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NEWSLETTER ON ASIAN AND ASIAN-AMERICAN PHILOSOPHERS AND PHILOSOPHY

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Chenyang Li, Editor

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FROM THE EDITOR

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Comparative philosophy can be understood broadly as philosophizing across two or more philosophical systems or traditions. Today, when people say comparative philosophy they typically mean philosophizing across cultural traditions, even though the lines between cultures are not always easily drawn. We do not need a precise definition of comparative philosophy to see the value and benefit of doing comparative philosophy. Different philosophies may have different issues to deal with because of their respective understandings of the world and human society; they may also share some philosophical problems, even if they do not tackle these problems in the same way. As we compare, we see both differences and similarities. Seeing differences helps us better understand one another; seeing similarities makes us feel less distant from one another and enhances our human solidarity. Comparative philosophy, however, is not merely about seeing differences and similarities across traditions. Drawing rich resources from other traditions can help one's own practice of philosophy become more fruitful. Philosophizing across traditions enables us to expand our horizons and to see things from different perspectives. In the contemporary world, philosophizing without looking beyond one's own philosophical system or tradition proves increasingly impoverished and parochial.

This issue presents eight articles on comparative philosophy. Robert Cummings Neville discusses the role of comparative philosophy in serving today's global philosophic public. Neville argues that traditional resources are woefully inadequate in dealing with today's philosophical problems and philosophers need to move through comparative philosophy to integrative philosophy in order to make philosophy meaningful in today's globalized world. Eliot Deutsch sees comparative philosophy as "cross-cultural." While some see comparative philosophy as helping us know ourselves better or helping us discover universal patterns of thought, Deutsch argues that a central role of comparative philosophy is to enhance our philosophical creativity. Using an example of comparative study in aesthetics, Deutsch illustrates how comparative philosophy can be creative philosophy. Drawing on personal experience in studying ethical theories, Joel Kupperman discusses two main reasons for doing comparative philosophy. First, it enables us to appreciate different philosophies. Second, the suggestiveness of philosophy in an unfamiliar tradition provides new prompts for philosophical investigations. Kupperman argues that comparative studies of

philosophy help us retain balance in our philosophical thinking and remain mindful of normal patterns of life choices. As an Anglo-American analytic philosopher who fruitfully crosses into European continental philosophy, Samuel Wheeler III presents a Quinean-Davidsonian account of comparative philosophy. Using the example of Derrida and Quine-Davidson, Wheeler illustrates how, from a Davidsonian viewpoint, interpretation across philosophical traditions is possible even though there are no trans-linguistic Platonic meanings. Walter Benesch addresses the matter of comparative philosophy at a metaphysical level. Using the analogy between the chaos and fractal nature of the human mind and chaos and fractals in physical spaces, Benesch argues that the goal of comparative philosophy is to combine different dimensions of philosophical systems in order to facilitate awareness of the fractal nature of thinking in systems and to further understanding of different systems of philosophical thinking. Kisor K. Chakrabarti uses a comparative approach in analyzing a classical problem of induction associated with the Indian philosopher Carvaka (6th century BCE?). Using the rule of double negation, the De Morgan rule, the rule of disjunctive syllogism and the rule of *modus tollens* in western logic, K. Chakrabarti reformulates and sheds new light on an old argument for induction made by Gangesa, a great Nyaya philosopher of the 13th century CE. His attempt serves here as an example of philosophizing cross-culturally. Arindam Chakrabarti attacks a bogus dichotomy between analytic and comparative philosophy. Specifically, he argues that there is no distinction between analytic philosophy on the one hand, and Indian philosophy on the other, as many western philosophers hold. Using an example in philosophy of mind, he shows that western analytic philosophy and Indian philosophy share some of the same philosophical problems and, while Indian philosophy can be done in a highly analytic way, western analytic philosophy can benefit from seriously exploring Indian philosophy. Finally, Bo Mou discusses three distinct orientations in comparative studies via a metaphilosophical examination of the appropriateness of four oft-cited accusations in evaluating comparative philosophical works. These four accusations are over-simplification, over-using external resources, exaggerated distinction, and blurring assimilation. Mou argues that whether a comparative study commits any of these "sins" depends on the orientations or purposes of the study. Some studies can be faulted, but without taking into consideration the specific context of a study such accusations may be simply mistaken and unproductive.

