemblance to the constructivism in the Chinese constitutional tradition.²⁵ But it should be clear that the Kantian theory of human nature informs a very different understanding of human rights which grounds our constitution. The Chinese constitutions provide a more radical constructivism than Dworkin's approach. In part this is due to the fact that over the past eighty years the Chinese have had eleven constitutions or constitutional drafts.²⁶ This provides a strong experiential and practical base for their constructivist approach. Traditional cultural values, such as the achievement of person-making, have enhanced this Chinese constructivism.

Rawls strengthens the social contract theory with his social role model. In Kantian fashion, he is concerned with reconciling the *reasonableness* of free agents entering the social contract with the historicity of mankind. Confucius is not only a representative of a pre-Ch'in version of the organismic theme, but also develops a social role model. Confucius' organismic position can be employed to argue for a pluralistic society as a prerequisite for harmony (*ho*) where harmony is a rhythmic unity in diversity. Both Rawls and Confucius hold a "social position" or social role theory to justify both moral and political obligations. It is their respective social role theories, and Dworkin's and the Chinese constitutional constructivism which provide the ground for my "organic contract" theory.

The Chinese and American constitutional traditions could learn from each other. The P.R.C. constitution is in need of a system of checks and balances; the people require a means to exercise rights of popular sovereignty. The Chinese constitutional tradition has in a sense inherited the exploitative and tyrannical elements of the traditional monarchy. Ideally the ruler reflects the needs of the masses, but in actual practice the Chinese emperor acted upon *fa chia* (so-called Legalist) principles of power tyranny. The American constitutional tradition might be enriched by acknowledging that, at least, some rights and liberties are not given but need to be achieved, and that some rights, especially welfare rights, change over time.

Traditionally the organic and instrumentalist theories have been seen as different in kind. Advocates of the organic theory argue that humans are political by nature. Proponents of the instrumentalist position do not accept that mankind is socially and politically orientated by nature, rather civil society is formed under a social contract. Here I develop a synthesis of the organic and instrumental theories, and argue for an "organic contract" to explicate a theory of social role ethic for citizens.

Grappling with the nature/nurture or nature/culture problem, I found my way clear by means of an organic contract theory. An organic contract theory assists in clarifying some key issues, namely the ambiguous role of nature and custom in the instrumentalist position, and the weak role of reason and human artifice in the organic theories.²⁷

Usually a theory's hypothesis concerning the origin of something, in this case political society, also predisposes the theoretical limits on the character of that topic, that is any theoretical stance on the origin of society, like divine creation (which strictly speaking is not a theory), natural development, or social contract, will place certain limitations on the character, nature, and justifications of political society and on political obligation and social ethics.²⁸

I develop an organic contract theory to ground social political theory in a comprehensive (social) scientific hypothesis, taking into account the historical and archeological evidence which shows that our ancestors were living in social groups for the past four to six million years. The organic contract theory acknowledges the spectrum of archaeological, historical, and social science evidence concerning human life, especially in social political arrangements. The organic contract theory is based on both the natural organic origin of political society and the historical role of reason in fine tuning the constitutional apparatus of that society. These two points are united in arguing for the organic natural basis of reason in culture.²⁹

An organic contract theory acknowledges the natural biological and environmental factors which make humans gregarious creatures. It holds that these biological and environmental factors coupled with the gregarious nature of humans leads to the *natural* development of culture—a repository of understanding and relating to the world and others in a sociopolitical manner—which is intimately part and parcel of language, both natural and artificial. Various combinations and interactions among culture language, and persons generate science, religion, philosophy, and art.

Confining the discussion to the social political dimensions, in the natural extended family loosely practicing exogamy, the small group or band is the first sociopolitical arrangement, and in a sense the small group is the fundamental arrangement in any society regardless of its overall size—all large societies are composed of smaller social units or groups. The extended family system or band creates and maintains the context into which the individual is raised, and the individual re-defines the group by participating in the social network. As the basic political unit grows in complexity and diversity through history, these participating persons find it necessary to re-define or to create new definitions of themselves, their

culture, and the world. That is to say, it becomes necessary, because of chiefly environmental, economic and social conditions, and socio-biology cannot be ruled out entirely, for people to construct, re-structure or even create new social structures, arrangements, roles, institutions, and professions. For an organic contract position, social contracts are a natural development in re-structuring or creating new forms of social interaction; the social contract grows organically as a natural human activity of reformulating and reinterpreting culture as a response to environmental, economic, social, and other factors.³⁰

An organic contract theory, then, overcomes the oversight of "reason" in many traditional organic theories, and it clarifies the ambiguous role of "nature and culture" in the social contract theories. For the organic contract position, human life is basically natural, but humans have a strong tendency to manipulate their natural environment and capacities through culture. In a sense, culture itself is the organic contract, for to some extent culture is biologically and environmentally influenced, but to a large degree it can be contrived by human activity and reasoning. As far as we can tell at this time, only humans have fully developed cultures, but human cultures are unique and various. That is, one must be born human to fully participate in a culture, but simply being a genetic human does not guarantee one admittance to human culture and recognition as a person with civil rights.³¹ One's role as a person is achieved through participating in culture, and yet culture is not fixed and unchanging—by participating in culture, one alters and redefines it. The organic contract theory attempts to account for all of the natural, cultural, and rational capacities of humans which play a role in creating new social arrangements. For the organic contract, humans qua humans have always lived in some social and political arrangement, and historically those arrangements have been renegotiated in different instrumentalist, contractual, formats.

In contrasting Chinese and Euro-American perspectives on human nature, I developed a syncretic approach, arguing that it dissolves problems such as the fallacies associated with the part/whole or individual/society relationship espoused in many traditional theories, and produces a realistic understanding of "equality," "freedom," and "person." These theories have influenced their respective constitutional traditions on human rights. We can safely say that the cultural and philosophical understanding of human nature impacts contemporary constitutions. I discussed some of the basic shortcomings of traditional organic, and social contract theory in accounting for the origin and nature of civil society to argue that a synthesis of the two positions can provide a more comprehensive and precise

hypothesis. I discussed some of the advantages of an "organic contract" theory, and showed how it dispels some traditional problems, particularly the relationship between reason and culture, in social and political theory. Hopefully, this work will assist in our sustained projects of reformulating our political constitutions.

NOTES

1. Kant, Immanuel. *The Metaphysics of Morals*, translated by John Ladd, (Indianapolis : Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1965), pp. 43-44.

2. In another paper, "Articulating Time," I have argued that the position and performance of the ruler generates "quality time" on cosmic, historical, and interpersonal levels.

3. Eliot Deutsch teaches and practices this creative and constructivist approach to comparative philosophy; see his, *Personhood, Creativity, and Freedom*. Honolulu : University of Hawaii Press, 1982, and *Creative Being : The Crafting of Person and World*. Honolulu : University of Hawaii Press, 1992.

4. One of the most powerful Feminist criticisms of Kantian moral philosophy is given by Sarah Lucia Hoagland, *Lesbian Ethics*. Palo Alto : Institute of Lesbian Studies, 1988.

5. See Benn, S. I. and Peters, R. S. "Justice and Equality," in W.T. Blackstone ed., *The Concept of Equality*. Minneapolis : Burgess Publishing Co., 1969. p. 54-81 for a more detailed analysis of this notion of equality.

6. Rawls, John *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge, MA : The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971. p. 410.

7. Rawls, John *A Theory of Justice*. p. 547.

8. Ontologically parity is the importance of each unique particular contributing to the field of interrelated processes in nature. The blade of grass and the mountain contribute to the environment, and the field of interrelationships would change with the alteration of either one, but their contribution is prioritized in that one will have a relatively smaller or greater effect from a certain perspective. Each contribution is significant, but each is different. Sociologically speaking, a conception of parity would propose that each citizen must be viewed with equal significance and rights under the law. John C.H. Wu notes that in practice traditional Chinese law did recognize a basic legal equality in that the despot was not above the law. John C.H. Wu, "The status of the individual in the political and legal traditions of old and new China," in C.A. Moore edited, *The Status of the Individual in East and West*. Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1968. p. 396. The truth here is limited to legal theory. A hierarchical social system precludes legal equality. And a social system based on parity also recognizes

that certain people because of their social size, position, and the quality of their performance require more social privileges, and thereby, have greater social responsibility. For example, the officials of a state require greater access to the means of fulfilling life because they presumably are in a position to deliver it to the masses who need it most.

9. My debt to J.P. Sartre is obvious. See, "Existentialism is a Humanism," in *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*. Walter Kaufmann ed, New York : New American Library, 1975.

10. This notion of existential commitment is similar to many traditional religiophilosophical positions which claim that people have some basic responsibility for others, for example, *Dharma*, or the "brother's keeper" idea.

11. What this means is that the characteristics of the parts do not necessarily apply to the whole (guarding against the fallacy of composition), and attributes of the whole do not necessarily apply to the parts (guarding against the fallacy of division).

12. In the first book of the *Politics*, Aristotle proposes that the family is prior to the individual since the whole is prior to the part. *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. ed. by Richard McKeon, New York : Random House, 1941. p. 1129.

13. Although Aristotle recognizes the need for the state to provide for the needs of the individual citizen, the priority of the whole still takes precedence. Since the whole is advanced by perfecting the quality of workmanship, he promotes a perfectionism where society, for its own betterment, advances the development of superior personality types (*megalopsychia*).

14. Mill, John Stuart *Utilitarianism*, Indianapolis : Hackett Publishing Co. Inc., 1979. p. 34.

15. Hume struggled with these problems. For example, he cited the problem of identity over time with the example of a boat rebuilt at sea; if we change every part of a boat during a long journey, in what sense is it still the same boat? David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, L.A. Selby-Bigge editor, Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1980. p. 257.

16. A similar idea can also be found in Taoism, and Buddhist causality theory; especially in Chinese Ch'an (Zen) and Hua Yen Buddhism, where the patriarch Fa Tsang proposes that removing one brick from a house changes the whole house, see F.H. Cook, *Hua-yen Buddhism : The Jewel Net of Indra*. University Park : The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977. pp. 75 ff. The Sung dynasty Confucians constructed their philosophy around this concept of unity in diversity.

17. The focus/field worldview is ontologically homogenous; there is no imposed value structure in existence. This is not to say that there is no structure to existence, for there is a structure. There is a value-neutral hierarchical structure

built into the world in that the active (*yang*) principle moves first, and the inactive (*yin*) responds—this hierarchical structure is especially true for Tsou Yen, the Confucians, like Hsün Tzu and the ritualists, and Huang-Lao Taoists more so than the Lao-Chuang Taoists. The ontological priority of the *yang* principle puts heaven (*yang*) above earth (*yin*), and man (*yang*) above women and children (*yin*). I describe this as a value-neutral system because it is not that things are “better” this way; for the organismic philosophers, this existential priority of *yang* is just the way things are.

18. Rawls, John *A Theory of Justice*. p. 527.

19. For example, the manner in which one behaves to and with one's neighbors defines the neighborhood one lives in; the criminal himself creates the criminal element in society: society, the interaction of roles, is criminal wherever he performs. This is not to say that the responsibility of the crime rest solely upon the criminal himself—because of the interdependency of roles, the non-criminal elements in society which allow for an unjust distribution of wealth are also responsible for the crime.

20. Although I agree with John Rawls that perfectionism is distasteful and to be argued against in a just society, nevertheless I disagree with his reading of F.W. Nietzsche which leads Rawls to discredit him as a perfectionist, see *A Theory of Justice*. pp. 25, & 325.

I agree that Aristotle and others hold a doctrine of perfectionism; however, if it is true that Nietzsche's point of view is basically “existential” particular truths precede universal truths (which are lies for Nietzsche), then Nietzsche cannot be a perfectionist. Though Nietzsche might have held some opinions in his personal life which sound elitist or perfectionistic, I do not *read* such ideas in his philosophy. For example, the passage which Rawls cites to show Nietzsche's apparent perfectionism, I interpret it to be a call to each and every one of us to fulfill our potentialities and dreams to our fullest. Since Nietzsche argued violently against Darwin's views, his use of “specimens” cannot mean individuals of a greater species; rather it should be *read* as the particular manifestation of the *Übermensch*, the existential attitude or choice to create through and beyond human life.

21. The Confucian sage, like the Confucian tao, way or tradition, is not something fixed and pre-established; rather it is negotiated, put into practice, and “traveled on” in one's particular interactions with others.

22. Lü Pu-wei, *Lü-shih ch'un-ch'iu chi-shih teng wu-shu*, Yang Chia-lo ed., Taipei: Ting Wen Publishing Co., 1977. p. 76.

23. Hall, David and Ames, Roger describe the “authority” of authoring oneself and correlatively one's context. David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking*

Through Confucius. Albany : State University of New York Press, 1987. p. 180.

24. Andrew J. Nathan, *Human Rights in Contemporary China*. New York : Columbia University Press, 1986. pp. 121-122.

25. Dworkin wants to argue that constructive interpretation adds something which is only coincidentally new, but in fact maintains the original intention, but Dworkin recognizes that history tests one's interpretation. Ronald Dworkin, *Law's Empire*. Cambridge, MA : The Belknap of Harvard University Press, 1986. p. 67. The power and beauty of Dworkin's theory is that it is a realistic theory or one which seeks to explain the nature of ordinary, especially U.S. constitutional, politics.

26. Nathan, Andrew J. *Human Rights in Contemporary China*. p. 78.

27. The problem is that many Euro-American social and political theories and especially practices, for the past four hundred years, have been based on an instrumentalist or social contract theory which denies or ignores the natural organic basis of political society. This is a peculiar point in contract theory since the contractarian is aware that no actual society was ever solely formed by a contract. Even the United States, which would be the most likely candidate, was not formed out of a pre contractual state of nature, or some version of a hypothetical pre-historic or a-historic "original" position. It too had its cultural tradition, environmental factors, and predispositions which loosely conditioned the Constitution—in particular the early colonial Township and church charters which established a tripartite division of powers. Although contemporary contractarians, like Rawls, have attempted to sidestep this historical applicability problem by positing a hypothetical "original position" before the contract is made, nevertheless other problems concerning political obligation and morality arise because of their faulty starting point. See, A. John Simmons, *Moral Principles and Political Obligations*. Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1981. pp. 101 ff, and 143 ff.

28. For example, for the divine creation position, since the physical world, and society along with it, is created by God(s), that society should serve, worship, and obey the will of God(s). Or since society is founded on the social contract, it should serve the needs of the contractors. Or since individuals develop naturally in society, they should serve the organic whole. Even if the strong implications do not apply in other theoretical frameworks, it certainly applies in social and political theory. It seems that in social and political theory, one's theoretical understanding of the nature and purpose of civil society is predetermined to some extent by the theoretician's hypothesis on the origin of society.

29. An organic contract position recognizes strong and weak points in conservative and liberal, and organic and instrumental theories. It attempts a synthesis by uniting the strong points and dissolving the weak ones.

30. For example, the development of social contract theory in Europe and

America can be seen as a reaction to social changes brought on by economic and scientific revolutions, and ideological and religious reformations, and in turn the contract position, as constitutionalism, creates the contemporary social order. We could, like Nietzsche and others, easily oversimplify the whole of contract theory as a political application of the merchant's business contracts, which allowed for the great trade boom of Renaissance Europe. There was also a great deal of concern to eradicate any deep rooted religious or otherwise biased ideology from politics, especially state persecution of religion, and the contract theory could guarantee that.

31. Recall the examples of human children raised by non-human animals, and the great, if not impossible, task of reintroducing them into human society. The Tarzan myth is part of the Romantic image of the noble savage ideal—that uncultured and untutored humans living alone as rugged individuals in the jungle can achieve true humanity. There is no anthropological evidence that this ideal is achievable. In fact, the evidence shows that without appropriate human contact psycho sociopathologies, or at least anti-social behaviors, develop.

**DIVERSITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL
PERSPECTIVE**

CULTURE AND GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

Fred Dallmayr

Development is the global watchword today. Commonly the topic is discussed from the angle of economists and social scientists. The comments I want to offer here are of a reflective or theoretical kind, nurtured by my background in philosophy and social-political theory. The question I want to raise is, on the surface, quite simple : What is "development" or what do we mean by "development," especially global development? The (tentative) response I want to propose is that the question cannot be adequately addressed without a consideration of "culture." Due to limitations of time and space I can only present my argument in the briefest outline form.

1. The notion that development presupposes a consideration of culture is likely to be challenged or rejected by economists and many empirical social scientists. For mainstream economists, development tends to consist in the growth of the GNP, particularly in the expansion of industrial productivity coupled with the acceleration of capital accumulation and steadily higher levels of consumption. For economists trained in orthodox Marxist doctrine, development involves basically a change in the mode of production, a shift from feudal landlords and entrepreneurs to industrial labor—with culture being relegated to a super structural status. On the other hand, empirical social scientists tend to see development under the rubrics of division of labor and growing structural complexity, with an accent on the transition from agriculture to industry, from village to urban centers—changes which permit empirical analysis and resort to quantitative-statistical measurement.

2. Approached from these angles, development and culture are only marginally correlated. I realize, of course, that the preceding picture is somewhat overdrawn. Economists are often willing to recognize that the efficiency of specific production techniques and marketing strategies

depends in good measure on the prevailing cultural context. Accordingly, economic planners and company managers are often exhorted to learn something about foreign cultures where they wish to do business or introduce economic changes. But the purpose of this exhortation is of a purely utilitarian sort: learning about a foreign culture is encouraged not for the sake of that culture, but in order to maximize corporate efficiency and to increase the chances of economic gain—in the face of prevailing cultural constraints. Empirical social scientists, on their part, are often ready to acknowledge culture as one of the ingredients or variables in a growingly complex social structure, that is, as one of the “sub-systems” of society (alongside the economy and the polity) contributing to the maintenance and evolution of societal goals over time.¹ But again, the significance of culture here is reduced to a subordinate and utilitarian role: as one variable among many others, culture is invoked to enhance the possibility of empirical social prediction and control.

3. In asserting the correlation of development and culture—the dependence of development on a consideration of culture—I mean to go beyond such marginal concessions. The question: What is development? or what do we mean by development? cannot be answered in strictly economic or social-scientific terms. Even the notions of “economic development” or “social development” exceed in principle the disciplinary confines of economics and social science. To assess the meaning of these notions requires a reflective judgment (about higher/lower, better/worse) which transgresses the competence of these disciplines. In the absence of such judgment, the pronouncements of economics and social science on development are bound to have the character of dogmas. For on what grounds and with what justification can one say that development equals growth of the GNP or the enhancement of societal complexity? What are the criteria of judgment which allow us to say that some societies (richer, technologically advanced societies) are “more developed” than others? Economists and social scientists may invoke at this point their expertise. But acceptance of this expertise requires again criteria which lie outside their professional disciplines.

4. Talk of development hence requires judgment—that is, resort to theoretical or (if you will) philosophical reflection. Philosophical reflection is not confined to any one of the established scientific disciplines. If one wishes to locate it at all academically, philosophy belongs to the so-called “humanities,” that is, to the field of the “human” or “cultural sciences.” To this extent, one may say that philosophy has its home in culture. Given that development questions presuppose reflective judgment,

their adequate treatment hence can be shown to depend on a consideration of culture. The matter can be stated somewhat differently. Reflective judgment—I want to emphasize—is not the exclusive province of professional philosophers; rather it is an everyday occurrence and as such the task and privilege of every human being. In its everyday mode, reflection does not occur in a vacuum but is always inserted in a cultural and linguistic context (without being imprisoned by the latter). Like philosophy, everyday thinking involves a reflection—sometimes a critical reflection—of and on culture. By “culture” I mean here not merely a set of artifacts but rather a way of life, a manner of thinking and acting shared by a group of people over time.² Captured in reflective judgment, culture provides an overall framework through which we understand the world; it offers a frame of reference which gives sense or meaning to individual terms or concepts (like the concept of development).

5. The linkage of development and culture, however, is still more intimate than has so far been suggested. What today is termed development was in earlier times often if not usually discussed under the heading of culture; more harshly put : the slogan of development has today usurped the place previously occupied by culture. By the latter term I mean at this point no longer simply a general frame of reference but an experiential process : a process of human cultivation, educational growth or “formation.” During the classical period of German thought and literature, this process was captured by the term *Bildung* (which is commonly rendered in English as “formation” or “culture”). In his magisterial work titled *Truth and Method*, the German philosopher Gadamer has evoked this tradition in stirring and lucid language. As he writes : “The concept of self-formation or cultivation (*Bildung*) which became supremely important at the time, was perhaps the greatest idea of the 18th century and it is this concept which became the natural element or soil of the humanities during the 19th century (even if they were no longer able to provide an epistemological justification).”³

Crucial for the rise to prominence of *Bildung*, in Gadamer’s account, was the work of Herder, particularly the latter’s notion of “human cultivation” (*Bildung zum Menschen*) and of a “rising up to humanity through culture” (*Emporbildung zur Humanität*)—phrases which preserved and transformed Enlightenment ideals of education. Herder’s lead was continued by German classical philosophy, especially by Hegel whose *Phenomenology of Spirit* was nothing but a detailed account of the process and successive stages of human self-formation (*Bildung*). Gadamer also reminds his readers of the linkage of *Bildung* (formation/

culture) and *Bild* (image/icon)—where *Bild* refers to the divine image implanted in the human heart (recollecting the biblical story of the creation of humans “in the image of God”). This linkage, Gadamer notes, had not yet been forgotten in that period. “The cult of *Bildung* in the 19th century,” he writes, “preserved the profounder dimension of the word, and our notion of *Bildung* is determined by it. . . . The rise of the term *Bildung* evokes the ancient mystical tradition according to which humans carry in their soul the image of God after whom they are fashioned and which they must cultivate in themselves.”⁴

6. The notion of educational formation or *Bildung*, to be sure, is not limited to the German classical period; nor to Western culture in general. Virtually all the cultures of the globe have stories or mythical-religious narratives which recount a formative process of humankind—stories which sometimes date back several millenia. In the West, such a story is part and parcel of the basic religious patrimony. Gadamer refers to “medieval mysticism,” but the story has a broader foundational character. Drawing on older Hebrew teachings, Christianity depicts the development or formative process of humankind as a “salvation history”: a story which starts from a condition of initial bliss, proceeds to a period of corruption, loss, and separation, and finally points to the promise of recovery, healing, or redemption. The basic pattern of this story persisted well beyond the time of medieval speculation and mysticism. In the wake of the Enlightenment and at the height of German classical thought, Hegel portrayed historical development as a movement from initial immediacy over a stage of alienation, loss, and dispersion to the final epiphany of “absolute spirit”—thus preserving and transforming salvation history in the mode of a self-formation of reason (*Bildung zur Vernunft*).⁵

In different guises, parallel stories can be found in most world civilizations. A case in point are the great epical narratives of India, the *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahābhārata*. In both narratives, one may note, the heroes are divine-human beings, that is human beings that carry within themselves preeminently the image of God. In both stories, this image is subjected to severe tests; the heroes have to undergo prolonged agonies of separation, loss, and exile before they can return to their true home and fulfill their divine destiny. In the *Rāmāyana*, the leading hero is an “avatar” of Vishnu, while his wife *Sitā* is an offspring (a “furrow”) of the earth goddess. Due to the cabal and deceit of his step mother, *Rāma* is deprived of his kingdom and together with his wife is forced into exile. While they are dwelling in a forest far from home, *Sitā* is abducted by the demon-king *Rāvana* and carried off into the distant land of Lanka. Only after a

protracted search and after enlisting the help of the monkey king is Rāma able to face and defeat the demons, to recapture his wife, and to bring her back to his native Ayodhya—where, after some further trials, the two finally find peace and heavenly transfiguration. In the Mahābhārata, the heroes—named Pāndavas—are sons of human mothers and gods, thus carrying with them likewise a divine imprint. As a result of the trickery and deceit of their cousins (the Kauravas), the heroes are expelled from their kingdom and compelled to live in a far-off forest region. It is there, in suffering the agonies of exile, that the Pāndavas slowly begin to discover their sense of purpose or mission. After having assembled an army, they finally face their cousins and other relatives on a large battle field—the field of “rightness” or *dharma*. Having vanquished their foes, the Pandavas establish in their homeland a rule of peace, harmony, and general well-being—whereupon they retreat into the Himalayas, thus completing their process of divine-human formation (*Bildung*).⁶