Three of these papers (Benesch, Kupperman, and Wheeler) have been presented at an invited symposium at the 2002 APA Pacific meeting in Seattle. Let me thank the symposium commentator Professor Peimin Ni of Grand Valley State University for his excellent commentary on all three papers, and all eight authors for their contributions to this issue. My hope is that we as philosophers will benefit from comparative philosophy in the years to come.

ARTICLES

Beyond Comparative to Integrative Philosophy

Robert Cummings Neville
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The thesis of this essay is that vital and creative philosophy today needs to operate within a public that integrates reflections from as many of the world's philosophic traditions as possible. To support this thesis I shall first make some remarks about an appropriate philosophic public for vital philosophy. Then I shall comment on some of the kinds of comparative philosophy that are helpful for the integration of the world's philosophic traditions into a public. Finally, I shall suggest a two-tiered agenda for integrative philosophy.

1. What is a philosophic public?

A voluntarist answer is that a philosophy's public is anyone the philosopher chooses to address, and this can be quite narrow as in some program philosophies.¹ The advantage of a program philosophy is that everyone understands the terms and advances within the parameters of the program; perhaps it is a little like a scientific experiment to see how far the programmatic ideas go. But such a public is not really public: it is a private conversation.

A traditionalist answer is that a philosophy's public consists of those who accept the cultural premises with which it is framed, the styles of argument characteristic of the tradition, and that tradition's self-understanding of what its philosophy is trying to prove. A tradition, of course, moves through many different positions, but it has an unfolding story that gives contemporary bearers of the tradition their identity. Western philosophy, for instance, is self-conscious about its beginnings with the Socratic movement in ancient Greece (for all the diversity in that movement), its relations to religion in late antiquity and the medieval period, and its Enlightenment heritage of epistemological skepticism, foundationalism, complex relations with science, romantic reactions, and now postmodernism. Chinese philosophy in a similar way defines itself in terms of the core texts and motifs of Daoist and Confucian classics, the struggles with sinicizing Indian Buddhism, the recovery of Neo-Confucianism and now a reconstruction of that East Asian tradition in relation to Western thought. The South Asian tradition in its orthodox schools variously affirms the authority of the Vedas while the unorthodox schools finesse them, and the integral South Asian tradition takes its identity from the interplay of these. The Islamic tradition takes a different rise from Plato, Aristotle, and Neo-Platonism than the European took, and developed its philosophic tradition in dialectical relation to Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, the Hinduisms of the Moghul Empire in India, and the complex forms of Buddhism in Southeast Asia. Although many occasions of contact among these traditions have occurred, their separate identities as traditions have been emphasized in the last two centuries in reaction to imperialism. Representing the imperial winning culture, western philosophy established itself from Harvard to Hong Kong in the curriculum of the modern university. The other philosophies in reaction have attempted during the last two centuries to define themselves over against Western philosophy. Representatives of each of these world traditions

have been able to say that "real" philosophy is the one that accepts "our" cultural assumptions, "our" ways of argument, and "our" interpretation of the horizons that give meaning to philosophy.

The problem with the traditionalist answer is that the philosophic concerns that come from alien cultural premises, different styles of argument, and different interpretations of what is at stake are precisely the ones from which it is most important to learn. They are most ready to illuminate unacknowledged presuppositions, blind spots in argumentation, and disorientation concerning what is at stake. So philosophers have a great need to open their positions to thinkers from other cultures and invite them to come into one's argumentation. Only a philosophy that is deliberately vulnerable to correction is likely to get very far. A philosophy that is heavily entrenched within a set of cultural premises about the nature of philosophy, a certain conception of rationality and argument, and a rigid interpretation of the horizons of its significance is fragile. The best philosophy is the one that is most vulnerable to correction and that has amended and steadied itself through as many corrective examinations as possible. The real public for a philosophy is the set of perspectives that might correct it.²

So I would argue that the philosophic public today consists of anyone with an interest in the outcome of the argument and the willingness to work to understand it. This is a global public. People from any philosophic culture are in one's public, if they have an interest and devotion to the necessary work.

Now it might be thought that willingness to work to understand one's argument means accepting the cultural premises with which it is framed, the style of argument, even the argument's self-understanding of what it is trying to prove. But that is not so. Someone from a different philosophic culture might challenge cultural premises, styles of rationality, and even the understanding of the enterprise of philosophy. These are precisely the challenges that make philosophy live. Otherwise, philosophy becomes repetitive, preoccupied with authenticity to its tradition, while the society's need for wisdom gets palmed off on disciplines and groups less able to respond with deep resources.

The global public for philosophy should not be defined only negatively, as if one needs to be ready to defend oneself against alien traditions. The positive definition is that those other traditions should be sought out for the critical insights they might have. Each philosophic tradition needs to build bridges to the others to engage the others in critical dialogue. Here is where comparative philosophy is an indispensable tool.

2. Comparative Philosophy

Comparative philosophy, of course, is not new. Aristotle began the *Metaphysics* with a classification of philosophies known to him. The six orthodox schools of Indian philosophy were attempts to reconstitute a Vedic-Hindu tradition in the face of Buddhist challenges, and in explicit dialogue with Buddhisms of several sorts. The ancient Chinese philosophers compared one another's perspectives, and the argument can be made that the distinction between philosophic Confucianism and Daoism was not formally important until drawn in the 9th century to set Chinese philosophies over against foreign Buddhist ones.³ Comparative philosophy is always at work where dialogue takes place between philosophic positions that do not share cultural assumptions, styles of rationality, and interpretations of the meaning of philosophy.

Comparative philosophies in the 20th century have been of two main types, which can be called the objectivist and normative approaches.⁴ The objectivist approach embraces

several kinds. The most ancient is Aristotle's typological method, carried on in the 20th century by Richard McKeon, Stephen Pepper, Robert S. Brumbaugh, Walter Watson, and David Dilworth.⁵ A second main kind is the social science approach brought to such brilliance in Randall Collins' magnificent *The Sociology of Philosophies: A Global Theory of Intellectual Change*.⁶ A third kind is philosophy of culture as pioneered by F. S. C. Northop's *The Meeting of East and West* and illustrated with great depth in the comparative books by Roger Ames and the late David L. Hall.⁷ Yet a fourth kind, called the historical analysis of core texts and motifs, was practiced in my *Boston Confucianism*.⁸

The normative approaches to comparison are far rarer. They involve the deliberate use of disciplined comparison to make a philosophic point. Roger Ames' and David L. Hall's *Democracy of the Dead* is an excellent example of this.⁹ The normative approach to comparison in fact is a kind of integrative philosophy that is explicit in its comparative work, in contrast to the integrative philosophy that simply builds an argument on the resources brought together by comparison.¹⁰

The mention of normative comparison raises a controversial issue. Does not normative comparison run the very grave risk of distorting the philosophies compared because of the normative case being made? For instance, Ames and Hall's *Democracy of the Dead* asks what kind of Western philosophy would be helpful for China today in light of its Confucian heritage, and answers *pragmatism*. A critic can easily say that this argument is almost bound to distort both Confucianism and pragmatism.

The controversy is even deeper, however. Objectivist theories of comparison also have normative elements. The selection of the categories according to which ideas are compared, the respect in which comparisons are made, and the purposes and contexts of comparison all are functions of values operative in the comparison. To defend comparison of either the objective or normative sorts against charges of high-risk distortion and bias, it is necessary to note in detail where the biasing values might occur. By controlling for these values and their functions, I shall argue, comparisons themselves can be made vulnerable to correction before they do much harm.¹¹