Similar stories of formation can also be found in the Chinese tradition, though with different accents. In Confucianism everything—including the peace of the family and of the political regime—depends on the proper formation of humans in the spirit of nobility, that is, on the cultivation of the qualities of the “chun-tzu.” Foremost among these qualities are the virtues of humaneness or fellow-feeling (*jen*) and of the propriety of behavior (*li*) in accordance with given contexts. As one may note, K’ung-fu-tzu—the teacher of these noble virtues—was himself the victim of political intrigues and cabals, and was forced to live in exile for many years, before he was allowed to return to resume his pedagogical mission.⁷

The notion of formation or self-formation also plays a prominent role in Chinese Taoism and Buddhism (though in a form transgressing traditional morality). In Buddhism, the basic task is to overcome the lure of selfishness or self-centeredness and thus to reach the level of “*sūnyatā*” or emptiness—a level where the world can be experienced in its “suchness” (*tathata*) beyond the bifurcations of knower and known, of being and non-being. Ascent to this level is far from easy or smooth, but requires a strenuous process of self-formation, a kind of pilgrim’s progress along the “eightfold path” and in accordance with the “*śīlas*” handed down by Shākyamuni. Taoism likewise counsels self-abandonment or abandonment of self-centeredness for the sake of a higher recovery, mainly for the sake of living in accord with the “way” of things and with cosmic harmony as expressed in the correlation of “yin” and “yang.” Like K’ung-tzu, incidentally, Lao-tzu also was forced by political intrigues to leave his post at the court and to travel far afield to the borders of China (the Western

mountain pass). Regarding the gist of self-formation, listen to these words of Lao-tzu: "Be utterly humble/And you shall hold to the foundation of peace. . . Those who would take over the earth/And shape it to their will/ Never, I notice, succeed./The earth is like a vessel so sacred/That at the mere approach of the profane/It is marred."⁸

7. Let me return to the issue of development in our present global setting. How much of these older stories of formation, culture (*Bildung*), and self-development still lives on in contemporary conceptions of social development? One has to admit: not very much—although one probably has to qualify this verdict somewhat in the interest of fairness. Basically, development theory presents itself today in two major forms or versions: an empirical or social-scientific variant and a philosophically more ambitious or sophisticated model. Let me briefly summarize the models. The empirical version presents development essentially as an evolutionary process patterned after the process of biological survival and growth. In the field of economics, the model was outlined in succinct fashion in Rostow's trend-setting *Stages of Economic Growth* with its emphasis on the progressive expansion of industrial productivity and of the potential for capital accumulation.⁹

In the domain of social and political science, writers on development have tended to rely heavily on the founders of modern sociological analysis—from Comte to Spencer and Max Weber—with their stress on the progressive differentiation of social structures and functions coupled with the steady rationalization or secularization of world-views. In line with neo-Darwinian teachings on natural selection, human societies in this model are portrayed as quasi-organic structures seeking to increase their survival chances through the enhancement of internal complexity and external-environmental adaptability. Following in the footsteps of Spencer and Durkheim, proponents of the model view social evolution as a process of differentiation manifest in the division of labor and growing "subsystem" autonomy, a differentiation requiring ever renewed efforts of system integration to insure effective environmental control. On the cultural level, Comte and strands in Marxism have furnished the formula of the steady rationalization of world-views, that is, of the progressive ascendancy of science and technology over traditional beliefs.¹⁰ If at all, the notion of culture as self-formation (*Bildung*) surfaces only dimly or furtively in the empiricist model; scant traces of the notion can be found in the postulated evolutionary transition from "status" to "contract," from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*, from tradition to modernity—but the meaning of these formulas tends to be left obscure.

8. Much of this obscurity is removed in the second model which offers a philosophically grounded view of modernization and development inspired mainly by Enlightenment teachings. According to this view, development signifies basically the progressive emancipation of humankind from modes of political and religious tutelage characterizing past ages; in the Kantian formulation, Enlightenment means the resolute awakening of humankind from a condition of self-induced immaturity. In large measure, the model has inspired revolutionary transformations in the modern age, from the French Revolution to recent "velvet revolutions" in Eastern Europe. In terms of political theory, the model furnishes the central ingredients of modern Western liberalism with its focus on the enhancement of individual rights and freedoms. Viewed under liberal auspices, development or modernization involves basically an exodus from past constraints: that is, a movement from dogmatically held beliefs to rational knowledge, from collective social structures to individual autonomy, and from geographically circumscribed accidents of birth to more universal or cosmopolitan aspirations. In our century, this liberal outlook was articulated in stirring language by the founder of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl, in his portrayal of historical teleology as the progressive unfolding of rational reflection and moral autonomy throughout the world.¹¹

Although elevating and inspiring in many ways, the discussed philosophical model is not without drawbacks, especially from a cultural perspective. As indicated, the model heralds in large measure an exodus from tradition—which also means basically an exit from historically grown culture. With its focus on individual autonomy, moreover, liberal Enlightenment thought has difficulty in reconciling individual rights with the notion of culture as a way of life shared by a larger group or community of people. In addition, individualism is coupled with a rationalizing bent. Despite its cosmopolitan aims, the model's celebration of "universal" human rationality is couched unmistakably in the idiom of modern Western philosophy—a fact that is liable to arouse suspicion among non-Western societies or cultures wedded to different modes of reasoning or thinking. The situation is aggravated by the linkage of rationality and modern science. To this extent, the liberal model is an accomplice (or provides insufficient antidotes) to the ongoing process of global rationalization, that is, the standardization and homogenization of the world under the auspices of Western science and technology—a process which, again, is bound to evoke resentment and opposition among non-Western cultures. Finally, by bracketing traditional cultures, the sketched model also brackets

or sidesteps most of the inherited conceptions of "culture" in the sense of human cultivation or self-formation (*Bildung*).

9.- Against the backdrop of prevailing development theory (in both its empirical and universalist-philosophical versions), the importance of a consideration of culture emerges clearly into view. For present purposes, I want to highlight this importance under three headings or from three angles.

a) Culture is important by providing a frame of reference through which development of any kind can be at all discussed and formulated. Culture here means a framework of meanings and assumptions presupposed by economics and empirical social science; this framework is provided by philosophical reflection which has its home in the human or cultural sciences—which, in turn, are embedded in a broader cultural context.

b) Culture is important as an antidote to the ongoing process of global standardization and Westernization, that is, as a source of resistance for non-Western societies in the grip of Western hegemony. Culture here has connotations of "counter-culture." The need for resistance to global standardization and homogenization has recently been articulated especially by spokesmen of post-structuralism or postmodernism (from Foucault to Derrida and Lyotard). In the context of development strategies, the stress on counter-cultural resistance can be found in many non-Western writers, from Frantz Fanon to Ashis Nandy. In his Third-World manifesto or "credo" titled "Cultural Frames of Social Transformation," Nandy has underscored the significance of indigenous cultural traditions as a counterpoise to the steamrolling effect of Westernization and global uniformization; resort to such traditions, for him, also constitutes a bulwark to "the modern idea of expertise," that is, to the technocratic rule of scientists, bankers, and development experts. Invoking directly Foucauldian teachings, Tariq Banuri likewise has emphasized the importance of indigenous cultures as vehicles of non-Western societies "to retain control over their own actions and their own environments."¹²

c) Counter-cultural resistance might lead (or is sometimes accused of leading) to parochialism or communal self-enclosure. For this reason it is important to remember a third dimension: the notion of culture as cultivation, self-formation and self-transformation (*Bildung*). By retaining the memory of traditional legacies, societies—both in the North and the South—preserve also the memory of older stories of human development, stories where development means a learning process proceeding through loss and self-abandonment—or rather a process leading to self-discovery

through loss and abandonment. Culture in this sense is crucial both for salvaging the human (or humanistic) meaning of development and for providing a bulwark against cultural isolation or self-enclosure.

10. The last aspect is underscored by an aspect which has always been a central feature of culture as cultivation (*Bildung*): its interpersonal (that is, not self-centered) and dialogical character. This aspect has been eloquently articulated by Charles Taylor in a recent essay on "multiculturalism." As Taylor points out, stories of cultivation or self-formation in pre-modern times were always embedded in shared ways of life which were interpersonal or transpersonal by definition; given the fragility of shared life-forms in modernity, the link of interpersonal mutuality has to be deliberately cultivated today through dialogue—which gives rise to a complex "politics of recognition." In his words: "the genesis of the human mind" (that is, self-formation or *Bildung*) is "not monological, not something each person accomplishes on his or her own, but dialogical. . . We define our identity always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things our significant others want to see in us." What is distinctive of the modern age, he adds, is not the need for mutuality or recognition as such but "the conditions in which the attempt to be recognized can fail. That is why the need is now acknowledged for the first time."¹³ This transpersonal and dialogical character of culture is underscored likewise in the work of Gadamer, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Raimundo Panikkar. What Panikkar calls a "dialogical philosophy" is not the imposition of one point of view or the adoption of a superior standpoint but "the forging of a common universe of discourse in the very encounter" among people (a process which does not necessarily yield consensus or a complete fusion of horizons).¹⁴

11. If the status of culture in global development is as I have tried to outline above, what does this mean for contemporary politics (on both the regional and global levels)? What are the implications of culture for a politics of development? Here are a few things I do not mean to suggest. I do not mean to propose a mere substitution of cultural for social and economic development, and certainly nothing like a simple ban or moratorium on industrialization, urbanization, or the ongoing "informational revolution" (although some curtailments might well be culturally and socially beneficial). Least of all am I proposing a governmentally or state-sponsored culture policy (or *Bildungspolitik*). Culture, as I see it, cannot be transformed into, or reduced to, a political agenda. What I *do* want to endorse is culture as a source of ferment, a source of contestation, and also as a resource for countering the "iron

“cage” portrayed by Max Weber : that is, the relentless process of standardization, homogenization, and global bureaucratization.

12. Cultivation of this resource, in my view, is not (or not in the first instance) the province of the state or state officials—although state officials surely do not need to be uncultured. Rather, such cultivation is primarily the task of the family and civil society—where “civil society” means that dimension of society beyond the confines of narrowly economic market relations, the dimension which is or should be the training ground of “civility.” I have in mind here schools, churches, universities, and the welter of voluntary associations marking a complex modern society. This domain is not strictly governmental, although it is likely to generate political and governmental consequences.

What I want to emphasize is that cultivation of culture cannot or should not mean the mere perpetuation of elite culture and class privilege nor the imposition of standards of conduct from above or from the top down. In line with Taylor’s stress on mutual recognition and dialogue, cultivation must embrace popular culture and must remain an open-ended, non-dogmatic learning process where *Bildung* is neither willfully imposed nor willfully rejected. Such a learning process is akin to what A.C. Graham has called the “disputation of the Tao.” Let me conclude with these lines from one of China’s great sages :

“A sound man’s heart is not shut within itself
 But is open to other people’s hearts :
 I find good people good,
 And I find bad people good
 If I am good enough.”¹⁵

NOTES

1. The treatment of culture as one of the sub-systems of society was particularly prominent in structural functionalism, as articulated chiefly by Talcott Parsons. See especially Parsons. *The Structure of Social Action* (New York : McGraw-Hill, 1937); *The Social System* (Glencoe, IL : Free Press, 1951); *Politics and Social Structure* (New York : Free Press, 1969). Parsonian theory has exerted a strong influence on political development literature; compare, e.g., Lucian W. Pye and Sidney Verba, eds., *Political Culture and Political Development*. (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1965.)

2. In large measure I follow here the view of culture articulated by Clifford Geertz in *The Interpretation of Cultures : Selected Essays*. (New York : Basic Books, 1973), p. 5 : “The concept of culture I espouse . . . is essentially a semiotic

one. Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experiential science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning." Compare also James Clifford and George Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture : The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. (Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press, 1986.)

3. Hans-Georg, Gadamer. *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall New York : Crossroad, 1989. p. 9.

4. Gadamer. *Truth and Method*. p. 10. Compare also Johann Gottfried Herder, *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit*, with Postscript by Gadamer. (Frankfurt-Main : Suhrkamp, 1967); Georg F. W. Hegel. *Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J. B. Ballie. (New York : Harper & Row, 1967.)

5. Compare Hegel. *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Libtree. (New York : Dover, 1956.)

6. For perceptive comments on the two epics in terms of a human-divine formation process (*itinerarium mentis in Deum*) see J. L. Mehta. "My Years at the Center for the Study of World Religions : Some Reflections" (especially the section "Considerations on the Ramayana") and "The Discourse of Violence in the Mahabharata" in Mehta, *Philosophy and Religion : Essays in Interpretation*. (New Delhi : Munshiram Manoharlal, 1990.) pp. 65-82, 254-271.

7. Compare in this context Dallmayr, Fred. "Tradition, Modernity and Confucianism," *Human Studies*, Vol. 16 (1993). pp. 203-211; also Tu Weiming, Milan Hejtmanek, and Alan Wachman, eds., *The Confucian World Observed : A Contemporary Discussion of Confucian Humanism in East Asia*. (Honolulu : East-West Center, 1992.)

8. Lao-Tzu. *The Way of Life*, trans. Witter Bynner. (New York : Perigee Books, 1972.) pp. 45, 58 (Chapters 16, 29).

9. Rostow, W. W. *The Stages of Economic Growth*. (Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press, 1960); Robert T. Holt and John E. Turner. *The Political Basis of Economic Development*. (Princeton : Van Nostrand, 1966.)

10. Compare, e.g., Gabriel A. Almond, and G. Bingham, Powell. *Comparative Politics : A Developmental Approach*. (Boston : Little Brown, 1966); Lucian W. Pye, *Aspects of Political Development* (Boston : Little Brown, 1966); A. F. K. Organski, *The Stages of Political Development* (New York : Knopf, 1965).

11. See Husserl, Edmund. *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr. (Evanston, IL : Northwestern University Press, 1970); compare also Jürgen Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy. (Boston : Beacon Press, 1969.)

12. See Nandy, Ashis. "Cultural Frames for Social Transformation : A Credo,"

in Bhikhu Parekh and Thomas Pantham, eds., *Political Discourse: Explorations in Indian and Western Political Thought*. (New Delhi : Sage, 1987). pp. 238–248; Tariq Banuri, “Modernization and Its Discontents : A Cultural Perspective on the Theories of Development,” in Frédérique Apffel Marglin and Stephen A. Marglin, eds., *Dominating Knowledge : Development, Culture, and Resistance*. (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1990. pp. 73-99.)

13. See Taylor, Charles. “The Politics of Recognition,” in *Multiculturalism and “The Politics of Recognition”* (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1992). pp. 32–35. My only reservation vis-à-vis Taylor is that “recognition” for me is not so much cognitive as rather ethical—ontological in character—which implies a shift from Hegelian dialectics to Heideggerian “letting-be.” To this extent I concur with Krzysztof Ziarek when he writes that Heideggerian *Mitsein* (being-with) implies a mutual openness, but an openness which “does not amount to a disclosure of the content of the other that would simply result in the eventual cognition, thematization, and thus absorption of the other.” Hence, Heidegger’s thought culminates “not in a dialectics of (re)cognition but precisely in proximity to their respective, non-cognizable, otherness.” See his *Inflected Language : Towards a Hermeneutics of Nearness*. (Albany, NY : SUNY Press, 1994.) p. 57.

14. Panikkar, Raimundo. “What Is Comparative Philosophy Comparing?” in Gerald J. Larson and Eliot Deutsch, eds., *Interpreting Across Boundaries : New Essays in Comparative Philosophy*. Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1988. p. 132. See also Tzvetan Todorov, *Mikhail Bakhtin : The Dialogical Principle*, trans. Wlad Godzich. (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1984.)

15. Lao-tzu. *The Way of Life*, p. 76 (Chapter 49). Compare also William Theodore de Bary, *East Asian Civilization : A Dialogue in Five Stages*. (Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press, 1988); and A. C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao : Philosophical Argument in Ancient China*. (LaSalle, IL : Open Court, 1989).

CROSS CULTURAL CONTACTS : ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN MARKETING

Fathi S. Yousef

Symbols and outlets of successful U.S. multinational organizations can be seen in many parts of the world. In Cairo, Egypt and Bangkok, Thailand, in Dammam, Saudi Arabia and Amsterdam, Holland for example, McDonald's hamburgers and/or Sizzler restaurants, Cola drinks and/or Mobil oil products function effectively and their dealers thrive materially. There is a large demand in many foreign countries for a wide variety of products with the "American Mystique."¹

On the other hand, the number of faux pas committed by U.S. organizations in foreign markets is quite high and expensive. For example, when General Motors introduced its Chevrolet "Nova" in Puerto Rico, the automobile dealers there were not very excited. Although "Nova," literally translated, means "star," when spoken, it sounds like "no va" which to a Spanish speaking population means "it doesn't go!" Later General Motors changed the name to "Caribe" and the sales there increased. And, when Ford Motor Company initially introduced its "Pinto" under the same name in Brazil, the name was changed fast to "Corcel" which means "horse" in Portuguese after the company discovered that "pinto" translates in Portuguese slang to "a small male appendage!" According to Ricks,² there are hundreds of blunders by multinational organizations that have not understood their target foreign markets. For instance, a well established U.S. fast-food company conducted site studies in Hamburg, Germany to determine a location with the most potential for an outlet. After management deliberations and meticulous "traffic counts," a site was selected and the land was purchased. The sales however, were disappointingly low. It turned out that though large numbers of people passed by the location, they didn't think of fast-food. They were headed to the next door spot—a major bordello!

This paper addresses aspects of the role of language and culture in marketing decisions.

Foreign Markets

On the domestic level, marketing communication strategies usually focus on the study of customer buying habits and needs. On the global or international level, however, a major emphasis is on the target culture(s) or language(s).

Global products seem to have standardized “looks” and “content” such as Coca Cola and Knorr foods though the ingredient proportions of a product may be modified a little to suit the tastes of different target markets, e.g. Coca Cola in Cairo, Egypt, is a little sweeter than Coca Cola in Los Angeles, California. The intent is to transcend national boundaries and create name and identity recognition for global brands. International marketing, however, is concerned with the needs, motivations, and cultural expectations of the consumers of a target country. A case in point is the targeting of the U.S. small car market by Japanese automobile makers. Actually, according to Terpstra,³ international marketing involves three major dimensions :

1. Marketing across national borders entails different economic, political, and legal constraints that range from currency exchange rates to boycotts and international laws.
2. Marketing within foreign countries is another issue. A U.S. firm that markets a product in Argentina and France faces different competitive forces, distribution patterns, consumer tastes, and promotional approaches in each country. In other words, Argentina and France do not only have market environments different from those in the U.S. but, in a way, every country presents to the international marketer a different milieu with different sets of challenges. And, these are true whether the marketer considers Bolivia and Brazil in Latin America or India and Pakistan in Asia.
3. For a multinational organization, coordination and integration of marketing plans in different environments is an area that should be emphasized. The marketer should try to minimize foreign country adaptation costs and maximize synergy in the larger, global marketing program.

Yet, many U.S. organizations, for example, attempt to bring their products in foreign countries using the same marketing methods adopted in the United States. Though the approach may be considered naive or

uninformed the reasons for it are not difficult to appreciate. They are frequently based on assumptions such as :

- The methods are successful and proven in the home market.
- Management knows the approach and is comfortable with it. It would be the least expensive course of action to adopt.
- A marketing approach that is the same in all countries is economically appealing to a multinational organization.

Of course, in opposition to "home marketing" and "standardized" approaches is the "when in Rome, do as the Romans do" or the "going native" approach. But to phrase the issue in such black and white terms is being too simplistic. Obviously, a foreign product that doesn't stand out in a target country will be unlikely to gain a meaningful market share in that country. A product that is a "little" different from the norm in a culturally inoffensive if not a pleasant manner may be quite appealing and successful in the target country. For the international marketer, the issue is really a delicate balance of the skills and appeal techniques used at home and the cultural values and norms of the target country. From a linguistic perspective, a meaningful example is the highly emotional speech of John F. Kennedy, during the Cold War, to West Berliners in the early 1960's where he said, "I am a jelly donut." He wanted to say, "I am a Berliner," but the addition of the three letter word "*ein*" in his statement, "*Ich bin ein Berliner*," changed the meaning of the words dramatically. According to native speakers of German, it is idiomatically correct to say, "I am a Berliner," the reference is to a "Berliner" or sticky, jelly-filled pastry. John F. Kennedy nevertheless won the hearts of the German people for his support, well-intended, and inoffensive effort to communicate in their language.

Translation Problems

Actually, in foreign markets, faulty translations are frequently the cause of major promotional blunders. Ricks² identifies three fundamental types of translation errors : simple carelessness, multiple-meaning words, and idiomatic usage.

Careless translations which may seem rather humorous to the consumers are usually quite embarrassing to the organization. For example, when Otis Engineering Corporation participated in an exhibit in Moscow, Russia, the company representatives couldn't understand the Russian

snickers and comments that the display received. Later, the corporation was disappointed and embarrassed when it was discovered that a careless translator had identified a sign of "completion equipment" as "equipment for orgasms." And, in a Mexican magazine ad for a U.S. brand shirt instead of "when I used this shirt, I felt good," the translation read, "until I used this shirt, I felt good."

Translations with unintended multiple meaning words could also cause embarrassment to the concerned firms. In Spain, many people had a good laugh when Chrysler Corporation tried its successful U.S. slogan, "Dart is power." The translated version of the message implied that the car drivers needed sexual vigor. Or consider the U.S. toothpaste manufacturer that promised that its customers would be more "interesting" if they used the firm's toothpaste. However, the company's advertising translators did not realize that in some Latin American countries, "interesting" is a euphemism for "pregnant." Translated words could, many times, also refer to the same thing yet convey a different message. For example, "as smooth as a baby's bottom" was incorrectly translated into Japanese "as smooth as a baby's ass," and an Arabic language translator of a U.S. computer manual faced with the term "dummy load," an electronics term, probably checked the dictionary, put the words together, and produced the Arabic term for "false pregnancy."

In marketing campaigns, idioms are frequently most difficult to translate. Pepsi-Cola's advertising slogan, "Come Alive with Pepsi" had to be revised when the German translation became "Come out of the Grave." And, in China, the slogan translated into "Pepsi Brings Your Ancestors back from the Dead." And, in Spain, a U.S. company advertised its brand of hosiery with the claim that those who didn't wear it "wouldn't have a leg to stand on." The translation, however, declared that the wearer would "only have one leg." The following adapted sample from Brisbois⁴ clarifies the point regarding the translation of idioms from English into French and Arabic, for example:

English	French	Arabic
"Nothing to sneeze at."	"Nothing to spit at."	"Nothing to forget."
"A little bird told me so."	"My little finger told me so."	"The bird told me."
"To make a mountain out of a molehill."	"To drown in a glass of water."	"To make a dome out of seed."