The first thing to note about a comparison is that it always involves a "theory" that holds the things to be compared in view together. Postmodernists and other have long pointed out that the "theory" involved in most cross-cultural intellectual comparisons is not the explicit theory stated but rather a higher level perspective, usually that of Western culture. So, Western philosophy (or religion) defines the categories that we take to be important respects in which things are to be compared. This already biases what counts as philosophy (or religious ideas—outside the West these are not easily distinguished). Some critics point out that any theory is logocentric—that's what a theory is, a logos of what gets registered and related to what. If a theory is logocentric, it marginalizes the philosophies that do not get registered, and therefore should be avoided. Do not compare at all, these critics imply, only juxtapose the different philosophies; let each tell its story without saying how they compare.¹²

Juxtaposition might be necessary at the beginning stages of building a global philosophic public because some philosophers might not realize that there are many modes of philosophy other than their own. But juxtaposition does not get very far. To overcome the criticism that all comparison reflects a logocentric and therefore marginalizing theory, we can recall a lesson from Charles Peirce.

In his delightful essay about the logic of theories, called "A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God," Peirce pointed

out that the development and testing of a theory have several stages, not all of which are deductive in Aristotle's sense of following according to a rule (e.g., *modus ponens*).¹³ The first stage he called abduction or retroduction, and it is a guess at a theoretical idea that might solve the problem at hand; in a comparison, it would be guessing at the respect in which to compare the things at hand. Then this guess, which might be quite fanciful, needs to be elaborated in theoretical terms, well-formed formulas. Neither of these first two moves proceeds according to a rule, but we seem to have evolved pretty good instincts for making progress quickly. The third step is to deduce out predictive consequences from the theory that can then be tested in experience, a kind of reasoning that does follow from rules. Up to this point, most philosophers of science would have followed Peirce and now move to seeing whether the experiential or experimental predictions hold. But Peirce makes a bold unexpected move. He points out that the theoretical categories themselves might have all sorts of bias and that they in turn need to be examined as to whether they distort the experience they are supposed to categorize. Only after they have been demonstrated to be non-distorting (or their distortions understood and controlled for) should the testing of the theory proceed by examining how much experience supports the theory and how much it does not. So a crucial part of theoretical development is to take the side of the phenomena, as it were, to see whether they are registered appropriately in the theoretical categories that classify them. To put the point another way, in the process of formulating comparative hypotheses, it is necessary to install a dialectical check that asks whether the well-formed formulas of the hypothesis in fact resonate with the ideas to be compared. That they can express the ideas in their own terms is not doubted. But that is the problem. The question is whether they do so with bias, and whether that bias can be controlled for.

Of course no completely neutral standpoint exists for saying what the phenomena are before relating them to theoretical comparative categories. But we dare not let the comparative theory say what the ideas have to mean in order to count in the comparison, for that marginalizes what might be the most important elements. So a checklist of sorts needs to be developed to get a new perspective on whether and how the theoretical categories register the ideas to be compared. In the natural sciences, this is the point where theories of instrumentation are very important. In comparing philosophic ideas from different cultures, the following checklist is helpful:

1. Examine the ideas to be compared in their own terms, in their classic texts. This lets the ideas to be compared speak for themselves, a kind of "intrinsic" analysis. But we cannot take them at face value, as the various hermeneutics of suspicion have taught us.
2. Examine how each idea in its cultural context or heritage takes up a perspective on other ideas and practices in its context. This "perspectival" analysis is not to get at the perspective of the comparativist but at the perspective the idea has on its own culture. Here is where ideas that look very similar in expression from different cultures might be shown to be very different indeed, the similarity being an illusion.
3. Examine how each idea to be compared can be understood in the terms of as many explanatory theories as practicable, not including the comparative theory to be applied. Here is the point at which reductionist explanations, such as in the social sciences and hermeneutics of suspicion, have their day, showing their power and limitations.

4. Examine how each idea has practical consequences when lived with or believed in various contexts, both within its culture of origin and in others. One has to be careful of too hasty a pragmatism; nevertheless, the pragmatic point has its moment. If the comparative theory cannot register what an idea means in practice, it is not fit to classify the idea.
5. Cultivate a sense of what is singular about the ideas to be compared, those things that inevitably get lost in comparisons and juxtapositions. This point is explicitly non-comparative, but it works to increase sensitivity to bias.