Obviously, a multinational organization should invest and ensure the accuracy, appropriateness, and connotations of its translated messages. Mistakes in translation could destroy marketing campaigns, negotiating sessions, or daily company operations. North American expressions such as "the buck stops here," "general rule of thumb," "shotgun approach," "down the tubes," "ball-park figure," which are part and parcel of everyday U.S. conversations are neither universal nor easy to translate. Translation problems, however, are not unavoidable. But, effective input from bilinguals, local talent from the target language and culture, and back translation could prevent many costly blunders.

Closely related to translation dimensions are the issues of product name selection and changes. Ford Motor Company found, for example, that its low cost truck "Fiera" meant "ugly old woman" in Spanish. And, when the "Comet" was introduced in Mexico under the name "Caliente," the company was surprised at the low sales levels until it was realized that "caliente" is slang for a streetwalker. The Sunbeam Corporation also had its problems when it tried to launch its curling iron "Mist-Stick" in Germany. The translated meaning of "mist" in German is actually "excrement." On the other hand, name adaptations have frequently been successful. Wrigley, for instance, in Germany, changed the spelling of its "Spearmint" chewing gum to "Speermint" to make the German pronunciation easier. And, "Maxwell House" also became "Maxwell Kaffee" in Germany. Another case in point is the Egypt Air name selection. The word Egypt in Arabic is "Mīsr." The name, however, frequently sounded like the French word "misere," i.e. misery. Hence, the name was changed to Egypt Air.

Adaptation Needs

A major part of the role of communication in marketing a multinational organization products involves awareness of situational adaptation needs. Foreign marketers are expected by host countries and cultures to adhere to their rules and norms. In Italy, for example, Coca Cola found it was expensive to have the list of ingredients printed on the disposable cap, as the law mandated, rather than on the bottle. A prosecutor in Genoa ordered the seizure of all Coca Cola bottles in Italy. The local courts agreed and the company quickly modified its package. The lesson was not without cost.

In reality, different countries have different product requirements to protect their citizens.

Developing countries, though, despite the need, because of lower literacy and education levels and sophistication in modern-day buying experiences, seem to do a lot less in terms of consumer protection and product regulation. Developed countries, however, seem to regulate the same areas as the U.S. government does, e.g. red dye and sweeteners in food, flammable nightwear, phosphates in detergents, etc.

U.S. products sold abroad, however, need to be adapted to the metric system which is followed by almost all other countries. Metric measurements affect products that range from nuts and bolts to clothing, cosmetics, and pharmaceuticals. Electrical systems also represent another factor in mandatory adaptation needs. For example, while the U.S., parts of Mexico, and parts of Saudi Arabia ARAMO towns operate on 60 cycles and 110-120 volts, most other countries use 50 cycles and 220-240 volts.

More pertinent to this discussion, however, are product adaptations in accordance with appeals, buying habits, and cultural norms in different target markets. The experience of the Campbell Soup Company has been reported and studied at length initially in "The \$30 Million Lesson,"⁵ later in Terpstra³ and Ricks.² Although the company had tested for British consumer interest in its soup and priced the product competitively, sales were low. It turned out the British were used to buying canned soup but not in condensed form. The consumers thought they were paying double the price for the same amount of soup. The company modified its product, added water to the soup, and presented it in the accepted form. The market responded positively and the sales increased.

Kentucky Fried Chicken franchises are another case in point. "Kosher" chicken is served in Israeli outlets and in franchises in countries where the population is predominantly Moslem such as Egypt. Nestle has also developed dozens of blends of its instant coffee, Nescafe, according to different tastes in different countries, e.g. Taster's Choice in the U.S., the Gold Blend in Japan, and so on.⁶

For multinational organizations, product promotion tactics and information methods entail a lot of cultural adaptation needs. Volvo's promotional campaigns are meaningful examples of successful advertising. In the U.S., it is safety, economy, and durability. In France, it is status and leisure. In Germany, it is performance. And, in Mexico, it is price while in Venezuela, it is quality.² On the other hand, in Brazil, a promotional campaign mounted by a large U.S. food enterprise created the exact opposite of what the company wanted. Brazil, which has a huge supply of raw materials for fruit-flavored drinks, is one of the largest markets for bottled beverages.

The U.S. firm was already selling an inexpensive powdered mix in that market. The company saw an opportunity to introduce its leading U.S. brand and increase mix sales. The marketing strategy intended to create a strong identification of the product with the U.S. space program while stressing a tasty orange flavor rich in vitamin C. To the Brazilians, however, the mission of the astronauts seemed remote from everyday life. The approach was unsuccessful.

The Brazilians with available and abundant varieties of fresh fruits could not accept the implications that the astronauts found the convenience product especially appealing. The assumption was the astronauts only drank it because nothing else was available in outer space, i.e. the product was associated with the ultimate in artificiality. The promotion campaign resulted in the exact opposite of its desired effect.⁷

The area of public behavior is another aspect of the cultural dimension of information and promotional messages. Pictures or commercials that show a male executive relaxing with his feet up on his desk facing the audience are likely to elicit negative reactions, regardless of what the message is in the Middle East or the Far East.^{8,9}

Cultural appeals also entail awareness of the aesthetic dimension in the target area. A U.S. born and raised colleague, married to a Middle Easterner, told this writer that at her wedding in the U.S., few years ago, she met her sister-in-law for the first time. She was college educated and spoke English fluently. Seven years later, the colleague was on a visit to the Middle East with her husband and two young children. At her in-laws, she didn't initially feel flattered when her sister-in-law told her that she looked quite womanly and attractive since she put on some weight! Later on, she realized that the intent was to compliment her and that the U.S. female ideal of a skinny, hard body is not universal. The message was reinforced recently by one of this writer's, U.S. born and raised, former students. While on a short business trip in Moscow, Russia, she went to visit a friend's family that she had met two summers earlier when she was studying Russian there. After greeting her, her friend's mother told her that she gained a few pounds and looked healthier!

Obviously, products whose promotional messages emphasize appetite suppression and developing and maintaining skinny bodies need to focus on nutritional needs and health factors in markets where a high premium is not placed on dieting and skinniness. The messages also have to be modified from the hard sell, e.g. buy because it is more effective or because it tastes better to effective target market approaches. The British, for example, are embarrassed by the direct approach and prefer humor while

the French prefer the elegant, the abstract, and the surrealistic.¹⁰

In international marketing approaches, religious variables, objects, and colors are also important cultural dimensions that should be considered in information processing and message development. In India, for example, where the cow is a sacred animal, pictures or commercials for refrigerators or stoves with a side of beef in the center, are unlikely to be received favorably.

The same holds true about bacon and ham in Jewish and Moslem communities. Judaism and Islam forbid eating such meats. By the same token, chrysanthemums in Belgium and clocks in China are objects with negative connotations. They evoke images of death.¹¹ The colors black and white also illustrate the point. In the Middle East, in the U.S., and in many parts of Europe, black signifies death or mourning. In many Asian countries, however, white represents death.

Cultural linguistic nuances among native speakers of the same language should also be considered. For example, while "to table a motion" in the U.S. means to avoid discussing it, the phrase means the exact opposite to the British. And, the U.S. "napkin" is a "diaper" to the British and a session that "bombs" in the U.S. means the exact opposite to the British, i.e. it's a "great success." Again, to feel "full" after a meal in the U.S. implies being "drunk" to the Australian and to say, "I'm stuffed" after a meal in the U.S. indicates involvement in sexual intercourse in Australia and being "pregnant" to the native speakers of English in South Africa.¹²

Conclusion

The role of language and culture in marketing decisions entails complex issues with multifaceted dimensions. Organizations need to prepare and tailor their programs with an eye on different cultural norms and dictates that vary in different cultures and geographic fields of operations.¹³ In business, "The bottom line is often considered to be the only measurement. However, without doing the homework and preparation on the top lines, and utilizing all the faculties and expertise available to you, there will be no bottom line."¹⁴

In sum, effective development of meaningful marketing programs in multinational organizations involves awareness and study of several interdependent variables. These range from the historical and cultural background of the target market to the language, norms, and values of its present population.^{15,16}

NOTES

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THE CONCEPT OF NATURE IN CROSS-CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PERSPECTIVE

Gerhold K. Becker

For quite some time now, Taoist shares on the intellectual stock market have fared much better than their Western counterparts. Whereas the Dow-Jones Index of the humanities continues to be bearish and to suffer from negative growth rates, the interest in trade with Eastern ideas has been unabatedly strong. Yet, who should have thought that such strong demand would translate into hefty prices, was proven wrong. Eastern ideas, so it seems, come rather cheaply. Everybody can afford them. The promises for wholesalers therefore lie in mass production and inexpensive paperbacks. The 91/92 edition of Bowker's Books in Print lists some fifty titles beginning with "The Tao of...", and the range of books with vested interest in Taoism spans the serious and the not so serious. "The Tao of Physics" stands besides "The Tao of Islam", "The Tao of Leadership" competes with the "Tao of Balanced Diet" and the "Tao of Nutrition", "The Tao of Peace" seems somewhat in conflict with the "Tao of Power." There is a "Tao of Art", and a "Tao of Baseball", a "Tao of Programming", and a "Tao of Psychology", a "Tao of Love and Sex" and a "Tao of Sailing", of "Management", "Science", "Relationships", "Time", "Objects", even "of Mao Tse-Tung." And just in case you wondered about my opening remarks, you may by now have guessed that there exists a book entitled: "The Tao Jones Average. A Guide to Brained Investing" (Penguin 1984)!

There is certainly method in this wholesale enterprise. In the following, I would like to expand on just three distinct, yet closely related aspects.¹ The gist of the following considerations is to recommend a certain amount of healthy scepticism about the chances for successfully importing alternative resources for dealing with our environmental crisis. Instead, it will be argued to use alternative world-views mainly as heuristic devices for the re-evaluation of the West's ideological history and for the re-discovery of its own rich cultural heritage.²

I

One of the reasons for the fascination Eastern ideas currently command in the West is that they seem to give unexpected credence to intellectual undercurrents off the Western mainstream development. In its strongest version this is taken to be an undisputable indication for the intellectual unity of humankind. In its weaker version it is seen as the rehabilitation of the down-trodden by the world-spirit which brings back to the fold all that was once lost. It comes as no surprise then that the mere possibility of such vindication should have propelled the search for commonalities to new heights. The discovery of certain parallels between assumptions underlying the new (quantum) physics and streams in Eastern mysticism has been interpreted as their being "in perfect harmony."³ This in turn has been heralded as the advance of a new age of holistic thought and a veritable step forward in human evolution. Instead of having to replace the Western model entirely by an Eastern alternative, at least some of its cargo could be salvaged from the wreckage and used as valuable building material in the forthcoming reconstruction. What at first glance looked rather alien and exotic, now turns out to be part of our own heritage which we had been disowned undeservedly, without even taking note of it.

The answer may indeed be sought in that direction. Yet, it will be suggested that instead of losing sight of cultural differences in a new unitarian mood of all-embracing intellectual brotherhood, the real service the Eastern world could render to the West might be to help us confront our own tradition and to take stock.

In recent years a remarkable shift has taken place from the wholesale offer of something that is supposed to work like an intellectual miracle drug towards an analysis of the current Western predicament and its possible causes. This shift has also benefitted more sober reflection on Eastern, and particularly on Chinese traditions of thought, which largely serve as a litmus-test for our contemporary crisis.

Careful analysis revealed not only the intricacies between life style and the ubiquitous ecological catastrophe; it also helped us to better understand the ideological roots of both. There is broad agreement that the devastation of nature is not only the by-product of the technological "Triumph of the West" (alluding to the title of the well-known BBC series), but also of certain underlying assumptions which shaped the Western history of thought.

I suppress the temptation to rehearse once again the details of the

environmental destruction, since we are all too familiar with them. Those lists are very depressing anyway, and read like a coroner's report delivered shortly *before* the patient's exitus. What needs, however, to be considered is the link between environmental and intellectual pollution. For, obviously the Western conquest of nature is a Janus-headed achievement which displays a rational and a moral side. Whereas Western rationality laid the ideological foundations for the evolution of modern technologies, Western morality allowed for their unrestricted use in the service of nature's exploitation.

Human ingenuity seems to know no boundaries in manipulating nature and changing her course. Whereas the most radical development may lie in the rapidly advancing field of biotechnology, the hazardous side-effects of our technological power are clearly visible everywhere. Yet, Western triumph turns out to be a Pyrrhic victory. We are now presented the bill for all those achievements. Shocked about the unexpectedly high price we are asked to pay, we begin to reconsider, in accordance with the rules of good house-keeping, whether we really need all that we had ordered quite some time ago.

In search of the culprit for the environmental disaster the circles were drawn ever wider over the years. At the early stages, it was just the industry which was being blamed along with the greedy entrepreneurs and capitalist exploiters of nature. Instead of taking the critique to heart, dismantling their plants and cleaning up the environment, they were quick in passing the buck on to the consumers, i.e. all of us, whom they were supposedly serving and who, after all, had placed such strong demands for their products. The ensuing examination of conscience, therefore, soon focused on the life styles and world views dear to us, and on strategies for a possible exoneration in the face of their disastrous side-effects on the environment. This shift of attention not only cast doubt on many of the underlying assumptions of the Western way of life which up to now had been taken for granted, but also stirred up the debate about the desirability of this way of life, as a whole.

It is in this context that I would like to draw on a recent publication of the German philosopher and cultural critic Peter Sloterdijk. In his book provocatively entitled *Eurotaoism*, Sloterdijk attempts a critical theory of the West which utilizes Taoism in a most peculiar fashion.⁴ Instead of importing specific Taoist ideas as conceptual resources, Taoism is used as a heuristic device for a critical analysis of the West.

Its focus is on what Sloterdijk calls the "kinetic reality of modernity" (27). Mobility and motion are the all-pervasive principles which determine

the Western paradigm. In ontological terminology, Sloterdijk characterizes modernity as "pure being-towards-movement"(37). Modern life is essentially the mobilization of all possible resources which in turn merely accelerate the speed of an ultimately self-destructive process whose only *raison-d'être* is to be in motion, to proceed, to gain speed, and to bring everything under its spell. This process, paradigmatically represented in the automobile and ever-moving escalators, makes reality become less and less real, reducing it to that which has not yet been mobilized. Sloterdijk quotes from Novalis' essay "Christianity or Europe"(1799) the famous metaphor of the mill which mills itself ("die Mühle, die sich selber mahlt"). In the mobilization of nature through technology and the mobilization of society through politics, Sloterdijk is convinced that Novalis' prophecy has come true.

Such analysis is inspired by the contrasting Taoist "ontology" of pure being-there. Sloterdijk suggests that Taoism may provide a counterbalance through its emphasis of in-active presence. From within the Western tradition, only Heidegger's philosophy, and particularly his concept of composure ("Gelassenheit"), seems to point in a similar direction.

Therefore, several farewells are due. The first goes to the modern philosophy of history, and our habit to construe teleologies into the future. For Sloterdijk, the horizon of the future is closed. The second farewell must be bid to the philosophy of subjectivity. Finally we are invited to say good-bye to all forms of modern activism. An early Western example of the required new attitude of skeptical inactivity Sloterdijk sees embodied in Diogenes of Sinope, whose ridicule of Plato's ideas pointed out the ancient Greek alternative to the high-spirited metaphysics of restless ascent.

The critique attempts to emulate ancient Christian theology without any theological aspirations. Within this critical frame of reference, Taoism plays very much the same functional role as the Christian God used to play within the theological setting. Thus an alternative standard becomes available by which even one's most intimate desires could be judged. "Eurotaoism" represents a form of critique which aims at the transformation of the critical potential of theology into its non-theological and purely immanent representation. It enables us to simultaneously acknowledge that modernity is at the root of our own desires and not something accidentally super-imposed on us, and that modernity ought to be subjected to rigid criticism.

Taoism, on this reading, serves as a catalyst for the appraisal of modernity and is, with the possible exception of Heidegger's later

philosophy, the only catalyst. Neither Christianity, nor any sort of neo-paganism on the basis of the relics of European non-Christian religions, nor traditional metaphysics could be entrusted with this role. Their ontological, and particularly their moral resources are depleted and their critical potential has evaporated in face of the overpowering kinetic drive of modernity. Yet, unless its internal potential for mobilization can be reduced, modernity left to itself will gain more and more speed and is heading for the big crash.

What Sloterdijk suggests is not the utilization of certain isolated conceptual resources in the process of Western revitalization; his sarcasm with regard to the current euphoria for Eastern ideas in the West is quite explicit. Instead, he relates the Western fascination with the East, stretching all the way from the early modern period to the present, to the enthusiasm the Renaissance once developed for ancient Greece. In both instances by-gone ideas are being called upon to provide new standards for an age beset with doubts about its own future. A "renaissance" is the representation of an ancient culture under a new sign: in the shadow of the authority of a classical culture the renaissance liberates the present from itself and enables it to evolve towards an entirely new and unprecedented future. That is to say, the fertility of a renaissance always depends, to a large extent, on a misunderstanding of the ancient culture to which it relates itself. Inasmuch as the West spins forth its dream of a submerged culture and conjures up the image of the Classical Antiquity of the East as the cultural standard of contemporary life, it in fact searches in an alien past for possibilities of its own future. The "East" then is neither simply Taoism, nor any specific philosophy of Confucianist, Buddhist, or Hinduist provenance. It is not the contemporary Asian way of life either, which has long fallen prey to the West. Instead, it could be defined as "the spirit of the ancient as such", set over against the spirit of modernity. For Sloterdijk, the smallest common denominator of the various currents of ancient Asian thought is its meaning of being, which he defines as "being-towards-stillness", and thus sees in direct opposition to the Western concept of being-towards-motion.

Sloterdijk's approach to the East forms an integral part of his post-modernist analysis. In his interpretation, "Taoism" and Asian thought as a whole can exert their power over the West not because they are considered true and the Western paradigm false. Truth and falsity are both categories within a teleology of history which no longer exists. Instead, Asian Antiquity is just an alternative background against which the colors of Western modernity oscillate. The disintegration of the concept

of nature in the ecological crisis is part of the Western syndrome. Change cannot be expected from imported ideological constructs, but only from within. In Solterdijk's opinion conservationism and environmental activism will, at best, provide a cure of the symptoms. Yet, what is required is the fundamental change of the Western paradigm. The function of the "East", then, is to confront the West with a powerful, albeit lost alternative, which could stimulate the critical analysis out of which the regeneration of the West might arise.

II

There is, however, another aspect of the Western fascination for the East in general and Taoism in particular. It has to do with the simple fact that in the West excitingly novel ideas, particularly those with regard to our relation to nature, are currently in short supply. Import therefore appears to be the answer for reviving a sluggish economy and, as a much desired side-effect, providing better employment prospects for philosophical manufacturers.

However, this import-export business might not come without risks and could have some dark sides, as well. For Gerald James Larson⁵ it smacks too much of colonialism and is just one more attempt in economic exploitation, this time on the level of intellectual goods.

Furthermore, the danger looms large that instead of perceiving the true picture of the Eastern world we might project expectations onto it which reflect only our intellectual despair in the face of the staggering problems we can no longer ignore. Sometimes, one cannot help wondering whether, even in serious scholarship, the East might not be painted too neatly in colors exactly opposite those that we have come to associate with the West. In the West, we are told, we have either/or dichotomies, barren dualism⁶, and "a host of disjunctive concepts": "God and the world, being and not being, subject and object, mind and body, reality and appearance, good and evil, knowledge and ignorance";⁷ the logic of transcendence is reflected in a rigid hierarchical order and based on abstract rationality unable to grasp the intricate interrelatedness of being.

In the East, however, are assembled all the goodies we are lacking in our current predicament: polar complementarity, pure immanence, and "not a dichotomy between the individual and culture or society" nor between part and whole. Instead there is nothing but a "metaphysics of presence, wholeness, and totality, in which everything exists as part of Ultimate Reality, equal in degrees of being and reality, and fundamentally

interrelated as in the luminous image of Indra's net."⁸

Although, I do not wish to dispute the heuristic value of characterizations such as these, I venture to suggest that, at least as far as "the West's" conceptualization of nature is concerned, they might provide only a partial account and a somewhat biased interpretation of the wealth of ideas generated over the centuries.

At first glance though it may appear that along the lines of a teleology of history which identified its Western variety with history as such, and history with the march of the world spirit through its various formations, there was no alternative worth noticing. The ideologies of capitalist liberalism as well as marxist authoritarianism invariably adhered to the same historic agenda of the subordination of nature and the installation of man as master and possessor of the world (*dominus et possessor mundi*). Originally coined by Hugo of St. Victor, this Cartesian formula should become the battle cry of the modern battalions of any camp in their conquest of the earth.

The genealogy of this programme was traced further back, and its true origin identified in the Judaeo-Christian theology of creation. It has been claimed that the despotic anthropocentrism of this theology set free the teleology which inevitably led to the subjugation of nature and to persuasive patterns of its rational justification.

In the meantime, the discussion has widened again and concentrated on the Greek roots of the Western triumph. Baird Callicott and Roger Ames have argued "that the Greco-Roman legacy, which is less visible to lay persons than to philosophers, has more powerfully informed the prevailing assumptions and premises of modern Western thought than distinctively Judeo-Christian ideas."⁹ They focus on a dualistic world-view which "essentially and morally segregated" (*ibid.*) human beings from nature. This development reached its climax in the natural philosophy of atomism as well as in the metaphysics of Plato whose transcendental principles are held accountable for the degradation of physical and human nature alike.¹⁰

Predictably, these interpretations did not go unchallenged. In particular, the attempt to put all the blame on the Judaeo-Christian tradition has been vigorously rejected in a number of scholarly studies which offered numerous counter-examples of a more positive Christian attitude towards nature.¹¹

At this point, it should be remembered that in Western philosophy the very concept of nature has always served two purposes :

Firstly, it attempted to conceptualize the "essence" of human beings as

humans, and thus to bring out their true identity in distinction to any other animal. Nature provides the backdrop against which human beings gain theoretical "visibility." In this regard, the concept of nature is determined by its negative relationship to human beings and human practice. Nature then is contrasted with concepts such as the following: "physis" versus "nomos": that is law and conventions; then, "physis" versus "techne": that is everything related to human production which up to the eighteenth century included artistic production as well. Whereas these pairs are most characteristic of classical Greek philosophy, the distinction between the "natural" on the one hand and the "artificial", or "depraved" on the other, links the cynical and stoic tradition with the moral world of Christian thought.¹² The distinction between "natural" in the sense of "original" and "civilized", or "cultural" is best associated with Rousseau but can be traced to Plato's *Politikos*. Lastly, the distinction between "external" and "internal" which is most influential in the development of modern thought needs to be recalled as well in this context. As in Kant's philosophy, this distinction can unfold into that which is external and alien to me in contrast to my intimate and familiar own internal nature (soul). From here it is only a small step to define nature as the sum total of the objects before the external sense.