The heuristic device of such a checklist serves as a kind of phenomenological counterweight to the theoretical unfolding of comparative hypotheses.¹⁴ Of course there is no guarantee that all biases have been identified and controlled for. But attention to the question whether the theoretical terms of the comparison bias the things compared can be focused in some detail if such a checklist is observed.

The most important thing to notice about comparisons is that they are hypotheses. If the comparative work has been done well, they are well-grounded hypotheses and can be taken for granted. Nevertheless, if the public within which the comparison are made includes those whose traditions include the ideas compared, the comparative hypotheses are vulnerable to valuable criticism. Comparative hypotheses are best justified when they have been made vulnerable to correction and subjected to as many challenges as possible.

Philosophic ideas are not at all easy to compare because each has its own contested provenance. How can we compare Plato's theory of forms with the Neo-Confucian conception of principle or *li* if Platonists do not agree about the theory of forms and Confucians dispute the meaning of *li*? In each tradition, contests exist between what the ideas have meant in the past and how they might be reconstructed to address issues of the day. This is part of a living philosophic tradition. So the point of comparison for the sake of integrative philosophy is not just intellectual history but the creation of a conversation within which all the parties share in the struggle to develop old ideas into new ones, each appreciative of the heritages of the others as well as the creative challenges. Comparative hypotheses, then, are both backward looking, as in comparative intellectual history, and forward looking as in the work of creative reconstruction for contemporary purposes.

3. A Two-Tiered Agenda for Integrative Philosophy

Problems face philosophers today for which there are woefully inadequate traditional resources. These are moral or cultural problems with great urgency, what William James would have called "forced options."

For instance, because of advances in economics and other social sciences, we now can seriously entertain questions about the nature of *global* distributive justice. When Thomas Aquinas thought about distributive justice he had in mind, say, France, with its king, or at most the Holy Roman Empire with its titular monarch, not a global situation with no one government or even a set of competing governments that govern in the same sense: Somalia, Japan, Argentina, France, and the European Common Market need to be conceived together to understand distributive justice. Knowing something new and rich about the causal properties of a global economy presents urgent demands to understand global distributive justice. No philosophic tradition has thought in this context before, however much it might have anticipations.

Advances in biological and chemical sciences have taught us that the Earth is an ecosystem in such a way that no philosophic or religious traditions developed so far can say clearly what it means to "be at home" on the planet. Human activities can radically change the environment in a short time, and none of our old models of "how to inhabit the earth" gives guidance equal to the scientific knowledge we have or the technological power. The widespread use of the WorldWideWeb is quickly undermining suppositions in all philosophic cultures about differences between elite and popular thinking and communication. In these and many areas, imaginative philosophic thought is greatly needed and no cultural tradition has the answers. I need not belabor the point that these philosophical problematics are the proper topics of the global philosophical conversation, not especially apt for one tradition or another.¹⁵ This is the first tier of the philosophic agenda: philosophy for practical global life, respectful of all peoples with their philosophic traditions and going beyond all.

The second tier is more subtle to state but should not be unexpected. Practical problems such as those just mentioned were the stimulus of the invention of philosophy in the ancient cultures: problems of war and peace in China, of new religions that destroyed cultural authority in India, of sophistic critiques of the Greek civilization's values in Plato's time. In order to respond to those practical problems, all the world civilizations developed philosophies that ask the grand questions: what does it mean to exist, to have value, to be obliged, to know beauty, to have virtues? What is reality versus illusion, harmony versus disorder, truth versus advantage? How should we understand friendship and families, religion, education, politics, law, and justice? Each tradition has different core texts and motifs for these ideas, and no neutral way of expressing the questions exists. But the questions function in all the traditions. Our own practical problems necessarily force contemporary philosophers, however integrative, to re-raise those classic questions. The language for re-raising them cannot be merely the reassertion of some tradition's philosophic heritage. The language has to arise out of a vigorous global public within which serious comparison of philosophic ideas has advanced to the point where each tradition provides helpful conversation partners to the others. We should never hope for a non-problematic global language for philosophy. We do not even expect Platonists to speak like Aristotelians, or Daoists like Confucians, or Vishistadvaita Vedantins like Madhyamika Buddhists. But we can hope that all the world's traditions can argue with one another fruitfully, as each of those pairs has.