Secondly, and in contrast to that, the concept of nature was used to relate human beings to that all-embracing entity out of which they grew and which is the presupposed "given" of any human activity. Thus nature describes also the horizon within which empirical experience is made possible. That is to say, human beings simultaneously are distinct from nature and part of nature. This gives the Western concept of nature a veritable complementary ring which needs to be recalled, particularly at times when only the dualistic overtones appear to be remembered. Walter O'Briant has succinctly designated these two views as "'man apart from nature' and 'man a part of nature'." He concedes though that these views "have not always been explicitly formulated or even clearly distinguished from one another", since they were intimately intertwined.¹³

Yet, it could be argued that they can be traced almost everywhere in the history of Western philosophy, and that the specific tension between these complementary views provided the fertile soil for quite a few of the systems which are most characteristic for Western metaphysics. When Aristotle draws on the famous sophistic distinction between physis and nomos which implied the incommensurability of nature and human practice, he locates human beings firmly in both: nature and society. In his view, humans are by their very nature political beings, that is to say,

they can realize their natural potential only in human social practice. The Aristotelian distinction between "nature" and "man" (anthropos : Mensch) which was utilized to determine the concept of nature, is not an antinomic but a complementary relationship. Nature is what is not a result of human efforts but rests in itself. Yet, humans can act only on the condition of nature providing the means, and because human action follows nature's prescript.¹⁴

The Stoic distinction between logos and kosmos draws on similar ideas which serve as epistemic keys to their concept of nature. Zenon's book *On the Nature of Man* defines as the ultimate goal of life "homologoumenos zeh", to live in accordance, in harmony. Yet, since in stoic thought physis and logos are identical, this formula could be interpreted as "to live in harmony with nature" (*homologoumenos te physei zeh*) : life in accordance with nature is by itself life in accordance with reason—and vice versa.

This tension in the Western concept of nature can explain, at least to some extent, the long sequence of alternating dualistic and holistic systematizations. Since the latter is not always adequately reflected in the contemporary debate on nature, it is worth recalling that they basically comprise two different yet closely related conceptualizations : one is the anima-mundi theme, the other pantheism and its variations. Both are clearly directed against any attempt to dissociate nature and the various forms of life it bears. An intimate understanding of natural phenomena seemed to preclude dualist interpretations and to suggest instead that nature alone is the source of life, teleology, and even of spiritual forces. Pantheism, in contrast, could be seen as the metaphysical radicalization of the anima-mundi doctrine and the final abolition of any distinction between creation and creator, nature and God, immanence and transcendence.

The idea of the world of nature as a living being dates back to the oldest strands of Greek mythology, and is represented by earth goddesses such as Kore, Cybele, Ishtar, Isis and Demeter. Particularly influential was Plato's myth of the *Timaeus* which describes how the demiurgos set "soul in the midst (of the universe) and spread her through all its body and even wrapped the body around with her from without" (*Timaeus* 34b). The doctrine of the world-soul obtains definite and systematic philosophical form in Plotinus' *Enneads*. Christian writers struggled with the idea by trying various ways to reconcile it with orthodox theology. Whereas Origen called the world "some huge and immense animal, which is kept together by the power and reason of God as by one soul", a medieval theologian, William of Conches, regarded the world-soul as a natural force

which he thinks is the Holy Spirit Himself.¹⁵ Renaissance philosophers drew on the conception of the world-soul to grasp the unity of nature and the pervasiveness of spiritual force. In the writings and engravings of Robert Fludd (1574–1637), many of these ideas, for the last time, were translated into powerful images and metaphors. Explaining one of his most comprehensive cosmic schemata *Integrae Naturae Speculum Artisque Imago* (*The Mirror of the Whole of Nature and the Image of Art*) Fludd writes of Nature depicted as a beautiful virgin: “She is not a goddess, but the proximate minister of God, at whose behest she governs the subcelestial worlds. In the picture she is joined to God by a chain.¹⁶ She is the Soul of the World (anima—mundi), or the Invisible Fire of Heraclitus and Zoroaster. It is she who turns the sphere of the stars and disposes the planetary influences to the elemental realms, nourishing all creatures from her bosom.”¹⁷

The Western concept of nature, tracked down in all its facets, is not monolithic after all. Instead, it reveals a bewildering variety of ideas which account for inanimate things as well as for animate. It is entrenched in systems as different as Eleatic monism (Xenophanes, Parmenides), the stoic cosmology of the world-soul and its revival in Renaissance thought (Ficino, Telesio), and the deification of nature in Pliny and Seneca. Its pantheistic sideline begins to show in later medieval and Renaissance¹⁸ thought, in the school of Chartres, in Amalrich of Bene, and in Lorenzo Valla (who maintains that “nature is the same as God or almost the same”¹⁹). Finally, it gains notoriety with Giordano Bruno’s “natura est Deus in rebus”, Spinoza’s “deus sive natura”, Shaftesbury’s nature mysticism, d’Holbach’s materialism which bears all the hallmarks of a most paradoxical “atheistic pantheism”²⁰, Hegel’s pan-entheistic idealism, and Scheler’s later philosophy of God’s self-development in and through nature.

On this account, it seems misleading to suggest that the Western history of thought can be found adequately represented only on the dualistic track. On the contrary, it could be argued that Western philosophy is the immensely rich product of complementary and interacting systems whose borderline cases are paradigmatically represented in dualistic naturalism and holistic pantheism. Dualism, then, is shaped just as much by its opposition to the more colorful aspects of pantheistic thought which defy rationalization, as pantheism is by its naturalistic and dualistic opponents. The consequence is that the Western concept of nature is much richer than is usually assumed. It is most interesting to see that stoic conceptualizations of the world-soul were revived by Cambridge Platonist Henry More at a time when the preferred view in natural science was that

of nature as dead matter and of particles moving in the infinite void. Yet, as the example of Robert Boyle shows, the concept of nature around which the natural sciences revolved was less straightforward than might be expected. In his "Free Inquiry into the Vulgarly Received Notion of Nature" (1686) Boyle lists eight different significations comprising all levels of being from the finite to the infinite.²¹ The complaints about the complexity as well as the vagueness and ambiguity of the concept of nature—which were commonplace as late as in the eighteenth century²²—suggest that the early success of the natural sciences was overshadowed by the crisis of their most fundamental concept.

In conclusion, the assumption can be made that, as far as the concept of nature is concerned, the Western tradition is conceptually sufficiently rich to provide the needed resources which might hold the promise of changing our intellectual attitude towards the ecological crisis.

III

The enthusiastic response by many Western intellectuals to the lure of the East has also a trivial side. As with fashion, Western customers simply like variety. People have begun to realize that the numerous hues of grey in which the concept of Western rationality has been wrapped up for so long are no substitutes for more striking colors. Most of those titles referred to above seem to draw on a widespread feeling in the West that something is wrong with our way of life, and that it needs at least some infusion of Eastern ideas for its revival. It almost amounts to a platitude to point out that there is a fairly universal disenchantment hovering over Western achievements, casting doubt on the overall significance of many of those once well cherished gadgets of the technological age.

Such uneasiness, however, remains usually as vague as its appeal to Eastern mysticism from which the cure is expected for our Western woes. The various topics to be put on the intellectual agenda, such as the broadening of consciousness, deepening of feelings, the renewing of our bonds to nature and advocating the unity of all, were certainly appealing enough to bring about the New Age Movement. Yet, their persuasiveness can largely be attributed to their triviality: Who in the world would not want to share those good—provided they could be obtained without completely severing the ties to the more agreeable sides of modern life? The problem seems to be that many new movements draw their strength from their insistence on being different, that is to say from a deliberate

neglect of developing non-confrontational means of communication through which their new insights could be mediated with the intuitions on which the Western way of life—whatever it may be in detail—was once grounded.

Instead of simply promoting wholesale conversion and a sort of Kierkegaardian leap into the envisaged lap of higher consciousness, the real task seems to lie elsewhere. In contrast to many end-of-philosophy “philosophers” and advocates of post-modernism, I would argue with Jürgen Habermas that the unfinished project of modernity deserves another chance before it is abandoned. The current trend towards value relativism and cultural isolationism based on ethnic differences is a frightening perspective for everyone who believes that one of the main tasks of practical philosophy is its contribution towards safeguarding the dignity and inviolability of the human person. Whether this should be done along Kantian lines of thought, as Habermas and Apel suggest, or whether it needs refuelling from alternative sources, is not as important as the task to design the blueprint for a consensus-oriented rational discourse in which all beings of goodwill can participate with equal chance of being heard. In this process, comparative philosophy could provide invaluable assistance by clearly setting the focus on uncovering the cognitive deep structure of alternate world-views and by working towards the establishment of an universal frame of reference within which the eventual convergence of views could be comprehensibly advocated and realistically expected.

The immense difficulties this project has to face are indeed daunting. Whether Eastern, and particularly Chinese philosophy is “of the same orientation as Western philosophy” is always been controversial and still is.²³ This debate can certainly not be decided with reference to the fact that classical Chinese does not provide an equivalent for the term “philosophy.” The introduction of the term to Chinese thinking and the confusion resulting from its application to Chinese sources could ultimately lead to a broadening of the original concept of philosophy comprising also the specific Chinese “love of wisdom.”

In recent years, great steps have been taken to uncover the deep and rigid cognitive structure under the thick layers of the frequently aphoristic, anecdotal, or mystical language of the Chinese classics. Chad Hansen has claimed that it is not Chinese philosophy which is obscure but our own way of thinking which is inherently twisted and therefore incapable of grasping the full meaning of Chinese ideas. “It is as if we were attempting to examine a biological specimen but insisted upon a self-distorting lens

for our microscope."²⁴ Hansen argues that Chinese, and particularly Taoist, thought is neither "philosophy" in the Western sense, nor simply anti-rational mysticism. "In the abstract, we have no reason to expect more similarity between Chinese and Western philosophy than we have to expect similarity between Chinese music and Western music." Its true significance should therefore neither be sought within a theoretical framework which Chinese thinking, for good measure, never developed, nor in its mystical overtones however appealing they might be to the disenchanting Westerner. Instead, Hansen offers a "unified theory" based on an alternative (non-Western) theory of language. His unified theory of ancient Chinese, and above all, Taoist thought is not only able to do justice to "a conceptual content drastically different from that of Western thought", but provides also a coherent, intelligible, and after all, truly fascinating alternative which is in no need of obscurantism.²⁵

Although this debate is far from being settled, there are good reasons for arguing that, as far as practical life is concerned, Chinese thought is moved by the same fundamental questions about "how one should live" as its Western counterpart. In Hansen's interpretation, it is the Chinese view of language serving practical not theoretical and descriptive purposes which constitutes the fundamental difference from the Western approach. Morality rather than cosmological concepts of nature seems to provide a common ground where Eastern and Western traditions could meet and fruitfully interact. The challenge of moral practice within the confines of finite human life is universal. It is certainly remarkable that on the level of formal morality East and West converge in their answers. We should live, we are told, so as to grant to everybody what we grant ourselves. This answer, which offers the prospect of a "good" life in the full sense of the term, has decisively shaped the Chinese (Confucian)²⁶ as well as the Christian²⁷ tradition, and lies at the heart of the moral philosophy of Kant.

The dialogue, then, between East and West should be carried forward neither with over-expectations nor with timidity but in the sober mood of individuals frightened by the same bleak outlook and encouraged by a vision of morality which can embrace even dramatically different theoretical positions.

NOTES

1. I am grateful for helpful comments on the earlier version of this paper by Walter Benesch, Craig Ihara, and Nathan Thierney.

2. The alternative idea of nature in Taoism seems more appealing to the

West than to contemporary China; it did certainly not prevent China (and Japan) from facing largely the same environmental problems as the West. As Holmes Rolston III pointed out : “ a test of the power of Eastern thought will be to see how environmental problems are resolved in industrialized Eastern nations—Japan or Taiwan for example”. Holmes Rolston III, *Can the East help the West to value nature?*” In *Philosophy East and West*, 37 (1987), pp. 172–190, p. 189. If today’s China and Hong Kong should be subjected to this test, the case were certainly lost. See : Lester Ross, *Environmental Policy in China*. Indiana University Press : Bloomington and Indiana, 1988. Ross identifies greed, profligacy, and individualism as the major factors of China’s environmental degradation. An example for dissenting voices in classical Chinese thought is the Hsnn Tzu which strongly advocates the idea of controlling nature : “You glorify Nature and meditate on her,/ Why not domesticate her and regulate her?” You obey Nature and sing her praises,/ Why no control her and use it? . . . You depend on things, marvel at them,/ Why not unfold your abilities and transform them?”. According to Vincent Shen, in texts like these the Hsnn Tzu provided an “ideological framework” that “is favorable for the development of science and technology in the modern sense : an attitude of domination over nature by seizing her causal regularities and her transformation by technological process.” Vincent Shen, “Confucianism, Science and Technology—A Philosophical Evaluation.” In *Ching Feng*. 32 1989. pp. 120–137. And Wing Tsit Chan deplors “that this did not lead to a development of natural science” in ancient China! See : Wing–Tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*. Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1973, p. 122. (Ch. 17 : On Nature, pp. 116–124).

3. Capra, Fritjof. *The Tao of Physics*. (Third edition) Harper Collins Publ. : London, 1992, p. 335. Capra follows Joseph Needham’s suggestion of a similarity between Chinese thought and modern (quantum) physics; see Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1954 ff.

4. Sloterdijk, Peter. *Eurotaoismus. Zur Kritik der politischen Kinetik*. Suhrkamp Verlag : Frankfurt, 1989. (In the following, all pages numbers refer to this edition).

5. Larson, Gerald James. “‘Conceptual resources’ in South Asia for ‘environmental ethics’ or The fly is still alive and well in the bottle”. In *Philosophy East and West*, 37 1987. pp. 150–159, p. 152.

6. Benjamin Schwartz has rejected as simplistic the attempt to identify Western philosophy of the mind with dualism : “The fact is that the radically paradoxical dualism of the mind/body as the ‘ghost in the machine’ is post-Cartesian in the West and is as foreign to much Western thought as it may be to China. It can certainly not be found in ancient Hebrew thought or in pre-philosophic Greek literature. The tendency to link affective-mental traits with

specific organs of the body is as prevalent in this thought as in ancient China": Benjamin Schwartz in his review of A. C. Graham's *A Review of Disputers of the Tao: Philosophic Argument in Ancient China* (Open Court Publ. Co.: La Salle, Ill., 1988), In *Philosophy East and West*, 42 1992. pp. 3-15, p. 8.

7. Hall, David L. and Ames, Roger T. *Thinking Through Confucius*. SUNY Press: Albany, New York, 1987. p.17.

8. Olds, Linda E. "Chinese Metaphors of Interrelatedness: Re-Imaging Body, Nature, and the Feminine." In *Contemporary Philosophy*, 13, 8 1991. pp. 16-22, p. 21.

9. Callicott, J. Baird. and Ames, Roger T. "Introduction: The Asian Traditions as a Conceptual Resource for Environmental Philosophy". In J. Baird Callicott and Roger T. Ames, eds. *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*. SUNY Press: Albany, 1989. pp. 1-21, p. 5.

10. Callicott, J. Baird. "Traditional American Indian and Traditional Western European Attitudes Towards Nature: An Overview". In Robert Elliot and Arran Gare, eds. *Environmental Philosophy*. Open University Press: Milton Keynes, 1983. pp. 231-259, attributes the Western alienation from nature and its exploitation largely to the "Pythagorean/Platonic concept of the soul as immortal and other-worldly, essentially foreign to the hostile physical world", which was revived by Descartes and popularized in Pauline Christianity (p. 236). Hall, David L. "On seeking a change of environment: A quasi-Taoist proposal". In *Philosophy East and West*, 37 1987). pp. 160-171, construes a link between the classical Western attempts to ground morality in either reason, or the passions, or the will and the Platonic-Aristotelian tripartite structure of the psyche (p. 162). He contrasts this anthropocentric concept of morality which he finds incapable to deal with the new environmental problems (p. 164) with a Taoist approach which is focused on "aesthetic ordering" instead of rational ordering (p. 166). Cf. Benjamin Schwartz' (loc.cit.) critical comments on similar interpretations.

11. See in particular: Attfield, Robin. *The Ethics of Environmental Concern*. Blackwell: Oxford, 1982. Attfield, Robin. "Western Traditions and Environmental Ethics." In Robert Elliot and Arran Gare, eds. *Environmental Philosophy*. Open University Press: Milton Keynes, 1983. pp. 201-229. Robin Attfield, "Christian Attitudes to Nature", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 44 1983. Further: H. Paul Santmire, *The Travail of Nature*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985.

12. See: St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 1: 26: "they exchanged the natural use for what is against nature".

13. O'Briant, Walter H. "Man, Nature, and the History of Philosophy". In

William Blackstone, ed., *Philosophy and Environmental Crisis*. Athens : University of Georgia Press, 1974. pp. 79–89, p. 79.

14. For an in-depth discussion of this aspect, see : Robert Spaemann, "Natur". In *Philosophische Essays*. Reclam Verlag : Stuttgart, 1983. pp. 19–40.

15. Quotations in: Flora I. Mackinnon, *Philosophical Writings of Henry More*. New York : Oxford University Press , 1925. p. 303.

16. A reference to Homer's catena aurea which descends through all the hierarchy of existence.

17. Quoted from : Godwin, Joscelyn. *Robert Fludd. Hermetic philosopher and surveyor of two worlds*. London : Thames & Hudson, 1979. p. 22.

18. See : Ernst, Cassirer. "Der entwicklungsgeschichtliche Pantheismus nach seinem geschichtlichen Zusammenhang mit den ilteren pantheistischen Systemen". In Ernst Cassirer, *Weltanschauung und Analyse des Menschen seit Renaissance und Reformation*. B.G. Teubner Verlagsgesellschaft : Stuttgart, pn. d., pp. 312–390. Also, Thomas, McFarland. *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition*. Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1969.

19. Klein, Jacob "On the Nature of Nature". *The Independent Journal of Philosophy*. III (1979). pp. 101–109, p. 102.

20. Cf. his reference to Samuel Clarke's proof of God's existence.

21. Excerpts in Stewart, M. A. ed. *Selected Philosophical Papers of Robert Boyle*. Indianapolis : Hackett. 1991. pp. 176–191.

22. For further aspects of this debate see : Gerhold K. Becker. "The Divinization of Nature in Early Modern Thought". In Thomas Bargatzky, and Rolf Kuschel, eds. *The Invention of Nature*. Peter Lang Verlag : Frankfurt New York, 1994. pp. 47–61.

23. Allinson, Robert E. "An Overview of the Chinese Mind". In Robert E. Allinson, ed. *Understanding the Chinese Mind*. Oxford University Press : Hong Kong, 1989. pp. 1–25, p. 6.

24. Allinson, Robert E. in his introduction to Chad Hansen's essay : Chad Hansen, "Language in the Heart-mind". In Robert E. Allinson, loc. cit, pp. 75–123; p. 6.

25. Hansen, Chad. *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought : A Philosophical Interpretation*. New York/Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1992; references to pp. 26–29.

26. "Tzu-kung asked, 'Is there a single word which can be a guide to conduct throughout one's life?' The Master said, 'It is perhaps the word "shu". Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire.' (Analects, XV, 24). See also : "The Master said, 'Ts'an! There is one single thread binding my way together.' . . . Tsen Tzu said, 'The way of the Master consists in doing one's best and in using oneself as a measure to gauge others. That is all.'"

(Analects IV, 15). And : ““Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire. In this way you will be free from ill will whether in a state or in a noble family”” (Analects, XII, 2). From : Confucius. *The Analects*. Translated by D. C. Lau. Hong Kong : The Chinese University Press, 1979.

As Tu Wei-Ming explains, the Confucian Golden Rule “does not simply mean that one should be considerate to others; it also means that one must be honest with oneself. . . It is certainly not a categorical imperative in the Kantian sense; nor is it the guiding principle for action to which one is enjoined to conform. Rather, it is a standard of inspiration and an experienced ideal made meaningful to the students through the exemplary teaching of their master. Self-cultivation may mean different things to different people at different stages of moral development, and its realization may also assume many different forms. Yet, self-cultivation remains the locus of Confucian learning. Learning to be human, as a result, centers on the self, not the self as an abstract idea but the self as the person living here and now.” Tu Wei-Ming, *Confucian Thought : Selfhood as Creative Transformation*. SUNY Press : Albany, p. 56–57.

27. “So always treat others as you would like them to treat you; that is the meaning of the Law and the Prophets.” (Mt. 7, 12).

ON THE EXISTENCE OF A CULTURE INDEPENDENT CORE COMPONENT OF SELF

Jonathan Shear

We ordinarily all take it for granted that all of us, simply by virtue of being conscious human beings, are *selves*, that is, conscious, experiencing individuals. However while it is readily agreed that we all ordinarily think of ourselves in this way, it is not entirely clear what it is we are thinking when we do this. For the notion of "self" has proven notoriously difficult to pin down unambiguously. In the West philosophers such as Descartes, Hume, Kant, and Sartre have been utterly unable to come to anything even approximating agreement as to whether there is, or even could possibly be, anything in our experience which could fulfill our commonsensical conception of self as the unitary conscious subject of one's thought and experience. Philosophical traditions as diverse as those of Buddhism, Yoga, and Vedanta in the East have also pointed out major problems, sometimes very different from those discussed in the West, raised by our ordinary commonsense notions of self. And as in the West, they have responded in a variety of conflicting ways, ranging from suggestions for revision of our commonsense notions to insistence that they need to be rejected as intrinsically misleading. It is also clear that our concepts of self-identity (what it is to be a member of the human race, a man, a woman, a success, etc.) are in many ways both culturally imbedded and significantly different in different cultures. Thus hermeneutical considerations would also seem to suggest that no coherent general, culture-invariant notion of self could possibly be forthcoming. In short, the seemingly commonsensical intuition that despite our various cultural differences we all have in common at least the fact that we are all *selves*, would from a variety of perspectives thus appear to be both mistaken and misleading.

The present paper will suggest, however, that re-examination of the notion of self from a cross-cultural perspective should lead to a very

different result. For it will suggest both (i) that major problems about the nature of the self that have arisen within the separately developed Eastern and Western philosophical traditions appear to be resolvable when specific components of these traditions are analyzed together (hermeneutical objections notwithstanding), and (ii) that commonsense may well be correct (rather than incoherent) in its intuition that underneath all of our differences we are all simply "selves" after all.

Let us begin with a brief review of the theories of self of the three major modern Western philosophers, Descartes, Hume, and Kant. Descartes, "the father of modern (Western) philosophy," working in a time of tremendous social and intellectual upheaval and searching for some absolute rational (and non-faith-based) foundation for knowledge, thought he had found what he needed in his famous "*Cogito, ergo sum*," "I think, therefore I am." By "*cogito*" Descartes of course meant much more than "thinking," for as he made clear as soon as he introduced the term, his *cogito* included understanding, doubting, sensing, willing, imagining and any and all other functions of consciousness.¹ Thus, as Anscombe and Geach make clear in their now standard translation, Descartes' *cogito* and its cognates (*cogitans*, etc.) are translated more appropriately in terms of "consciousness" and its cognate terms ("I am conscious," etc.) than "thinking" and its cognates. Descartes' conclusion, put in modern terms, then, was that the indubitable foundation of knowledge is to be found in one's immediate awareness of the existence of one's own consciousness. For the very act of doubting demonstrates that which is supposedly being doubted, since doubting is an act of consciousness.²

Descartes then concluded that "all I really know, or at least have so far observed that I know" is that "I am certain that I am a conscious being," for "I come to the fact that there is consciousness . . . [and] of this and this only I cannot be deprived."³ Descartes then, by steps of reasoning that need not concern us here, concluded that the self we are all intuitively familiar with is "single and complete," one and the same "conscious being" throughout all of one's experiences, without parts, non-extended, "wholly indivisible,"⁴ and (because of its simplicity and non-extendedness, and also for more abstract logical reasons) non-picturable and non-imaginable.⁵ In short, Descartes concluded that introspection and logical analysis show that the self is a conscious being or thinking thing which is single, simple, continuing, and non-imaginable.

We should note here that Descartes' analysis was formulated to appeal directly to commonsense, rather than abstract doctrinal presuppositions.

Furthermore, both its immediate historical impact and its continuing convincingness to students who encounter it without prior philosophical training make it clear that it does in fact reflect important, enduring aspects of our ordinary, commonsensical notions of self and consciousness.⁶ Having said this, however, let us turn to Hume's formidable objections.

Hume, of course, recognized the commonsensical force of Descartes' position that each of us must have a self which is single, simple, and continuing throughout all of our experience. But, he argued, introspection in fact displays only continuously changing empirical perceptions, and never anything corresponding to our ordinary intuition: "For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception."⁷

Moreover,

When my perceptions are removed for any time, as by sound sleep; so long am I insensible of *myself*; and may truly be said not to exist.⁸

Thus, since one finds nothing but the presence of perceptions when one introspects, and since the absence of such perceptions is tantamount to non-existence, Hume concluded commonsense notwithstanding, that, "It is the composition of these [perceptions], therefore, which forms the self."⁹ Thus our commonsense notion of self as single, simple, and continuing is nothing more than a convenient conceptual "fiction" representing what is in actuality an everchanging conglomeration of internally related mental perceptions.

Unfortunately, however, Hume found that he could neither discover nor invent any satisfactory account of our persistent commonsensical sense of self by means of collections of or relations between perceptions. For perceptions themselves could never account for the unity one naturally feels one's perceptions have by virtue of being one's own. As a result, after developing and rejecting several versions of his "construction theory" of self, Hume concluded in the famous "Appendix" to his *Treatise* that he would have to "plead the privilege of a sceptic, and confess that this difficulty is too hard for my understanding."¹⁰

The next major Western analysis of self was that of Kant. Hume, as we saw, had argued both (i) that, in point of fact we have no experience of anything corresponding to our commonsense notion of self as single, simple, and continuing, and (ii) it appeared impossible to account for our

notion of self by means of any logically constructed collection of perceptions. Kant, noting that Hume's analyses woke him from his own earlier "dogmatic slumber," felt constrained to agree that Hume was correct. But he then went further. For he then argued both (i) that it is a *necessary*, rather than merely contingent, fact that we have no appropriate experience of self, and (ii) that the notion of self in question is nevertheless a *logically necessary* one—despite the fact that it both is and must remain entirely without significant empirical content.

Examination of Kant's reasoning would take us far afield. But his conclusions are straightforward, easily stated, and directly relevant to the present discussion. In the first place, as Kant argued, the self must be a unitary, unifying referent for all of one's diverse perceptions, for, as he put it, "It must be possible for the 'I think' to accompany all my representations; for otherwise something would be represented in me which could not be thought at all, and that is equivalent to saying that the representation would be impossible, or at least nothing to me."¹¹

But despite the logical necessity of this unity of the self (a unity which Kant felt to be so important that he characterized it as "the supreme principle of all employment of the understanding"), the self itself could never be experienced.

"[T]he perception of self . . . this inner perception is nothing more than the mere apperception 'I think' . . . in which no special distinction or empirical determination is given."¹²

Our concept of self, while absolutely necessary, must thus, according to Kant, also be absolutely empty. Indeed "we cannot even say that this is a concept, but only that it is a bare consciousness which accompanies all concepts. Through this I or he or it (the thing) which thinks, nothing further is represented than a transcendental subject of the thought = X."¹³

Kant's reasoning here is difficult to follow,¹⁴ but the underlying logic is not. For if the 'I' or self must be able to accompany all concepts and experiences, it must be compatible with all of them. Thus as a result it must be empirically qualityless; for if it had any empirical quality of its own it would be incompatible with all those possible experiences in which that quality was absent. Thus, Kant insists, that "It is obvious that in attaching 'I' to our thoughts we designate the subject of inherence transcendently, without noticing in it any quality whatsoever."¹⁵

This, however, produced a very unsatisfactory result. For, Kant argued, it implied that the most basic notion of all, that of self, was absolutely vacuous. If the very notion of individual experience presupposes the existence of a single, simple, continuing self, and if this self can be

conceived of only as pure qualityless consciousness, then it would appear¹⁶ natural to "conclude therefrom that I can be conscious of my existence even apart from experience and its empirical conditions."

But this would be a complete mistake. For all experience, by its very nature must be characterized by the presence of empirical qualities, and inner awareness therefore can "furnish nothing to the object of *pure consciousness* for the knowledge of its separate existence."¹⁷

This dilemma, this paradox of (i) the absolute necessity of our concept of self as single, simple, and continuing and (ii) the absolute necessity of the concept's complete conceptual vacuity and experiential non-significance, is, according to Kant, inescapable:

"Even the wisest of men cannot free himself from [this] illusion which unceasingly mocks and torments him."¹⁸

Descartes, reflecting commonsense, argued that the self is indubitably single, simple, and abiding. Hume, looking within, concluded that our commonsense idea was nothing more than a convenient fiction, since nothing corresponding to it is discovered even through careful introspection. And Kant argued that the notion of self as single, simple, and abiding was *both* absolutely necessary (as Descartes suggested) *and* not only in fact (as Hume argued) but also in principle completely devoid of empirical content. Thus, the arguments of these most important modern Western philosophers together would appear to render both our ordinary commonsensical and our best philosophical notions of self utterly problematic.

Let us now turn from Western analyses of self to those articulated in major Eastern traditions. Several similarities and differences relevant to our investigation of the question of culture-independent components of self immediately emerge from an examination of major classical texts. Consider first Shankara's reasoning about the indubitability of self-knowledge. In an argument strikingly like Descartes', Shankara reasons that every one is conscious of the existence of (his) Self, and never thinks "I am not." If the existence of the Self were not known, everyone would [be able at some time to] think "I am not."¹⁹

Yet no one ever does think this, so the existence of self is indubitable. Furthermore, with reasoning akin to Descartes' argument that since every thought and experience is mind-dependent, all evidence for anything whatsoever is also evidence for the existence of self,²⁰ Shankara argues that "All means of knowledge exist only as dependent on self-experience and since such experience is its own proof there is no necessity for proving the existence of self."²¹

Moreover, again like Descartes, Shankara argues that indubitable knowledge of the existence of self does not at all preclude further inquiry into precisely *what* the self is. And here we will find some sharp differences with Descartes.

First, however, let us turn from Shankara's Vedanta to Buddha and Buddhism. If Shankara can remind us of Descartes, aspects of traditional Buddhism remind us of Hume. Consider, for example, the famous *Questions of King Milinda*, where the sage Nagasena explains to Milinda the Buddhist understanding of the conventional, fictitious nature of our ordinary notion of self :

In exactly the same way, your majesty, in respect of me, Nagasena is but a way of counting, term appellation, convenient designation, mere name for the hair of my head, hair of my body . . . brain of the head, form, sensation, perception, the predispositions, and consciousness. But in the absolute sense there is no ego here to be found. And as the priestess Vajira . . . said . . .

Even as the word of "chariot" means
That members join to frame a whole;
So when the groups [of phenomena] appear to view,
We use the phrase, "a living being."²²

Or, as the *Visuddhi-magga* puts it, just as the terms 'army' and 'city' are merely convenient expressions for 'elephants, horses, etc.' and 'fortifications, houses, gates, etc.,' "in exactly the same way the words 'living entity' and 'ego' are but a mode of expression for the presence of the five attachment groups [sensations, perception, predispositions, etc.], but when we come to examine the elements of being one by one, we discover that in the absolute sense there is no living entity there to form a basis for such figments as 'I am,' or 'I'; in other words, that in the absolute sense there is only name and form."²³

Indeed, the correspondence with Hume's analysis could hardly be clearer.

Our original task was to examine the notion of self in a cross-cultural context to see whether any significant culture-invariant component of self could be located, as commonsense would expect. The parallels between major Eastern and Western texts and thinkers outlined above now allow us to make a first positive move in this direction. For regardless of one's position on the respective merits of the various opposing arguments, it is

clear that all of them, both Eastern and Western, despite their very different metaphysical orientations, were articulated in terms of the same basic notion of self as single, simple, and continuing which they took to be commonsensical and then either relied on as self-evidential or took pains to discount. Moreover, the widespread intuitive accessibility and the lasting influence of both the "pro" (Descartes and Shankara) and "con" (Hume and Buddhist) sides of the argument make it apparent that the notion of self in question was in fact "common currency" in the societies, both Eastern and Western, where they were developed.²⁴

Let us therefore take it as a given that the idea of self as single, simple, and continuing is a widespread, culture-invariant component of people's ordinary conceptions of self. It should immediately be noted, however, that finding a culture-invariant component of people's ordinary *conception* of self is not at all the same thing as finding a culture-invariant component of *self*. So the latter question still remains completely open. Before turning to this latter question, however, some further examination of a crucial empirical defect in what we can now call our ordinary commonsensical conception of self as single, simple, and continuing will prove useful. This defect is the fact that nothing corresponding to this concept appears to be locatable in our experience.

As we saw, this defect has been emphasized by thinkers and traditions in both the East and the West. But the criticism of the ordinary commonsense notion of self has been much more thoroughgoing and radical in the East. And it is here that we find the overarching general difference between the Western and the Eastern analyses of self. For the "pro" traditions of the *Gītā*, the Upanishads, Yoga, and Vedānta which support the intelligibility of our commonsense notion and the "con" traditions of Buddhism which dispute it all agree (i) that our *real* nature (however it is ultimately to be understood) is transcendental to the empirical world of ordinary experience, (ii) that attachment to our ordinary notion of self is a fundamental mistake blocking us from knowing what we really are, and (iii) that full recognition of our true nature requires a transcendental *samādhi* experience devoid of all empirical qualities whatsoever.

To be sure, these major Eastern traditions often offer very different and even directly opposing responses to the question of what (above and beyond the range of our ordinary notion of self) we really are. Thus on the one hand we have Yoga and Vedānta holding that our ordinary commonsense notion of self reflects a pure, unbounded Self nature which can be directly experienced. And on the other hand we have the Buddha's

enlightenment experience, in which “[f]rom the summit of the world downwards he could detect no self anywhere,”²⁵ and the Buddhist doctrine of “the non-entity of self-existence”²⁶ in general. Nevertheless, despite such polar differences in interpretation and doctrine, these very diverse traditions all insist that knowing what we really are requires transcending our ordinary modes of experience and coming into direct acquaintance with a pure, qualityless, undifferentiated mode of consciousness in the state of *samadhi*—however this state is ultimately to be interpreted, whether (as in Vedanta and Yoga) as displaying that which our ordinary notion of self inadequately intimates, or (in Buddhism) as displaying the ultimate unintelligibility of the notion. Let us therefore now turn to this unique experience itself.

The first major question about this experience a Western thinker will naturally be concerned with is whether it can even intelligibly be said to exist. For its defining characteristic is the complete absence of everything that we ordinarily take to be objects of experience. That is, it is defined as being utterly devoid of all thoughts, sensations, and empirical qualities, devoid even of the sense of there being any spatio-temporal manifold present in which objects and qualities could be located at all. Let us refer to this particular *samadhi* experience “the pure consciousness experience” or “the experience of pure consciousness,” as it commonly referred to in most of the Eastern traditions we are discussing (Yoga, Vedanta, many Buddhist sects, etc.).²⁷ Using this terminology, or any other single term or phrase, of course suggests that there is in fact a single experience referred to in common by the different traditions discussed, and this suggestion is, as we will see, debatable on hermeneutical grounds. Let us for the moment, however, defer consideration of this hermeneutical question, and proceed to examine “the” experience from the perspective of Western philosophical analyses on the supposition that a single, unique, putative experience is in fact identifiable by the above definition and phrases.

Kant, as we saw, argued that our notion of self inevitably suggested the existence of what he, too, called “pure consciousness,” absolutely qualityless and transcendental to and independent of all spatio-temporal properties and experience. But, he argued, this conclusion, inevitable as it might be, is also utterly problematic, for all of our experience without exception is entirely spatio-temporal in nature. Thus we not only do not have any such experience, but cannot form even “the least idea” of what it might be. All of the experiences we can have are contained within the manifolds of time and space, and all of our concepts gain empirical content only with reference to these manifolds and their actual and possible content.

This perspective has been characteristic of Western philosophical discussions, accepted largely without question, sometimes even as a logical "fact," for centuries. Kant himself, however, recognized that he was making an empirical rather than a logical observation about human experience, and was careful to allow the logical possibility of experiences (such as that of pure consciousness) outside of the space-time manifolds, insisting instead only that "we cannot form the least conception of any . . . possible understanding. . . that may possess an underlying mode of . . . intuition which is different in kind from that in space and time."²⁸

The existence of such a "mode of intuition," however, is precisely what is claimed by the Eastern traditions in question.

Something of the force of the overall Eastern position *vis a vis* both Kant's empirical claim and the general Western rejection of the possibility of the experience in question can be put in the following straightforward empirical terms: We, as human beings, do in fact have a mode of experience ("intuition") other than the spatio-temporal ones ordinarily encountered. This mode, however, emerges only when all the fluctuations of mind that structure the ordinary contents of consciousness settle down completely, and one nevertheless remains awake. When this happens, one can become aware of pure unfluctuating consciousness itself, rather than the contents of consciousness that ordinarily hold our attention (much, perhaps, as one can become aware of the unmoving, previously unnoticed movie screen when the fluctuating images that had held one's attention cease their activity and stop). Occasionally this profound settling of mental activity occurs spontaneously, in rare individuals, but most of us need to use procedures to encourage it if we wish to gain the experience in question. The development and refinement of such procedures has played a much larger role in Eastern cultures than in the West. Thus it should not be surprising if the experience in question should have been encountered more frequently there than in the West, played a larger role in their cultures in general, and their philosophical, psychological, and religious literature in particular.

In the West, however, the experience has been so rare, and so difficult (if not impossible) to reproduce systematically, that until recently discussion of it has been relegated to the field of mysticism,²⁹ and until recently it has hardly ever even been mentioned, much less examined seriously, in mainstream Western philosophical discourse. Over the past half century, however, with the increased intercultural communication that characterizes our modern world, knowledge of the extensive Eastern literature about this experience has become widespread in the West, and

traditional Eastern techniques such as those of Zen (from the Mahayana traditions) and Transcendental Meditation (from Advaita Vedanta) designed to produce the experience have begun to be widely practiced here—reportedly by millions of people in the United States alone. In addition, the physiological, psychological, and behavioral correlates and effects of these techniques and the experiences they reportedly produce have become the subject of many hundreds of articles, studying thousands of meditating subjects, in a wide variety of scientific journals.³⁰ As a result the experience we have been discussing has, quite naturally, become of increasing interest to mainstream Western thinkers.

Hermeneutical philosophers, in particular, with their strong interest in questions of cross-cultural communication, have been among the first to undertake extended discussion of this experience, recently imported into mainstream Western discourse on the basis of texts and techniques from Asian cultures. The main thrust of their analyses, however, has been to call the very existence of the experience into question. It is not that they question the existence of experiences corresponding to the standard sort of defining description. Their argument is epistemological rather than empirical. For, on their account, all experiences whatsoever are culturally conditioned, and therefore must always be different in different cultures. Thus, they argue, it is a mistake ever to talk of a single (or, more precisely, single type of) experience as occurring in different traditions and cultures at all.

As Steven Katz, the leading hermeneutical thinker here, puts it “All ‘givens’ are . . . the product of the processes of ‘choosing’, ‘shaping’, and ‘receiving’. That is, the ‘given’ is appropriated through acts which shape it into forms which we can make intelligible to ourselves given our conceptual constitution.”³¹

This “shaping,” according to Katz’s standard argument, inevitably must “involve memory, apprehension, expectation, language, accumulation of prior experience, concepts, and expectation, with each experience being built on the back of all these elements.”³²

Thus epistemological considerations imply that all experience in general, and therefore all candidates for the experience under discussion, must be “built up” of “images, beliefs, symbols,” etc. which “define, *in advance*,” what all of one’s experiences will be like.³³ Since these shaping components are all significantly culture-dependent and culture-specific, all the experiences shaped by them, that is, all experiences whatsoever, have to be culture-dependent and culture-specific as well.

It is not difficult to see that this hermeneutical analysis has a general

applicability, and that it should usefully serve to help us to be alert to otherwise unnoticed culture-specific components of a wide variety of experiences. However it is also easy to see that it does not at all apply to any experience fulfilling the defining characteristic of the "pure consciousness" experience we have been discussing. For the defining characteristic of this experience is that it is completely devoid of all thoughts, sensations, and empirical qualities whatsoever. And this, of course, implies that it is devoid of all the culture-specific sorts of content (images, beliefs, symbols, memories, concepts, expectations, etc.) that the hermeneutical analysis is concerned with. In other words, in short, no instance of any experience filling the defining characteristic of what we have been calling "pure consciousness" can contain any content that can serve to identify it in a culture-specific way for the simple reason that it has no empirical content in it at all.

The same conclusion also follows immediately from a simple abstract general argument. For it is easy to see that any two experiences which fulfill the defining characteristic of being instances of "pure consciousness" have to be phenomenologically identical. Consider any two such experiences, A and B. If they *were* (phenomenologically) different, then at least one of them, say A, would have to have some content that the other did not. But then that experience would have empirical content (i.e., content which could be either present or absent), and would not fulfill the defining characteristic of an instance of a "pure consciousness" experience, contradicting the original supposition. In short, the fact that any experience fulfilling the defining characteristic of a pure consciousness experience can have no empirical content at all implies that all such experiences are phenomenologically identical, and, therefore, not culture-specific. In other words, the definition of "pure consciousness" identifies a unique experience, hermeneutical arguments notwithstanding.

It is also worth noting in this context that the experience in question appears to be empirically correlated with a unique physiological state, characterized, among other things, by a significantly reduced metabolic rate and complete suspension of respiration. The association of the experience with this unique physiological state is found throughout history in the literature of diverse traditions around the world, from Yoga to Taoism and Western mystics such as Teresa of Avila, and it has now been described in depth by contemporary physiologists studying experimental subjects practicing traditional meditation techniques (Yoga, Zen, TM, etc.) designed to produce the experience. Both the experience and the easily recognized physiological correlates (repertory suspension, etc.) noted in

the traditional literature have now also been found to be correlated with specific central nervous system parameters (e.g., unusually high degrees of EEG coherence) outside of the experimental subjects' conscious awareness, and of course not mentioned in the traditional literature.³⁴ This correlation of the culture-invariant phenomenology of the experience with a specific culture-invariant physiological state having features that the individual experiencers (and, in general, their respective cultures) are completely unaware of strongly suggests that the experience reflects the natural subjective human response to the central nervous state in question, thus empirically reinforcing the straightforward phenomenological conclusion that the experience is in fact culture-independent.³⁵

For our present purposes, then, let us take the existence, uniqueness, and identifiability of instances of the pure consciousness experience for granted,³⁶ and turn to questions of both (i) what our current understanding of the experience has to offer the problematic modern Western philosophical analyses of self, and (ii) what these analyses can in turn contribute to our understanding of the experience.

Descartes, as we saw, argued that the self must be single, simple, and absolutely unimaginable, Hume rejected this notion as experientially meaningless, and Kant, paradoxically supporting both Descartes and Hume, compounded the difficulty by arguing that the self as single, simple and qualityless is both necessary and necessarily unexperienceable and unthinkable. If we take it as a given, however, that pure consciousness can be in fact experienced, then these conclusions are no longer so problematic. For it is easy to see that the experience of pure consciousness (i) allows us to give experiential significance to Descartes' notion of self as simple, independent of sensory qualities, and unimaginable. It also (ii) allows us to give significance to the notion of self as independent of all empirical "perceptions" and "impressions" that Hume recognized as commonsensical, sought for introspectively, and attempted but, by his own account, failed to explain away as a persistent "fiction." And it also, quite obviously, (iii) gives significance to Kant's "pure consciousness" independent of all empirical qualities whatsoever. Indeed, the experience of pure consciousness not only gives experiential significance to these influential but otherwise problematic and vacuous characterizations of self, it is obviously the *only* experience which could possibly do so. For this could be done only by an experience completely devoid of empirical qualities, and this property, as we saw, defines a single, logically unique experience.

Furthermore, to the extent that Descartes, Hume, and Kant's arguments,

derived by means of very different methodologies, in different contexts, and for very different reasons, correctly isolate and characterize the central, otherwise problematic core of our ordinary commonsense notion of self, as they purport to do, they also serve, both individually and collectively, to identify this pure consciousness experience, which uniquely fulfills their characterizations, as experience of the self.

Let us now turn to two major problems, as yet unresolved, raised by the Western philosophical analyses, beginning with that of why even careful, analytic observers such as Hume should have failed to discover pure consciousness at all when looking introspectively for self within. The Eastern traditions (Yoga, Vedanta, Buddhism, etc.) we have mentioned, all emphasize, what is often called "the mistake of the intellect," the mistake, that is, of not discriminating the empirical, quality-defined self from its transcendental, empirically qualityless ground. This notion has immediate relevance to Hume's introspective difficulty. For it implies that Hume, in looking for some perception or impression to give content to our commonsense notion of self was looking for the *wrong kind* of thing. It also implies that his act of *looking* was itself in error. For *wherever* one looks, one's looking will remain in the spatio-temporal realm of appearances, and the ground of self is entirely independent of this realm. Moreover, the traditional Eastern analyses of mind of the traditions referred to would also suggest that the very *act* of looking is self defeating. For since looking is a mental activity, the very activity of looking itself keeps the mind stirred up, and pure consciousness, the ground of mind, becomes isolated only when all the activity of mind settles down into the absolutely settled state of *samadhi*. Naturally, then, it is only to be expected that one should be highly unlikely to be able to discover what completely settled (pure) consciousness is like as long as such activity continues.³⁷

Secondly, it should also be noted that nothing has yet been said about the relevance of the experience of pure consciousness to one of the most important features of both our commonsense notion and the Western philosophical analyses of self, namely, its supposed continuance. The self, according to Descartes' argument, Hume's reflections on common sense, Kant's analysis, and common sense itself, has to be continuous, present along with whatever else one is experiencing. Yet the experience of pure consciousness as we have been discussing it—that is, as independent of any and all empirical perceptions—would at best have to be episodic. The Eastern traditions we have been discussing, however, all insist that, as a further stage of development, the experience in question can become permanent, existing along with all of one's waking, dreaming,

and even deep dreamless sleep experiences. Indeed, it should not be too surprising, if pure consciousness is in fact a constant, featureless ground of all of one's experiences, that (i) this ground should ordinarily go unnoticed, being overshadowed by the fluctuating objects of one's ordinary awareness, until these latter objects disappear, and (ii) that one would be most likely to become clearly aware of this ground along with the ordinary objects of one's awareness only after first having become acquainted with it as it is in isolation. By analogy, a person who had never before attended to a movie screen as distinguished from the movie playing on it might well be most likely (i) to first become explicitly aware of the featureless flatness of the screen only after the superimposed, attention-captivating images had disappeared, and (ii) to come to notice it along with the movie's action only after that, and only afterwards perhaps then come also to recognize that that flatness had been there all along, subliminally in one's awareness. On this analysis, reflecting standard features of numerous Eastern accounts, our commonsense notion of self would then appear to reflect a subliminal awareness of the underlying ground of pure consciousness, clarified first as isolated by itself and then, after sufficient familiarity, when along with the rest of one's ordinary experiences.