Endnotes

1. What I call program philosophies are conversations begun by some genius founder and carried on by disciples through a generation or two, with commentaries limited to those working out the founding ideas. Both continental and analytic philosophy in 20th century European thought have been prone to enthusiasm for special programs.
2. The claim that vulnerability to correction is the best argument for a philosophy is not innocent, and it runs as a theme through this essay. I have argued it at great length in *The Reconstruction of Thinking* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981).
3. Han Yu and Li Ao, though not original philosophers, did much to re-orient Confucianism as an answer to Buddhism, paving the way for the Neo-Confucian movement. They attacked the quietism of both Buddhism and Daoism.
4. I have explored these in much more detail in "Two Forms of Comparative Philosophy" in *Dao: a Journal of Comparative Philosophy*, 1/1(Winter 2001), 1-13.

5. See McKeon's *Freedom and History* (New York: Noonday Press, 1952); Pepper's *World Hypotheses* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1942); Brumbaugh's *Western Philosophic Systems and Their Cyclic Transformations* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992); Watson's *The Architectonics of Meaning: Foundations of the New Pluralism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985); and Dilworth's *Philosophy in World Perspective: A Comparative Hermeneutic of the Major Theories* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).
6. See Randall Collins, *The Sociology of Philosophies: A Global Theory of Intellectual Change* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).
7. See Northrop's *The Meeting of East and West: An Inquiry Concerning World Understanding* (New York: Macmillan, 1946); Ames' and Hall's *Thinking Through Confucius* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), *Anticipating China: Thinking Through the Narratives of Chinese and Western Culture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), and *Thinking from the Han: Self, Truth, and Transcendence in Chinese and Western Culture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998).
8. *Boston Confucianism: Portable Tradition in the Late-Modern World* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000).
9. *Democracy of the Dead: Dewey, Confucius, and the Hope for Democracy in China* (LaSalle, IL.: Open Court, 1999).
10. In addition to objective comparisons based on tracing core texts and motifs, my *Boston Confucianism* attempted to develop a normative philosophy drawing on Xunzi's Confucianism and pragmatism. Xunzi was a giant of the ancient Confucian world who was squeezed out of the Neo-Confucian canon by Han Yu.
11. This theory of comparison was put forward at tedious philosophic length in my *Normative Cultures* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995) and then was tested for four years in the Cross-cultural Comparative Religious Ideas Project centered around Boston University, whose results were published in the three volumes I edited, *The Human Condition, Ultimate Realities, and Religious Truth* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001).
12. I have presented a formal argument for rebutting the postmodern charge of inevitable bias in theory in my *The Highroad Around Modernism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), chapter 6.
13. Peirce's "Neglected Argument" essay appears in many anthologies, and is in *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, edited by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, volume 6 (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1935). I have analyzed it at length in *The Highroad Around Modernism*, chapter 1, and *Normative Cultures*, part 4.
14. A variant of this checklist was used extensively in the comparative project reported in *The Human Condition*.
15. The call for philosophical relevance to contemporary problems has become hackneyed. But it is still valid. I have discussed these issues at greater length in *Boston Confucianism*, chapters 1, 2, and 4.

Comparative Philosophy as Creative Philosophy

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Comparative philosophy — or what we might today better call "cross-cultural," "trans-cultural," or simply "global" philosophy — has throughout its history and development exhibited a rich diversity of aims, methods and styles. Let me briefly sum-up a few of the most enduring of these and then set forth some features of what I take to be its most vital intentionality, namely to contribute to *creative* philosophical thinking.