We have seen so far something of how (i) knowledge of pure consciousness derived from Eastern analyses and experiential procedures appears to provide the ground for resolving some long-standing, otherwise intractable philosophical problems of self as analyzed by Descartes, Hume, and Kant, and (ii) how these Western philosophical analyses in turn serve to identify the experience as being of self, for this and only this experience is capable of satisfying basic criteria for the self derivable from these Western analyses. If this identification derived from Descartes, Hume, and Kant's analyses is valid, then we can note that this would indicate that the Vedantan (and Yogic, etc.) side of the debate with the early Buddhists about whether the transcendental ground of self ("pure consciousness") experienceable within ought or ought not be called experience of "self" should be settled on the Vedantan (*atman* or self) rather than the early Buddhist (*anatman* or not-self) side, in conformity with the position of Zen, Tibetan and other later Mahayana sects.³⁸

Let us now return to our original question, that of whether or not we all have anything in common simply by virtue of being "selves," independently of all cultural variables, as common sense would insist. Our analysis has concluded in the first place that the notion of a single, simple, continuing self underlying and distinct from the changing contents of one's awareness is in fact a widespread "commonsensical" presumption,

occurring in the widest variety of civilizations throughout history and presupposed by and underlying diverse philosophical views in different traditions. Secondly, we have seen that the pure consciousness experience is intrinsically culture-independent, in that it has no empirical and therefore no culturally-determined components in it, is reported in diverse cultures, and is associated with a culture-invariant physiology. And finally we have identified it as the underlying core of self, as held by most of the major Eastern philosophical traditions and implied by major criteria derived from the analyses of Descartes, Hume, and Kant. In short, we have seen enough to conclude that our ordinary intuition that underneath it all, we are all selves, the same, at some deep level, everywhere, despite our imposing cultural differences, seems correct.

“East is East and West is West,” but if our analysis is correct, they appear to meet after all—at the deepest and most important level, that of the self.³⁹

NOTES

1. Descartes, Rene. *Meditations on First Philosophy*, in *Descartes Philosophical Writings*, translated and edited by Elizabeth Anscombe and Peter Thomas Geach (Indianapolis : The Library of Liberal Arts, Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1978), p. 76. A similar observation must be made for Descartes' French “pense,” as he also made clear.

2. Or, to put the argument more linguistically, “I am not conscious” can never intelligibly be asserted without contradiction, since intelligible assertion itself presupposes an intentional asserting agent.

3. Ibid, p. 69, 70, 76.

4. Ibid, p. 73, 121.

5. Ibid, p. 70.

6. The immediate influence of Descartes' analysis thus contradicts the assertion often made by contemporary “analytically”-oriented philosophers (Gilbert Ryle, Richard Rorty, etc.) to the effect that the “commonsensicality” of Descartes' arguments is only a product of the pervasive influence of Cartesian thought on the modern Western mind, and thus not really “commonsensical” at all. For the immediate widespread appeal of Descartes' analysis obviously had to have been based on already existing common notions of the self rather than any not-yet-existing influence of the argument itself. Comparable arguments and commonsensical notions of the self were also articulated by major philosophers in ancient Rome (e.g., Augustine) and India (see Sections VI-VIII below), again obviously independently of the influence of Descartes.

7. Hume, David. *A Treatise on Human Nature*, edited by L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1958) p. 252.

8. *Ibid*, p. 252. Compare Descartes, *Meditations*, p. 69.

9. *Ibid*, p. 634.

10. *Ibid*, p. 634.

11. Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by Norman Kemp Smith (New York : Macmillan & Co., 1964), pp. 152-3.

12. *Ibid*, pp. 329-30.

13. *Ibid*, p. 331.

14. We can note that Kant himself apparently had difficulty with the way he worked out the details of his argument, for the sections on the self were the only ones he completely rewrote for the second edition of the *Critique*.

15. *Ibid*, p. 337.

16. *Ibid*, p. 337.

17. *Ibid*, p. 380.

18. *Ibid*, p. 328.

19. Shankara. *Commentary on the Vedanta Sutras*, in *The Vedanta Sutras with the Commentary by Sankaracharya*, translated by George Thibaut, Sacred Books of the East, XXXIV and XXXVIII (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1890), commentary on I.i.1, reprinted in *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy*, edited by Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore, (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1973) p. 511.

20. *Meditations*, pp. 74-5.

21. From Shankara's Introduction to his *Commentary on the Vedanta Sutras*, translated by S. Radhakrishnan, *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy*, p. 506.

22. *Milindapanha*, in *Buddhism in Translations*, H. C. Warren, pp. 129-33, reprinted in *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy*, p. 284.

23. *Visuddhi-magga*, in *Buddhism in Translations*, pp. 132-5, reprinted in *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy*, p. 285.

24. Indeed, Buddhist texts repeatedly insist that the notion in question is so basic and widespread that it constitutes a major obstacle to the ordinary person's receptivity to the transcendental truth of enlightenment.

25. Ashvaghosa's *Buddhacarita*, in *Buddhist Scriptures*, translated by Edward Conze (USA : Penguin Books, 1986) p. 50.

26. Compare, for example, "The Thirty Verses on the Mind-Only Doctrine" (*Trimsikan*) by Vasubandhu, translated from the Chinese version of Hsuan Tsang by Wing-tsit Chan, in *A Sourcebook of Indian Philosophy*, pp. 336-7.

27. The locution "the experience of pure consciousness" will sometimes be used in the text for naturalness of English expression, but the "of" here should not be taken to suggest any intentionality, subject-object distinction,

object-content, or other empirical content or relationships. The two locutions, one with and one without the "of," are intended to have equivalent meaning.

28. *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 157.

29. Here, to be sure, the experience has proven so important in this field that it is often referred to as "the central" mystical experience, and (after Walter Stace) given a special name, "the introvertive mystical experience."

30. A typical literature search on the physiological correlates and effects of such techniques will identify well over a hundred research articles; the same result will be found for the psychological variable of trait anxiety; over fifty for behavioral variables, over fifty on self-actualization, etc.

31. Katz, Steven T. "Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism," in *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (Oxford University Press, 1978) p. 59.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

34. For a selected bibliography of relevant research literature discussing a variety of physiological parameters, including EEG phenomena and biochemical changes as well as metabolic and respiratory variables noted in the ancient literature, see my "Mystical Experience, Hermeneutics, and Rationality," *International Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. XXX, No. 4, December 1990, p. 397, notes 13 and 14.

35. The empirical correlation between instances of the pure consciousness experience and the associated physiological state, in addition to directly supporting the culture-independence of the experience, also presents a major conceptual problem for the opposing hermeneutical thesis. For the thesis that instances of the experience in question are (despite all appearances) necessarily different in each different culture because they are produced by cultural factors unique to each culture now requires that these unspecified diverse cultural factors somehow conspire, serendipitously, to produce both (i) the seemingly identical experiences and (ii) the unique, correlated physiological states (having features in general completely unknown to the cultures involved). Given the complete absence of any supporting evidence, and even of any suggestion of what the relevant, supposedly culturally-dependent causal factors and empirical evidence might be, such a position hardly seems a credible option, quite independently of the logical and phenomenological arguments outlined above.

36. More, of course, can be said about these hermeneutical issues. See, for example, "Mystical Experience, Hermeneutics, and Rationality" referred to in the previous note, and Robert Forman's collection, *The Problem of Pure Consciousness* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1990).

37. It should be noted that some of the meditation practices associated with

the traditions in question do not appear to reflect this inference from their own tradition's theoretical statements, and still emphasize active analysis and concentration, and even searching for the self within. Not surprisingly, however, these sorts of procedures are generally described as difficult, taking years of preparation and/or requiring a mind which is already almost completely serene and settled to be carried out successfully.

38. This conclusion, reflecting the analyses on which it is based, is purely a phenomenological one. Nothing at all has been said, or intended, here about the many metaphysical questions of substance, reincarnation, afterlife, etc. germane to the full *atman-anatman* debate.

39. Our cross-cultural analysis of self here is, of course, only a beginning. For to the extent that it is correct, it suggests the value of studying the relationship of what we have identified as the core component of the self, namely, pure consciousness, to an enormous range of topics, including many, if not most, of those traditionally examined in both Eastern and Western philosophy and psychology. For a more extended examination of questions of self, creativity, knowledge and ethical values from this perspective, see my *The Inner Dimension : Philosophy and the Experience of Consciousness* (New York : Peter Lang Publishing, 1990).

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND CULTURAL STEREOTYPING

Paul J. Will

At the turn of the 20th century, the question of unique cultural identities that characterize both East and West was sharpened by the speeches and writings of an Indian, Swami Vivekananda. Speaking at the World Parliament of Religions held in conjunction with the Chicago Columbian Exposition in 1893, he made a dramatic impact in both intellectual and popular circles in America. His basic thesis, which was developed over his lifetime, was that the West was based on a materialistic philosophy, while the East was on a spiritual quest.

So a nation which is great in the possession of material power thinks that that is all that is to be coveted, that that is all that is meant by progress, that that is all that is meant by civilization, and if there are other nations which do not care for possession, and do not possess that power, they are not fit to live, their whole existence is useless! On the other hand, another nation may think that mere material civilization is utterly useless. From the Orient came the voice which once told the world, that if a man possesses everything that is under the sun and does not possess spirituality, what avails it? This is the oriental type; the other is the Occidental type.¹

Vivekananda's supposition is a significant one, for it seeks to understand a whole culture in terms of an encompassing ethos. His evaluation provided and still provides the basis for the widespread conception of the East, if not the West.

In the case of Swami Vivekananda, an examination of his life and intellectual development is a fruitful approach in determining how he arrived at his cultural constructs. Most of the records of his life are written by his followers, and this tends to color the accounts. While this adoration

is understandable, the historian is confronted with the task of separating fact from semi-legendary reports that incorporate typical Hindu religious motifs in their explanations.

His decision to attend the international gathering in Chicago was an important factor in the evolution of his cultural stereotyping of East and West. After the death of his master, Sri Ramakrishna, Narendra (as Vivekananda was then called) wandered from 1890-1893 throughout the Indian subcontinent fulfilling a vow to seek further spiritual insight. During this time, according to his followers' accounts, he became increasingly convinced of the eternal truths of Indian religion and the misguided rationalism of the West.²

At Bangalore he told the Maharaja of his intention to go to the West to ask "for the means to ameliorate the material condition of India" in exchange for the gospel of Vedanta.³ While on a pilgrimage to Rameswaran, the Raja of Ramnad, also urged him to attend the Chicago meeting and promised him aid. But it was a confirming vision that convinced him :

. . . There flashed before his mind the new continent of America, a land of optimism, great wealth, and unstinted generosity. He saw America as a country of unlimited opportunities, where people's minds were free from the encumbrance of castes or classes. He would give the receptive Americans the ancient wisdom of India and bring back to his motherland, in exchange, the knowledge of science and technology. If he succeeded in his mission to America, he would not only enhance India's prestige in the Occident, but create a new confidence among his own people.⁴

Later, in Madras, he publicly announced his intention of going to the United States, and his followers began collecting funds to finance the trip. He had said that the money for the voyage should be collected from the people because it was to find a means of salvation for them that he was going. This statement and others reflect his determination to end the suffering of the people of India by appealing to America for the means to overcome the wretched conditions in India. They are particularly insightful as to what he thought India needed. Yet in the end, he accepted his wardrobe, first-class ticket, and travel purse from the Maharaja of Khetri, who also requested him to assume the name Vivekananda.⁵

Whatever his motivation, Vivekananda was one of the first Indian religious figures to travel to the United States. His few speeches before

the Parliament were, if not the most noteworthy feature of his visit to America, the means for him to become known. Theoretically the meetings were part of "a series of congresses for the consideration of the greatest themes in which mankind is interested, and so comprehensive as to include representatives from all parts of the earth."⁶ The group of religious congresses, called the Parliament of Religions, was the most successful of the twenty convocations offered in connection with the Columbian Exposition at Chicago.

Their importance in familiarizing Americans with other religious traditions should not be underestimated. Wide newspaper coverage and numerous books about the Parliament enabled the statements of the participants to receive nation-wide exposure. It was through these reports that Swami Vivekananda gained national attention. However, Vivekananda was not always fully quoted or properly identified; for example, Minot Savage's *The World's Congress of Religions* identified him as a Buddhist from India.

The Parliament of Religions met mixed reaction from the very beginning. At first there was enthusiastic response, but opposition did develop over the fear of disgracing the "True Word of Christ" and creating discord. Others argued that the meetings would reveal the superiority of Christianity over other religions. The Anglican,

Baptist, and Russian Orthodox churches refused to send representatives. Vivekananda is reported to have written :

The Parliament of Religion was organized with the intention of proving the superiority of the Christian religion over other forms of faith . . . [and] was intended for a 'heathen show' before the world.⁷

If there were some hostile members on the platform, Vivekananda had an undeniable charismatic impact on the assembly. *The New York Herald* remarked that "he is undoubtedly the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions."⁸ One could speculate that an important factor in his success was the stunning impression the Swami made clad in a red robe and yellow turban. His striking bronze, youthful features also may have caused him to stand out amidst the assembled delegates. Vivekananda's widely noted ability to speak in excellent English probably meant he was one of the few Asian religious figures who could be readily and immediately understood without having his papers read.

Or, one could posit that it was his message, the universality and tolerance of Hinduism, that captivated his audience. Yet, in an earlier

session the Swami himself had criticized Christians for lack of concern for the hunger of India's people : "The crying evil in the East is not religion—they have religion enough—but it is bread that these suffering millions of burning India cry out for with parched throats. . . I came here to seek aid for my impoverished people, and I fully realized how difficult it was to get help for heathens from Christians in a Christian land."⁹

Attendance at the Parliament of Religions helped to shape the focus of Vivekananda's message to America. There is a distinct possibility that the theme of the East's spirituality and the West's materialism, which became a hallmark of the Swami's later speeches, was born in Chicago through exposure to other speakers. Rev. John Henry Barrows, a principal planner of the meetings, remarked on the special significance of the Parliament, with its emphasis on spiritual matters, being held in Chicago. The Chicago locale reflected the crudest materialism of the day, identified by conjunction with a World's Fair stressing technological advancement and modern invention.¹⁰

In addition, Protap Chundar Mozoomdar, who represented the Brahmo Samaj, in his major address said : "In the West you work incessantly, and your work is your worship. In the East we meditate and worship for long hours, and worship is our work. Perhaps one day, after this Parliament has achieved its success, the western and eastern man shall combine to support each other's strength, and supply each other's deficiencies."¹¹

It is clear that Vivekananda was not the first to see a contrast between East and West, but he did give it wide currency through his speeches and writings. The audience at the Parliament of Religion was predisposed to be receptive to Vivekananda's expositions. It was composed of the intellectual and pseudo-intellectual elite who were willing to sit through the long sessions because of their interest. Hundreds of Catholic and Protestant clergy, missionaries, and seminary professors were in attendance, providing an attentive audience to his explanation of Hinduism.¹² There were also hundreds of women at each session who besieged him before and after his speeches.¹³

It is very conceivable that Vivekananda became either the adopted idol of the avant-garde of the intellectual world or the occult fad of curiosity seekers. Just as the Bazaar section of the Exposition held the greatest attraction for the masses of people attending the fair, it is equally possible that the Indian holy man captured the fancy of another faction of the public.

Why would people in an age of material success, to which the Exposition itself was a great tribute, listen to a man with a spiritual

message? Although the successes of the religious revivals led by Dwight Moody and Billy Sunday during this period are documented, these did not signify a mass spiritual renaissance in the United States. Rather within the multicultural American society there was a vibrant, though minority, interest in the spiritual tradition. In any heterogeneous culture there are subgroups with different interests, and it was to Emersonians, Transcendentalists, Neo-Christians, Theosophists, Universalists, Unitarians, and Congregationalists that the teachings of Vivekananda had an initial interest. They provided an early support group.

While at the Parliament he was introduced to many influential people including Mrs. Potter Palmer, the acknowledged head of Chicago society.¹⁴ After the close of the conference Swami Vivekananda toured throughout the Midwest and East of the United States giving lectures. At first his arrangements were made by a commercial lecture bureau; later he set up his own itinerary.¹⁵ Here the contacts he made in Chicago were invaluable.

To substantiate the hypothesis of a responsive American subculture, an examination of the contact between Indian thought and the United States before the Swami's visit is instructive. There were several significant examples of interchange in the early 1800's. While American traders and missionaries had brought back reports of India, it was basically through books that American intellectuals' interest in India was fostered.

A transplanted Englishman, Joseph Priestly, wrote *A Comparison of the Institutions of Moses with Those of the Hindoos and the Ancient Nations* in 1799. His account of religion, philosophy, and custom was based on a number of famous English and French works on the subject.¹⁶ This publication, in conjunction with the Serampore missionary printer William Ward's *A View of the History, Literature and Mythology of the Hindoos* published in 1806, provided Americans with a basic understanding of Indian thought until the middle of the 19th century.¹⁷

However, Americans not only got their information from the English, French, and Germans but from an Indian, Rammohun Roy. His *Translation of Several Principal Books, Passages, and Texts of the Veds* [sic] undoubtedly had an effect on the budding New England intellectual awakening.¹⁸ According to Miss A. Moore, Roy's writings were found in most American public libraries and there was no evidence of prior influence about Oriental philosophy before him.¹⁹

From 1821-22 *The Christian Register*, a Unitarian journal, had noted several times Rammohun Roy's iconoclastic views and controversy with the Serampore Mission over the divinity of Jesus and Trinitarian teachings. While it is difficult to directly trace the effect of Roy's views on the

Transcendentalists, it is known they were aware of his position.²⁰

While some Americans had negative reactions to Indian thought, many intellectuals took up an interest in it. This is especially true in New England, and there have been numerous scholarly speculations on the similarities between Vedantic thought and the works of Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman. America's interest in Eastern metaphysics was also increased with the foundation in 1875 of the Theosophical Society by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Henry Steele Olcott. This esoteric group promoted such Hindu concepts as reincarnation, the brotherhood of man, and the mystical knowledge of the supreme reality. This interest in spiritualism was met with resistance by Christians, especially the more conservative, orthodox sects. Theosophy reciprocated with its own virulent condemnation of institutionized Christianity.²¹

Thus early contacts through travel, scholarly books from abroad, native interest in spiritualism, as well as natural curiosity probably created a cultural subgroup receptive to the philosophical content of Vedantic Hinduism.

However, it is not true that Vivekananda's efforts resulted in a massive spiritual awakening, an idea that was widely believed in India. The reception given to Swami Vivekananda on his return to India in 1897 as recorded in *From Colombo to Almora* and the publishing of a refutation of his supposed success by Christians in *Swami Vivekananda and His Guru* are reflective of this belief that he had a great impact on America.

Swami Vivekananda seems to have appealed to a wide range of people. *The Detroit Free Press* reporting on his lecture of February 18, 1894 at the Unitarian Church stated: "All professions and business occupations were represented in the attentive audience—lawyers, judges, ministers of the Gospel, merchants, a Rabbi—not to speak of the many ladies who have, by their repeated attendance and rapt attention, shown a decided inclination to shower adulation upon the dusky visitor, whose drawing-room attraction is as great as his ability in the rostrum."²²

It appears that he frequently associated with the upper strata of society, as a look at his sponsors reveals. The Swami was the guest of the wife of ex-Governor Bagley while in Detroit and of former Senator Palmer in Chicago.²³ In 1896 he organized the Vedanta Society of New York to preach and practice Vedantic thought. Vivekananda wrote numerous books to convey the basic tenets of Vedantic Hinduism. On his second trip to the United States in 1900 he founded several Vedantic centers in California. Through these means he sought to ensure that his teaching would continue to influence Americans.

Swami Vivekananda added significantly to the stereotype that the East is spiritual and the West is materialistic. Surprisingly there is little evidence of this idea in his speeches at the Parliament of Religions. His interpretation of a cultural spirit was probably one that grew and developed, reaching its fullest development upon his return to India. The beginning of such an understanding can be found in statements Vivekananda made before he left India in 1893, and there are a number of examples of this position being stated during his time in the United States.

While speaking in Boston in 1894 he denounced the physical, materialistic compulsion of the West so strongly that many people left the hall, and the newspapers varied in their reaction from intense criticism to favorable statements.²⁴ In Memphis, Vivekananda stated: "I believe that the Hindoo faith has developed the spiritual in its devotees at the expense of the material. . . and I think that in the Western world the contrary is true. By uniting the materialism of the West with the spiritualism of the East I believe much can be accomplished."²⁵

This idea became a recurring theme in this thought: India should export her spiritualism to the West while using some Western technology to improve her material condition.

These ideas of spirituality were further developed by his travel to Europe in 1895-96. On his return to India in 1897 the Swami said:

Two attempts have been made in the world to found social life; the one was upon religion, and the other was upon social necessity. The one was founded on spirituality, the other upon materialism; the one upon transcendentalism, the other upon realism. The one looks beyond the horizon of this little material world and is bold enough to begin life there, even apart from the other. The other, the second, is content to take its stand on the things of the world and expects to find a firm footing there. Curiously enough, it seems that at times the spiritual side prevails, and then the materialistic side—in wavelike motions following each other. In the same country there will be different tides.²⁶

It was his contention that at this time in history the West was dominated by the materialistic impulse, while India was motivated by spiritual considerations. Yet, it is important to note his understanding of both materialistic and spiritual aspects being present in any one culture. During a speech in California he asserted that India had acquired immense wealth in the past, perhaps more than any other nation, but "wealth and power.

then, were not the ideals of the race." Rather, religion dominates every moment. "The Hindu man drinks religiously, sleeps religiously, walks religiously, marries religiously, robs religiously."²⁷

When speaking of materialism, if Vivekananda meant the prevailing spirit of the culture he could have ample evidence for such a position. On the other hand, if he meant the philosophical content of Western thought itself, such a premise can be questioned. Western philosophy cannot be classed as materialistic without overlooking the whole tradition of idealism, nor can it be called nonspiritual without ignoring many Western philosophers who hold a belief in some ultimately spiritual ordering of the universe and in a soul related to that principle. The West has a mystical tradition of its own, but the Judeo-Christian tradition often is antagonistic to it and has sought to suppress it.

His statements that supported cultural stereotyping may have been further influenced by the movement of Hindu Revivalism/Renaissance that was at its height in India at the turn of the century.

Certainly, his stereotype fit in with prevailing attitudes in Indian intellectual circles. Vivekananda's teaching about India's age-old spirituality was intended to convey a two-fold lesson to his Western

audiences. It was to persuade them to absorb some of that spirituality themselves and to get them to offer material support to the poor in India. His mission was a genuinely dual one, for East and West must share their own special gifts with each other. Naturally enough, Vivekananda emphasized that what India had to give was of a superior kind. Through this discourse he sought to redress the imbalance of respect between Hindus and Westerners, an imbalance reflective of colonialism. This made him a hero to many in India.

Other factors worked to support such a simplistic cultural understanding in the West. This historical period is one marked by reform zeal against the crass materialism of the monopolistic exploitation of the late 1800's. It was a period of American interest in the world which took its most blatant form in imperialistic ventures of national policy, but which nevertheless created curiosity about other cultures and, at the same time, caused the United States to become aware of its own identity.

For most people the bizarre, meaning here anything outside their own experience or understanding, could be lumped together. Within the popular culture there must have been numerous expressions of the sense of the East being different, mystical, and spiritual. How different was the general public's perception in the 1890's based on experiences like the carnival "swami" or "fakir" from that of the public in the 1960's when

transcendental meditation cults, Nehru jackets, and incense were part of the popular culture. In fact, one could speculate that there is a continuity of American enthusiasm for Eastern religion and philosophy. It might be instructive to compare the class and cultural background of those interested in Indian thought from three periods of American history: 1840's, 1890's, and 1960's.

The Swami's acceptance by some recognized scholarly authorities as a representative of Hinduism lent credence to his views. For example, William James referred to Swami Vivekananda in connection with monistic mysticism in his classic work *The Varieties of Religious Experience* as "that paragon of Vedantists."²⁸ The Swami also met Charles Rockwell Lanman, Professor of Sanskrit at Harvard, who became an honorary member of the Vedanta Society. Dr. Herschell C. Parker of Columbia College served as President of the society at the turn of the century.²⁹

From March 22-25, 1896, Vivekananda had talked with students and faculty at Harvard University for whom it was "a rare pleasure to see a form of belief that to most seems so far away and unreal as the Vedanta System, represented by an actually living and extremely intelligent believer."³⁰

On his visit to England in the same year he met Max Muller, the famous German Indologist, and arranged for him to receive primary source material to write a biography of Sri Ramakrishna.³¹

Throughout the history of the contact between East and West, the perception of each respective culture is dependent on who is the spokesperson for that culture. The fact that the early Western scholars of Buddhism were in contact with Theravada Buddhism has meant that a particular view of Buddhism as a whole became accepted. Even today the idea that Theravada Buddhism is closer to the Buddha's original teaching, and is thus purer, persists much to the dismay of other Buddhists. Because D. T. Suzuki became the major spokesperson for Zen Buddhism in the West, Rinzai Zen, which he championed although it was the minor Zen sect in Japan, became accepted as representative of Zen in general.

In the West the Vedanta school of Hindu thought has dominated early Western explanations of Hinduism. One wonders to what extent Swami Vivekananda is responsible for this Vedantic dominance in Western understanding of Hinduism. Surely, his efforts contributed significantly to the conceptualization of Eastern thought as spiritual. This may well be what Swami Vivekananda had in mind when he said: "I have a message to the West as Buddha had a message to the East."³²

NOTES

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2. Nikhilananda, *Swami Vivekananda : The Yogas and Other Works*, New York : Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, 1953, p. 46.
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CREATIVITY AND SPIRITUALITY : A CROSS- CULTURAL INQUIRY INTO RELATIONS BETWEEN ART AND RELIGION

Earle Coleman

Traditionally art and religion have been closely associated in all cultures; indeed, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy has categorically declared: "Art is religion, religion is art, not related, but the same."¹ Certainly, the intertwined histories of art and religion make one wonder if the well springs of creativity and spirituality can really be distinct. Various considerations support the thesis that religion and art, even if not interchangeable, are inseparable.

First, history reveals their interconnectedness in every age and society. Thus Wassily Kandinsky, who contributed monumentally to modern painting, held that when art is not flourishing, the spiritual world languishes : "... periods, during which art has no noble champion. . . are periods of retrogression in the spiritual world."² Again, the eminent British art critic, Clive Bell, has observed, "the great ages of religion are commonly the great ages of art."³ That the two wax and wane in tandem suggests that they are intimately linked rather than independent enterprises. Historically, religious motifs, themes, insights, figures, practices, and values have enriched and animated world art; and it, in turn, has facilitated the transmission of sacred scriptures, sermons, experiences, and prayers. Since antiquity, in both Eastern and Western traditions, religion has inspired, funded, or influenced the vast majority of great art works.

For a recent illustration of the historical ties between religion and art, one may turn to the "God is dead" theological movement of the mid-1960s. A *Time* magazine cover, dated April 8, 1966, arrestingly declared : "God is dead," thereby introducing to popular culture a notion that may be traced to Nietzsche. In God-is-dead theology, worse than deceased, God was found to be insignificant. Humans operated in an increasingly "God-less" way; the secular city and suburbs had arrived; and, God was no longer playing a vital part in the daily lives of his

creatures. More radical thinkers said that the church must proceed without any concept of God whatsoever; others held that the idea of God as "an old man in the sky" was dead, but that it should be replaced by a more meaningful conception. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the anti-Nazi, Lutheran theologian who became a martyr, had proclaimed during World War II that: "We are proceeding toward a time of no religion at all."

Not surprisingly, and also in the 1960s, a correspondingly critical turn appeared in art; the cry "Art is dead" meant that art had run its course; it was empty of creativity just as religion was empty of spirituality. Speaking about a major movement in Western painting of the 1960s, John W. Dixon asserts :

All signs of the artist's personality are effaced... The work of art is reduced to pure objecthood. . . the artist works hard to cancel out 'interest,' that is, any sensuous quality or any complex of internal relations that can give pleasure or direct our attention in time. . . Here is the artistic statement of the death of God. . . The minimal art of the 1960's; the color painting of Stella, Louis, Olitski, and the art of many others, make this same affirmation.⁴

Religious pluralism furnishes another twentieth-century example of the strands between religion and art. This theory, which affirms that there are insights in all the world religions, has its counterpart in the aesthetic temperament which recognizes artistic value in diverse and multitudinous artists, schools, and movements of every age and culture.

A second consideration in support of the inseparability thesis is that religion, with its quest for the real, lends profundity to art. Thus Paul Tillich speaks of religion as "the dimension of depth in all sections and levels of culture."⁵ Religion confers the possibility of revelation, not mere decoration or ornamentation, upon the artist's activities. Like science, religion, and philosophy, art has always pursued truth. To eliminate religion from art is to arrive at a diminished art, what Leo Tolstoy called counterfeit or insincere art. At best, it can only yield probable truths or the conditioned truths of the sciences. By contrast, genuine artists seek abiding truths with respect to the self, others, nature and the divine. By doing so, they present a world view that illumines the human condition, i.e., birth, maturity, and death.

A third basis for the inseparability of art and religion is that art, as the ideal vehicle for transmitting the ineffable, renders religion articulate; it confers the power of speech upon religion. Whether to transmit ideas or

feelings, religion needs art. In his spiritual theory, Kandinsky speaks of the art work as having the capacity to convey "emotions subtle beyond words."⁶ Given its ineffable subject matter, religion inevitably draws upon art as the premier means of self-expression. Religion without art would be like a sublime silence without the sound that complements and dramatizes it. Of course, religion can be as silent as the lone monk in contemplation, but it is through art that one's I-Thou dialogue with the absolute becomes a dialogue with other humans. For thinkers such as Bell, Ludwig Wittgenstein's assertion that what cannot be spoken about must be passed over in silence is falsified by music, an art that bodies forth and evokes what ordinary communication is powerless to do. Tolstoy's condemnation of religion without art is damning: "mysticism without poetry is superstition."⁷ Asked about the relation between religion and art, Huston Smith, the outstanding American scholar of world religions, replied simply, "Art can help religion." Indeed, religion is speechless without it.

A fourth basis for the inseparability of art and religion lies in the fact that they are both axiological spheres. They supply the values or standards by which everything else is judged. Just as religion offers ethical values, art offers the scientist aesthetic values, as when she chooses a theory because of its elegance. Humans are value-oriented creatures; and, values can scarcely be isolated from each other, witness the moral ramifications of aesthetic and religious matters or issues. If values belong to human nature and if humans are to be whole, religion and art, with their respective and complementary values, must be interrelated and integrated.

Fifth and finally, any number of common denominators link art and religion. For example, the artist's "drying up of creative energy or powers," i.e., writer's block, resembles St. Teresa's struggle with "seasons of dryness" that interfered with her spiritual cultivation and prayer.⁸ Ironically enough, in Lamentations iii,⁹ obstacles on the path of prayer are described as "square stones." The omnipresence of positive value is another hallmark of both perspectives. This is just to say that the beautiful, as well as the holy, exists in all places. The great British painter John Constable, for example, finds beauty to be ubiquitous: "I never saw an ugly thing in my life: for let the form of an object be what it may, light,—shade, and perspective will always make it beautiful."⁹ Similarly, St. Teresa suggests that the sacred is everywhere: "I believe that in each little thing created by God, there is more than what is understood, even if it is a little ant."¹⁰

Of all the manifold common denominators between art and religion, none is more primordial than that of the child as an ideal. All religions

enjoin one to return to the child-state, i.e., to the beauty of the childlike consciousness that nourishes art as well as religion. Restoration of a pristine condition of mind is a common goal—whether this primordial innocence is a return to creativity or a return to spirituality. Accordingly, the child frequently serves as a symbol of the ideal. Thus the sage of the Tao Te Ching, is one who returns to the condition of an infant, i.e., to the spirit of a child. In addition, one returns to the uncarved block, which symbolizes the undifferentiated Tao, in order to create art with childlike simplicity. Resembling the infant, the sage and the artist are receptive, flexible, and yielding to their surroundings. With a child-like perspective, one's outlook ceases to be blurred by preconceptions, be they the wrongheaded dogmas of religion or the brainwashing notions of the art academy. Thus the child epitomizes both the purity of spirit and the receptivity that are the foundation of all creativity. Of course, Christ warned his disciples that unless they became as little children, they would not enter the kingdom of heaven. Again, Confucius' disciple, Mencius, states that the great man keeps the heart of a new born babe. Part of the appeal of children is that they are generally less judgmental than adults, just as artists are apt to be less judgmental than art critics and mystics are less judgmental than their detractors. Perhaps the child, the artist, and saint all seek to establish rapport with the other rather than to analyze and evaluate.

Asked why God creates, Hindus liken the divine to a child at play. In short, God creates for aesthetic rather than practical reasons. Likewise the true artist does not create merely for utilitarian reasons. The child, the mystic and the artist put a premium upon immediate, intuitive experiences. Concepts, after all, are no substitute for concrete, lived existence, for the vital reality that transcends all abstractions. Children at play, with no thought of yesterday or tomorrow, participate in the same "present moment" that nourishes the artist and the religious person. Rekha Jhanji identifies one approach to play when she states that transcendence of the ego and desirelessness allow the art lover and the mystic to enjoy a sense of liberation; this freedom, in turn, yields a joy that is related to play: "It is this purity of joy which led Abhinavagupta to see a parallel between mystical ecstasy and aesthetic enjoyment, for the mystic, too, sees the world as a play (*lila*) of the divine creator."¹¹

The artist is characteristically more childlike than others. Reminiscent of Peter Pan who never grows up, she continues to engage in the activities which others largely surrender with their youth : drawing, painting, sculpting, dancing, singing, building, and writing. It is perhaps no accident that fairy tales are as concerned with "forever afters" as religions are with

immortality. Interestingly enough, the present Dalai Lama is widely known for his childlike openness and playful disposition. Of course, the artist, or the saint for that matter, is not someone who remains a child or never grows up; instead, she brings her childhood along with her throughout life, integrating it with each successive stage of maturity. As Frank Baron observes, "Creative individuals retain qualities of freshness, spontaneity and joy, as well as a certain lack of cautious reality-testing—openness to the non rational, if you will. They are in that sense childlike. But this is not regression, it is progression with courage."¹²

Ultimately, the hunger for return, which is often expressed through the literature of childhood, be it *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* or *the Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, is a quest for harmony, for return to one's source, since this alone yields complete wholeness. Not only must one return, but she is not fully herself until she does. Belden C. Lane yearns for this return, "How do I discover the second naiveté of which Paul Ricoeur speaks—the hard-won ability to reclaim the vitalities of myth on the far shore of critical suspicion? How can I be there again, without also denying all that I have since become?"¹³ Lane posits remembering as a way to retrieve religious states. To which one might add that art is especially suited for effecting a recollection which is not a mere going back, but a re-collection of the self into a second naiveté'. The theme of returning is featured in the second and third parts of Martin Buber's *I and Thou*: "Return signifies the recognition of the center, turning back to it again."¹⁴ One returns in order to rediscover what is central to all existence. One can only go so far away before he must try to come home again. According to Alexander S. Kohanski, "Return means complete, wholehearted turning toward the Thou."¹⁵ Buber teaches that humans are, after all, born with an innate Thou; and, unless their pristine paired and pairing nature actualizes itself, they will be profoundly discontent. Since the congenital yearning for the Thou is universal, the artist also turns in this direction—at least, when inspiration directs him to seek the primordial, the integrity of his original nature. Returning requires not just a different goal, but also a different sort of movement.¹⁶ The manipulative, practical movement is superseded by the aesthetic, relational movement of the I gravitating toward and, ideally, being met by a Thou.

At times the child motif is tied to that of the noble savage. Thus when a native Tahitian, whom Gauguin described as "a wild young savage," declared that Gauguin "was useful to others," Gauguin replied: "I indeed believe Totefa is the first human being in the world to use such words toward me. It was the language of a savage or a child, for one must be

either one of these—must one not?—to imagine that an artist might be a useful human being.”¹⁷ Similarly, many would find it hard to imagine that a religious figure might be a useful human being. Gauguin also unites the themes of “letting go” or eliminating the inessential—in Taoist terms, “losing day by day”—and the child: “For my part I soon gave up all these conscious efforts [to grasp a Maori soul] which so interfered with the enjoyment of life. I let myself live simply, waiting confidently in the course of time for the revelations that the first moments had refused. A week went by during which I had a feeling of ‘childlikeness’ such as I have never before experienced.”¹⁸

As Gauguin’s new life restored him to a childlike state, the medieval mystic, Hildegard of Bingen, found a taste of youth in her visions: “I see another light called the ‘living light.’ When and how I see it I cannot say but, during the time I see it, all sadness and anguish disappear, so that I seem to be an innocent young girl and not an old woman.”¹⁹ As Cliff Edwards, author of *Van Gogh* and *God*, has observed, after affirming his spiritual rejuvenation, Charles Dickens’ Scrooge, declares in the same sentence: “I don’t know anything, I’m quite a baby.” A Taoist would agree that to divest oneself of mundane knowledge is to be an infant once more. When Lao Tzu says that the sage keeps people ignorant and there by treats them as if they were children, such ignorance refers to simplicity and innocence, the absence of cleverness and guile. Over conventional knowledge, the Taoist chooses “ignorance” or the “knowledge of no-knowledge.” Always suspicious of rational thought, he seeks higher wisdom—a sudden, intuitive realization—that is “not knowledge” in the discursive sense. Similarly, Tolstoy inveighs against the intellectualism or rationalism of the art schools; and, a contemporary Hindu has observed that his school of Vedantic thought should be so free of intellectualizing that even a child could grasp it. To be like a child again is to re-experience a purity and freedom that are beyond concealment. Perhaps this is why nothing from the world of adults bodies forth the bliss, luminosity and expressiveness of children’s art.

Not only are art and religion inseparable from each other, but they are inseparable and essential aspects of the human condition. Because the two are universally pervasive, interacting forces, one can neither understand nor appreciate a culture without some grasp of its spiritual and artistic expressions. While an individual might eschew religion or art—and this is debatable—one cannot locate a civilization that is altogether bereft of them. Just as humans are sexual and cognitive creatures, they have aesthetic and religious impressions and impulses. As

the Epicureans observed, if particular people do not engage in sex, society can continue, but if all members refrain, society is at an end. While an individual may refrain from participating in the aesthetic or the spiritual, if all people were to abstain from such participation, humanity could not endure. At least it is debatable that any survivors would be humans, i.e., would satisfy the present concept of "human." When cave dwellers began painting pictures and worshipping supernatural powers, they took the necessary steps for there to be a humankind.

One can argue that the awesome richness of art and religion renders them immune to rejection by the individual. If someone were to declare, "I reject all art," he would be making a patently uninformed and quite unwarranted statement, for he could not renounce that with which he was unacquainted. How could he, or any one else, be familiar with the entire gamut of world art from antiquity to the present? One could hardly rule out the classical Spanish guitar, Jazz piano, opera, haiku poetry, Rajput drawings, ballet, Fellini films, Mark Twain's wit, Sung dynasty landscape paintings, a still-life by Cezanne, all cottages, huts, skyscrapers, residences, mosques, temples, and cathedrals, Picasso's classical, blue, rose, surreal, and cubistic periods, all literary masterpieces from all cultures, and all sculpture from primitive to post-modern. Obviously, such a list is endless; and, to complicate matters, the people of Bali say, "We have no art, for we do everything as well as we can." Sue Bender writes of Amish women working unhurriedly, "There was no rushing to finish so they could get on to the 'important things.' For them it was all important."²⁰ As the Balinese resists distinctions between art and non-art, the Amish fails to distinguish between the sacred and the mundane. Clearly, no one knows enough to assert, "I renounce all art."

The same sort of argument holds in the case of religion. Suppose a person disavows Christianity in the form of conservative Protestantism. For a total repudiation of the Christian tradition, one would also need to be familiar with all other expressions such as : the pietistic Amish, the liberation theologians of Catholicism, Christian feminists, the mystical gospel of a Teresa of Avila, the Christianity of a more recondite and scholarly mystic like Meister Eckhart, the abstract theology of Paul Tillich, fifteen volumes by Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas' voluminous, architectonic exposition of theology and philosophy. As if rejecting Christianity, with its two to three hundred, variegated denominations, not to mention their sub-groups, were not problematic enough, rejecting other world religions poses further, equally insuperable problems. Given the inexhaustibly diverse expressions of art and religion, no one can know,

much less evaluate, the varieties of either. There are, after all, atheistic religions such as Confucianism and Theravada Buddhism. Although the categorical rejection of all forms of religion and art is impossible, affirmation is possible, because everyone has some religious stirrings—evoked, for example, by the starry heavens above—that allow her to feel a rapport with the most spiritually accomplished souls; and, everyone has some aesthetic sensitivities that allow her to appreciate and feel a oneness with the most gifted artists of her culture.

Condemning aristocratic art from the Renaissance to the present, Tolstoy asks: "How could it occur that humanity lived for a certain period without real art, replacing it by art which served enjoyment only?"²¹ Tolstoy's reply is that "only a small part of humanity did so, namely the upper classes of European Christian society. Meanwhile, the vast majority of human beings continued to be enriched by what Tolstoy regards as genuine art: the epic of Genesis, the Gospel parables, folk songs, and fairy tales. For him, "to say that a work of art is good but incomprehensible to the majority of men is the same as saying of some kind of food that it is very good, but that most people can't eat it."²² Tolstoy submits that any so-called food, which cannot nourish all humans, is not food at all. Similarly, he argues that any purported art that cannot move all humans is bogus: Food is a necessity of life, not a frill. And if art is truly important, it must be essential, rather than a superfluous ornament; all must have it or suffer accordingly. Further, one might argue that if humans are religious creatures, then to speak about a religion that can only serve a select number is to speak about an impostor. Tolstoy believes that true art is intelligible to every one, for it is no mere frill or idle pastime, but an important aspect of life. After all, what sort of food would it be that could only nourish a small portion of humanity? Similarly, a masterpiece of Christian literature, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, discusses contemplation as "a practice so simple that even the most uneducated peasant may easily find in it a way to real union with God in the sweet simplicity of perfect love."²³ Coomaraswamy champions the aesthetic status of works by peasants, ". . . no distinction can be drawn between the ideas expressed in the humblest peasant art of a given period and those expressed in the actually hieratic arts of the same period."²⁴ Making the comparison between the aesthetic and the spiritual explicit, Tolstoy himself mentions "devotees of art who regard it, "like religion," as essential for all people."²⁵ He simply reasons that whatever is fundamental should be available to all. Moreover, he finds art to be "one of the indispensable means of communication, without which mankind could not exist."²⁶ Thus he concludes that so-called art,

which is not understandable to all, is not art at all. Tolstoy praises straightforward artistic expressions, because they are sincere, unaffected but affecting transmissions of feeling that elevate the human spirit, inspire wonder toward the grandeur of life, and foster rapport with one's brothers and sisters. His criticism of hedonistic art, a similar refrain marks Coomaraswamy's Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art, is that human nature sets limits upon what humans can enjoy, but that their spiritual project, i.e., the advancement of humanity, has no such limits.²⁷

Alongside the religious injunction "Seek and ye shall find," one may place the aesthetic dictum "Practice and you shall achieve" whether in the creation or appreciation of beauty.

The thesis that "All humans can have a measure of success in either religion or art" is supported by Tolstoy, who thinks that if an activity is truly basic to human nature, then it will be universal. Both religion and art are integral to humanity; and, if nothing in nature is in vain, steadfast responses to their respective impulses will not go unrewarded. The religious thinker may argue that any soul that hungers for religion has some capacity to receive it, for otherwise the divine would be a deceiving tempter. Gauguin also expresses optimism about the aesthetic capacity of humans, "Perhaps I have no talent, but—all vanity aside—I do not believe that anyone makes an artistic attempt, no matter how small, without having a little or there are many fools."²⁸ In fine, there is no one who cannot sketch, paint, write, sculpt, dance, sing, play a musical instrument, compose, or frame a simple poetic line; nor is there anyone who cannot recite a traditional prayer, meditate, sing, chant, lose oneself through absorption in a hymn, or be spiritually moved by liturgy or nature.

NOTES

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COLLECTIVE PERSONS IN CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE : ABORTION, ANIMISM, AND ECOLOGICAL PRATITYA-SAMUTPADA

William Herbrechtsmeier

I

Many of us who are engaged in interreligious dialogue do not participate as proponents of dogmatic positions or as representatives of formal religious organizations. We study religious traditions and teachings in order to find guidance for an uncharted future. I have no hope that any dogma or institutional structure will be able to move through time as a sure foundation, as a rudder and compass that will enable us to deal with the new problems that are sure to face us in subsequent historical epochs. But I do believe that the study of dogmas and poems, institutions and saints, can give us an insight into ineffable reality, and that this unveiling of the eyes will allow us to fabricate new dogmas and institutions that will be well suited to deal with the problems we face in our unfolding present. The historical relativity of all our institutions must force us to be honest about this, and to recognize that we do, whether we like it or not, reconstruct reality in every passing generation. We must resolve to be truly intelligent, compassionate, and otherwise clear sighted as we approach problems that have not been faced before by human communities, and we must further resolve to face our responsibilities forthrightly. Clinging tenaciously to dogmas that arose in the historical past, conditioned (as they were) by their times and circumstances, will likely mean that we approach otherwise resolvable problems with an ostrich-like blindness.

Fetal personhood and abortion as a specific social, religious, and legal problem, and as it is most usually discussed in the U.S. today, is a case in point. Within the most public forms of the discussion—as seen on TV and in newspapers, for example—the debate is almost exclusively a shouting match among various groups who insist on the inviolability and eternal validity of their own dogmas, without any serious examination of the axioms on which their position is based, let alone of the implications

which those axioms have in other areas of life at a distance from the abortion debate itself. Even among analytical philosophers, who are quite a thoughtful group, the goal seems to be to deduce the moral implications for life which lie inchoate in our linguistic systems, or to make explicit the rules that lie implicit in traditional ways of thinking.¹ In none of this is there a serious challenge posed to the first principles of current world-views that derive from earlier times, and which may have disastrous implications for us in ours. In this tendency lies implicit the notion that the solution to problems we face in the future is contained in ideas and values that are encoded in dogmas (or in the implicit logical structures of enculturated thought patterns) that we have inherited from previous generations. But such a belief, far from being our salvation, almost certainly implies that we will participate in a form of denial. We will be forced to ignore real world problems when they count as evidence against our most cherished ways of thinking.

II

That conceptions of personhood² are culturally relative has been established for me beyond doubt through the study of the Hebrew Bible. The seed bearing, macho males of ancient Israel who wrote about human rights and responsibility were so confident of their own procreative potential, and so protective of it, that they seemed to offer a kind of limited personhood to even their own semen. What this meant for women, not to mention the seed of other people (like the Egyptians and the Moabites, for example), is too grim and too dramatic for any modern theologian to ignore. We can be thankful that their view of the procreative process has so little in common with modern embryology that no one can really take the literal biblical view seriously any more. Still, as with so many paradoxes that arise from biblical texts, the biblical view of procreation is directly linked with one of the most important foundation stones of Israelite ethical thought: the corporate personality.

It was the ancient Israelite view that individual immortality was guaranteed for males by the propagation of their "seed" to produce as many male descendants as possible. More literally than figuratively, the nation of Israel considered itself to be Abraham's seed, and each person in the nation could be regarded as an individual manifestation of the singular substance that issued forth from their great-great grandfather's loins. It could be said that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob themselves lived on in their progeny, that Israel as a whole constituted the body of Abraham,

and that the nation as a whole was a sort of collective person. Against this background it is possible to understand quite clearly why Yahweh would say to Moses, "I, Yahweh, your god am a jealous god, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me" (Ex 20 : 5), and that he would "by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children, to the third and fourth generation" (Ex 34 : 6-7). And it also explains why Moses would tell the Israelites that Jacob, their father, "went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous" (Deut 26 : 5).

Though the issue is certainly more complicated than I can hope to explain here, the sons of one father considered themselves, in light of their common origin, as much a single person as a collection of individuals. Thus, brothers were commanded to inseminate their childless brothers' widows that the dead man's name could live on (Deut 25 : 5-10; see also Gen 38 and Ruth; the seed of the two brothers was functionally identical, as two kernels from the same hybrid stalk of corn). And acts that would entail wasting the seed were condemned as unclean or as an abomination, so important was it to protect the seed's reproductive potency (e.g., Lev 15 : 15-18; 18 : 19,22-23). This view helped to shape much of Israelite thought, including the sorrow of barren women, the second-class status of women generally, the pariah status of bastards, and the lack of communal feeling between Israelites and their neighbors who did not share in their lineage. Much of this we can happily leave behind.

Still, it has long been recognized among biblical scholars that the notion of the "corporate personality" is an important basis of Israelite (and, therefore, biblical) moral consciousness. Since the Israelites saw themselves collectively as the body and blood of their fathers, they understood themselves to have special responsibilities towards others who were part of that same body, not only in their own time, but also to those in previous and subsequent generations. Thus, it was commonly understood that property was owned by families (intergenerationally), not by individuals, as Naboth knew (1 Kings 21 : 3). And when the authors of Deuteronomy urged unity and morality among Israelites, they did so by preaching that all Israelite males were brothers descended from one man (e.g., Deut 17 : 14-20; 26 : 5-11).

The beauty of this view is that bonds between one person and another were so strong that self-other distinctions could disappear among those who understood the world properly. As descendants of Jacob, they were ontologically one person, and the welfare of the group as a whole naturally

took precedence over the interests of any particular individual. Indeed, problems of "altruism" in the strict sense did not even need to arise in this view, because in the deepest sense "others" did not exist. Having such a profound sense of interconnection with other members of the human community is something that most people in modern industrial societies can only try to imagine.

Sadly enough, the corporate person, which was once a biological reality for Israelites (as it has been for many tribal peoples), is now for the modern ideological descendants of Abraham little more than a metaphor used by a tiny seminary educated elite. Though I would never advocate a return to the system of tribal vendetta justice whereby the crimes of one individual could be visited on other members of his clan because they would all be seen as one person, I am still wistful for a conception of personhood that would allow us to understand our common bonds so powerfully. And even though our later systems of principled ethics (such as those based on love or compassion) have provided new forms of connection among individuals, too frequently we have felt it easy to de-personalize those individuals and races who violate—or lie outside of—our principles. Too rarely do we feel like Jeremiah, whose inner torments were born from his bonds of blood and semen with an unprincipled extended person.

The demise of the corporate person was surely a product of social forces (specifically the rise of the state), but in the West it has also been connected with the rise of ideas about the immortality of an individual, substantial soul as the prime concern of orthodox Christian salvation. Whereas for the ancient Israelites salvation concerned the continued corporeal and cultural welfare of the group, orthodox Christian salvation traditionally had to do with the continued well-being of individual souls after death. For the Israelites, their people as a whole was one person because they had all sprung as a common seed from the loins of one father. They had no concern whatever with the existence of individuals after death.³ On the other hand, Christians have traditionally believed personhood to be individual, because at some point during gestation each fetus became linked with an immortal, indwelling soul. These are incommensurate views, and their existence within one tradition clearly relativizes every attempt to establish any one view of personhood as eternally valid for the tradition. But more than this, these variations in tradition comprise a prime illustration of how the problem of tradition in history is also a problem of intercultural communication and dialogue. Every new generation is, in effect, communicating with another culture as it looks to its own past. This means not only that any group's claim to

represent the authentic biblical or Christian position is ludicrous, but also that any notion of personhood is caught up inextricably within the overall world-view of the culture in which it is articulated and understood. For me this conclusion has been reinforced again and again as I have looked at the rationales for fetal personhood (and sanctions for its protection) from various religious and cultural viewpoints.

In addition to the obvious relativity of Abrahamic revelation on such matters—the Hebrew Scriptures relativize Judaism and Islam as much as Christianity—Buddhist arguments for the illusory character of any substantial self have had a powerful impact on my thinking about persons. While it is certainly true (as Buddhists would agree) that we need clear definitions of persons for legal, doctrinal, and other practical matters, the Buddha taught that any notion of person or self is an arbitrary construct that has only limited usefulness, and it does not correspond with any truly existent thing. Later statements made by such luminaries as Nagarjuna and Chandrakirti, or by their more playful colleagues in the Zen tradition, comprise an effective deconstruction of every notion of self. I have found this critique of self to be appealing particularly because it requires commitment neither to revealed texts nor to an authoritative spokesman of arcane doctrines, but depends only on honest observation and the application of reason. It is, therefore, to the extent that we value and cultivate rationality, accessible to any open minded person, and could serve as a cross-cultural vehicle for reflection on the nature of persons.

The Buddhist dismantling of the self is so thoroughgoing that we needn't stop at considering whether there is some definitive stage of embryological development at which persons begin to exist. It goes even further to show that distinguishing between me, the air I breathe, the sun that warms me, and the space that defines me, is an arbitrary matter that has no independence from human modes of cognition. Hindu arguments about the self, though differing in their particulars, lead in the same direction.⁴

The combination of Hebraic and Buddhist influences has removed every basis in my own mind, whether from revelation or from experience and reason, that would provide an objective, culturally independent, non-arbitrary concept of self or person. But in a deeper sense, reflection on each of these two traditions has shown me that however variable and context laden our concepts of persons may be, the concepts we choose to define our consciousness must both help to liberate beings from the social structures that enslave them, and also eventually enable every conscious being to transcend the illusions of self and society that keep us all bound

to suffering. It is certainly impossible to describe a transcendental view of compassion, social justice, and cosmic awareness that stands outside of history and cultural context, but it is the intuition of many (however ineffable) that our efforts as moral agents must be directed towards alleviating social injustices and suffering among humans especially, but also among other beings with sense and personality. As we fabricate views on fetal personhood and an ethic of abortion, this—not specific doctrinal views from the past—must be the focus of our attention.⁵

The third influence on my thinking has been from various writings on shamanism. While on the basis of my studies in Abrahamic tradition and Buddhism I can find no reason to believe that any one view of personhood could ever claim absolute authority over human consciousness, shamanic studies have taught me that there is no reason to exclude animals (as the Children of Abraham have) or non-sentient beings (as Buddhism has⁶) from the class of persons. Only from shamans and from other forms of nature spiritism have I learned that plants too, and even minerals and the weather, can have personalities. In all of the major religious traditions that grew up in urban civilization, the way of life was of necessity alienated from an intimate contact with the natural world. But among those people whose existence has depended on more intimate relations with nature, the awareness of personality in natural forces has remained acute. A major concern in the variety of nature based religions in hunter-gatherer societies, for example (classed, broadly speaking under the heading of “animism”), has been to practice means of establishing relationships between the human community and the variety of spirits that animate other aspects of the world. These traditions have even been able to articulate how people can use other living beings as resources—that is to say, kill them—without violating their integrity as persons. While we in the so-called civilized world may be aghast that certain hunter-gatherers would eat other humans, we should be even more deeply alarmed that we can systematically prey on non-human beings with no mythic or ritual means for propitiating the spirits of these persons. It is no mean feat that primal religionists have been able to articulate a compassionate relationship with the creatures they feed upon and compete with. Their thinking could have profound implications not only for how we deal with the personhood of fetuses, but also for how we deal with the other species of living beings and the myriad natural processes with whom we cohabit the planet. It seems clear to me that only arguments of the basest self-interest and the narrowest spiritual imagination could deny that other creatures have equal claim to personhood with us, especially given the

widespread disagreement, arbitrariness, and historical-cultural relativity concerning the definition of even human persons.⁷

III

It is not too bold to say that our species' overpopulation of the earth is among the most pressing problems faced by humanity today. Though problems of population density have forever been a problem for earth bound species, the magnitude of the problem and our awareness of it have increased geometrically in the past few decades. Given the current astronomical rate of species extinction, given the pollution of the planet's surface water, given the depletion of aquifers, the strip mining of mineral and agricultural substances—the list goes on, and on, and on..., we must recognize that there is no more room on our planet for further expansion of the human population, and that the increase by one of human numbers most certainly implies a decrease in other species and in the quality of their lives. This is surely a condition that must shape our consideration of the morality of abortion.

Even for those who do not share my conviction that non-humans are persons, it must surely be clear by this time that increases in any human population imply a degradation of life for themselves or for other people, and will eventually imply disastrous consequences for all of us. Thus, choices made against abortion and simultaneously for larger families are not merely choices "for life," as many conservative dogmatic propagandists would suggest, but are choices made for the survival of specific individuals whose existence and welfare imply the non-existence, destruction, or diminution of other persons elsewhere on the planet. Though I would never deign to dictate abortion policy to those who live in India, China, South America, or anywhere else that lives in the wake of Euro-colonialism and in the shadow of U.S. mega-consumption, I feel compelled to shake a finger in the face of my fellow white skinned Euro-American Christians who condemn abortion as immoral without offering a workable solution to the problem of how exploding population affects adversely the lives of so many people on Earth. If there were a *workable* solution to the problem of human population growth that did not include abortion, we would surely all choose it. However, given the pervasive attachment to the joys of coitus and the ineffectiveness of other forms of birth control by themselves (whether from the irresponsibility of individuals or from mechanical failure), any comprehensive program to limit the growth of our population will surely include the use of abortion

—at least for a time.

Still, if we are to take the lives of non-human creatures more seriously, and if we were to consider even traditionally non-biological things (such as rivers, mountains, clouds—even the planet itself) as endowed with personality and life, then the priority placed on human embryos for protection could be seen as arbitrary—indeed, even hostile to the existence of other living beings. And if we were to recognize further that stages of embryological development are merely parts of a life process that begins long before conception, continues on long after the death of individual organisms, and includes the transmutation of beings animal, vegetable, and mineral into the illusory forms we call “human beings,” then (perhaps) we would be able to lend greater respect to the integrity of the whole of life than to the protection of our individual offspring.

This need not be taken to imply that we become heartless towards human fetuses, nor that we regard them as non-persons. In fact, to interrupt a life process anywhere should be understood, especially by those of keen spiritual insight, as a momentous act, one not to be undertaken lightly. A fundamental principle should be that we *never* undertake the interruption of life process lightly or cold-heartedly, including when we weed gardens, prune fruit trees, dam rivers, slaughter animals for food, or squash insects for our comfort. And it is further to recognize that life itself demands the interruption of one process by the intrusion of another. Life implies death; from death springs life. It is our responsibility as rational, moral, and compassionate creatures to ensure that the ways in which we channel our destructive-creative efforts enhance life as a whole, and we should also maintain a compassionate, perceptive awareness of our place in the matrix of life, especially as regards our relationship with the non-human persons who live, along with us, as individual expressions of our solar-planetary parents. Just as Thich Nhat Hanh describes *pratitya-samutpada* as “interbeing”, and illustrates its importance by pointing out the arbitrary distinction between paper and clouds, so could we recognize the arbitrary nature of distinctions made between any of us as individuals and the primal protoplasm that was the first form of life on earth some billions of years ago. And just as the Israelites believed themselves to be part of a single corporate person because Abraham had sired them all, so now we can understand ourselves as human individuals to be one body with all of the other creatures who have descended from that first life, and to have individual existence only like the jewels in Indra’s net. It is not the killing of individuals that impedes the flourishing of this life process in any case, for the relationship between predator and prey is inevitable.⁸ Our concern

should be that we do not so condition the environment in which we live that suffering increases among the spirits of the earth, that the means to escape suffering is eroded, or that our own eyes become clouded to our responsibilities to others as we feed on them. Along with the hardening of our hearts, it is the conviction that we are superior to and independent from the web of life that allows us to regard all other individuals within the planetary ecosystem as mere resources available for our harvest. The rapacious extremes to which such a hard-hearted harvest can go are manifest in the life-styles and ethics of four-wheeled, air-conditioned, fossil fueled, beef fed, clear cut, and Desert Stormed American life—which is all-too-frequently committed to the “right to life.”

Since moral life in the Kali Yuga is ever fraught with paradox, we are never left with absolute, but only with better and worse moral options. Our interconnectedness with other beings in an ecological *pratitya-samutpada* of planetary scope means that our life as a species requires the death of individuals from other species, and ultimately our lives as individuals affect adversely—even to the point of death—the lives of others on the planet. There is no option that allows us to avoid this problem altogether; but we can choose to act in such ways that curtail the effects of our death dealing lives by limiting our numbers and our consumption. Surely it would be nobler of us to restrain our own reproductive urges (including the preternatural desire to nurture every fertilized ovum to full adulthood⁹) than to slaughter more and more of those we prey on; and surely it is better for us to balance our needs with others', than to consume the beings of the world in the frenzied potlatch that arises from our clinging to self, to our families, and to the idolatry of *Homo sapiens sapiens*.

IV

All of this being said—and even more understood—what would an ethic of abortion look like if it were to revere both the sanctity of human life process (including even the personhood of fetuses) as well as the integrity of non-human beings? The attitudes of many primal peoples towards life are certainly instructive in a general way, especially among hunters who recognize and respect the personhood of the beings they prey upon, beings whose spirits are propitiated through rituals that help to maintain relationships among species by opening the hearts of the hunters in gratitude towards their prey. And I am especially impressed by the variety of Shiva/Osiris ideals in religions around the world, which acknowledge the inevitability of destruction as a prerequisite for creation,

and of death as a pre-condition of rebirth and regeneration.

But specifically as regards the problem of abortion, modern Japanese Buddhist views might stand as a model of compassion that could help us begin to deal with the concerns that I have discussed above. Of all peoples in the modern world, the Japanese have perhaps dealt most responsibly with the problem of over-population, and their attitudes towards abortion have developed in direct relation to this concern.¹⁰ Still, it is not specifically their ability to limit population growth through the use of a clinical procedure that interests me; Chinese Communists and certain Western materialists utilize the procedure in a most unappealing way, inasmuch as they seem to view fetuses with no qualitative distinction from appendixes and tonsils. Rather it is the ethic and metaphysics of abortion that have developed in Japan that are of interest to me. For if abortion is a necessary component of any truly effective family planning program, it is not whether we use abortion, but how we view it, that must be our chief concern.

An important feature of abortion in Japan is the ritual known as *mizuko kuyo*, which helps people to recognize the "necessary sorrow" implied in an abortion, which sends the soul of the aborted fetus on to a propitious rebirth, and which "softens the hearts" of those who might otherwise regard abortion as a mere clinical convenience. Whatever non-Buddhists may think of *samsara* and the continued spiritual existence of aborted fetuses, all people should be able to see that the interruption of gestation is a momentous act, which (while necessary, perhaps) should be perceived with sorrow by compassionate people.

What I find appealing in *mizuko kuyo* is a combination of elements. In the first place, Japanese Buddhists recognize the personhood of the fetus.¹¹ This is implicit in any view of *samsara*, and it requires a deep respect for the life process at work during gestation—indeed, especially respect for the beings who indwell their mothers' wombs. Regardless of whether the mythopoeia of *karma* and *samsara* is appealing to us, we should be able to appreciate the value of imagining the world in such a way that we approach momentous acts authentically. On the other hand, the Japanese recognize that happy families depend on giving birth to children who are truly wanted, and for whom adequate care can be provided. Unwanted pregnancies, therefore, are not merely a material threat (in terms of more bodies to be fed and housed), but also detrimental to the family values on which the whole of societal welfare depends. This is a microcosmic recognition of the social and political implications of over-population. Within this paradoxical situation (where they find themselves compelled to act in sorrowful ways) the Japanese consider abortion's biggest threat

to be such an expansion of the practice that it would be understood as routine.¹² If people were ever to view abortion as merely a clinical procedure—like an appendectomy—this would also pose a serious threat to society because of a hardening of the heart that would allow people to become insensitive to the unborn. Thus, *mizuko kuyo* rites are conceived as a means of dealing with both horns of this dilemma: they provide for the needs of the aborted fetus by providing a ritual transition to its next incarnation, which will be, largely in virtue of these rites, the best possible; and they serve to heighten the awareness of people involved with abortions, and thus “soften the hearts” of people who might otherwise become calloused from the pain of the act.

Mizuko kuyo rites are also explicitly concerned with the need to help women overcome the anguish that so often accompanies the termination of a pregnancy,¹³ and from this we in the U.S. can learn an urgent lesson. There can be no doubt that individual women have the closest relationship to the beings within their bodies, and we do no one a service by heaping guilt on women who feel compelled to abort the life process at work within them. The climate is so emotionally charged in most cultures—even in Japan—that women are forced to bear the responsibility for abortions entirely on their own and (for the most part) without a moral or ritual framework within which they can let go of their pain. In fact, the guilt we have traditionally heaped on women in the West has forced them into isolated anxiety over actions that have been forced upon them by us all—particularly us men. It is time that we publicly acknowledge the pain rightfully felt by women, recognize the complicity and responsibility of us all in this act which women must undergo personally, and provide community rituals that allow for healing and transition.

Abortion is inevitably sorrowful and a source of anguish. But it need not be seen as wrong. As is implicit in the Japanese Buddhist view generally, its sorrow is one that arises from acting in a paradoxical world. In order to live as part of the life and death process which characterizes every ecosystem, all creatures must kill in order to maintain their own lives. Thus, it is only fitting that we give of ourselves that others may live. No matter how we compose the ethics of life and death, there is sorrow written on every page: to live ourselves we must all prey on others, and we must ourselves die that others may live. But there is also joy in the kinship that arises from the exchange of life for life. We are all one life, a single extended person, a single process in which all of us—as individuals, as species, as beings of every kind—find expression. Our participation in this extended, collective, life-giving and life-savoring

consciousness is limited chiefly by a lack of imagination and compassion, particularly when these are constrained by excessive attachment to our individual or familial selves, and to a metaphysic of human superiority and spiritual independence from other forms of life and spirit.

NOTES

1. For example, see Jay L. Garfield and Patricia Hennessey (eds.), *Abortion, Moral and Legal Perspectives*. (Amherst : Univ. of Massachusetts., 1984), or Michael F. Goodman (ed.), *What Is a Person?* (Clifton, NJ : Humana Press, 1988).

2. Throughout this essay I use the terms "person" and "personhood" with advised ambiguity. See further commentary in subsequent footnotes.

3. It should be pointed out here that Judaism as it is known around the world today cannot be equated with the religion of the ancient Israelites as I am describing it here. Notions of individual immortality that have existed in Judaism for the last couple millennia arose during the late Second Temple period, and did not exist before the destruction of the monarchy by the Babylonians in the early 6th century BCE.

4. I am aware that Hindu views on the nature of *atman* are philosophically distinct and incommensurate with Buddhist views, and Buddhists have felt compelled to argue extensively against Hindu positions on the nature of self. My only point here is to suggest that as Buddhists and Hindus approach ultimates in the description of the self, both groups are inclined to argue that common sense perceptions of the self are fraught with illusion, and a more enlightened view entails a recognition of the profound interconnections between perceived selves and the whole of reality, to the point that persons should seek release from any attachment to their own phenomenal individuality.

5. In conversations on this topic with Jay Garfield, he has suggested to me that it would probably be better to "jettison the entire framework of personhood as the foundation for moral discourse. I just don't see why ethics needs persons. They only get in the way as metaphysical clutter. Why not recast moral discourse altogether in terms of non-personal beings? Then we could ask : What is the appropriate moral attitude towards beings such as . . . , and then consider the panoply of appropriate concerns, without the metaphysical overlay." I'm inclined to agree with Garfield on this point, but to elaborate on the issue of personhood from a systematic point of view within ethical discourse would open up too many problems for me to deal with here. My concern with persons is more mythopoeic than philosophical/rational, as will appear shortly. In this mode of perception the existence of persons, or at least of personalities, is unavoidable, and I am convinced

that the philosophical concern with persons is based on the intuition that persons have personality. Thus, the existence, nature, and moral standing of beings with personality is the prior and more interesting question for me, as will also appear shortly.

6. It is true that in some instances Buddhism has granted personhood and spirit to beings outside the zoological community (see, for example, Eiki Hoshino and Dosho Takeda, "Indebtedness and Comfort : The Undercurrents of *Mizuko Kuyo* in Contemporary Japan." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 14 [1987 : 305-320]. However, I am alluding to the special status that is given to sentient beings and traditional interpretations of *ahimsa* that protect them from harm. To my knowledge, plants, rivers, and other "non-sentient" beings are not given similar sorts of protections.

7. It should now be clear why I have chosen to use the words "person" and "personhood" with such intentional ambiguity. From my reading of the philosophical, theological, and legal literature on the moral status of embryos, it is an unwritten assumption that only humans could have status as persons. Thus, to establish that the fetus is a human seems to be (for nearly everyone) sufficient to demonstrate that it is a person, and that this in turn warrants its legal protection. However, if we were genuinely willing to entertain the possibility that non-human beings have personality, and that such personalities are worthy of recognition and respect, then the whole question of abortion would have to be recast, along with questions of meat eating, strip mining, clear cutting, net fishing, and so forth. Are we willing to think this deeply about our relationships with the world? Typically it's easier simply to reject the personhood of non-human beings out of hand.

I suppose that my argument about respecting persons of all sorts might be reduced to a plea for entering into an I-Thou relationship with more aspects of reality than merely other human beings. This is implicit, I believe, in various forms of animistic consciousness, because encountering something as possessing a personality implies a qualitatively different relationship than that we conceive of having with mere "its." The existence of this I-Thou relationship with many different aspects of nature is the reasons why primal peoples find it necessary to ritualize their relations with so much of nature. They know that they cannot act in nature respecting only themselves. There is something for us to learn in this.

8. By this I imply, of course, that plants are the prey of vegetarians, and indirectly that those other animals with whom we compete for access to vegetables for food also become casualties of our feasts.

9. Does this imply that I favor infanticide? No, certainly not. Indeed, I do not favor killing other creatures that I might live—but I am left with no other option. Similarly, if we conclude that human embryos are human persons, then

embryonic infanticide may be the best moral option available to us as members of a species that is populating other creatures out of their right to life.

10. William R. LaFleur, "Contestation and Consensus : The Morality of Abortion in Japan." *Philosophy East & West* 1990 (40) : 529-542.

11. Again, I use the word "personhood" advisedly. It is probably inappropriate to export this term from Western moral discourse to the Japanese context. But insofar as I am trying to discuss culturing an I-Thou relationship with the world, I regard the Japanese Buddhist mythopoeic universe as one worthy of emulation precisely because it sees an embryo as a person in the mythic sense.

12. LaFleur, *ibid.*, 537.

13. Bardwell Smith, "Buddhism and Abortion in Contemporary Japan: *Mizuko kuyo* and the Confrontation with Death." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 1988 (15) : 3-24. Also, Richard Fox Young, "Abortion, Grief and Consolation: Prolegomena to a Christian Response to *Mizuko Kuyo*." *Japan Christian Quarterly* 1989(Winter) : 31-39.