I

One of the enduring aims of comparative or cross-cultural philosophy has been to make evident the basic cognitive and

evaluative presuppositions of traditions other than one's own (historically, mainly Asian), with the expectation that one can then attain greater clarity and understanding about the presuppositions that inform one's own tradition. We come to know ourselves better philosophically, it is believed, in and through the recognition of other alternative conceptual schemes, values and ways of organizing and making sense out of our human experience. The major Asian (and today as well many other non-Western) traditions are studied, then, as they reveal distinctive "ways of thinking" and as they may be contrasted with each other and with various Western forms. This has been comparative philosophy in its broadest cultural modality. In its earliest phases, a deeper agenda was also at play, which many comparativists today regard as a rather naive one, which was to bring about a general synthesis of what was thought to be best in different traditions and attain a certain universal accord among philosophers wherever to be found. This approach occupied the attention of many of the philosophical pioneers in the field during the early-mid decades of the last century and is still carried out in a number of different ways.

Other workers in the field have also taken a rather universalistic approach by way of seeking to uncover topologies of philosophical thinking that can reveal general patterns of thought in both the East and the West. Empiricists, rationalists, theists, idealists, and so on, can be seen to have developed similar positions in diverse traditions, with the differences noted between them also being instructive.

This approach was tied in some ways to the growing sophistication in the scholarly study of non-Western philosophical traditions where, with enhanced linguistic skills, many important technical texts were translated into English and other Western languages and widely disseminated.

Another approach to comparative philosophy that has been prominent in recent decades is somewhat more piecemeal and works against the background of twentieth-century Western analytic philosophy. Attention gets focused on issues in epistemology, philosophy of language and logic where, it is thought, a careful and sophisticated reading of non-Western texts can enrich Western treatments of these issues; in short, that contemporary Western philosophers can have much to learn from the styles of reasoning, the notions of truth, and the analysis of the uses and functions of language from traditions different than their own.

This approach may be seen to be part of a larger comparative enterprise which we might call the "problem approach." Whether it be in ethics, metaphysics, aesthetics or any other branch or area of philosophy, the driving idea was that we can identify philosophical problems that cut across various traditions and employ the resources of those traditions to enable one to deepen and broaden one's own philosophical understanding and work. In a book on Indian philosophy published over thirty years ago, I stated what I still believe to be the most exacting and exciting approach to comparative philosophy. "We are aware now," I wrote then, "that there is much of intrinsic philosophical value and interest in Asian thought and that consequently this thought need not be cast merely in the mould of an historical (or exotic) curiosity. Students ought to be able to study Asian philosophy for the purpose of enriching their philosophical background and enabling them to deal better with the philosophical problems that interest them." I went on to say, and would now soften considerably the somewhat universalistic language employed, that "Without losing sight of the distinctive and sometimes unique characteristics of a tradition, one ought to be able to concentrate attention on the tradition as it is a response to a

series of universal questions and problems, and with the express intention that these responses will influence one spontaneously in one's own thinking."¹

Today, as I have indicated, we have become more circumspect in our understanding that philosophical problems, as well as the answers given to them, are highly contextualized and that one of the significant creative functions of comparative philosophy is to examine how one's initial formulation of a specific problem can itself be reformulated in the light of alternative possibilities proffered in other traditions. We have also come to realize that the very idea of *philosophy* may mean rather different things in different cultures and that we have much to learn from these other conceptions.

This brings me directly to comparative philosophy as creative philosophy.

II

The creative comparatist faces a number of formidable tasks, the first of which is that of understanding and interpreting the philosophical achievements of other traditions. This calls for a complex and subtle hermeneutic.

To begin with, the question must be asked whether or not, just because certain similar-sounding terminology is being employed, the same philosophical problem is in fact being addressed in different cultural traditions. We are, I think, compelled to recognize that there are cultural-philosophic presuppositions that largely influence the formulation of specific philosophical problems in both substance and style, and I would like to illustrate this briefly with reference to so-called problems of the self. These problems, in their specificity, are not universal. I am not aware of any discussions in Chinese philosophy that are quite similar to the problem of other minds as formulated in Anglo-American empiricist-based thought. I am not familiar with any discussions in Western philosophy, with the possible exception of some materials to be found in the mystical traditions (which most philosophers do not accept as philosophy anyway), that deal extensively with the type of metaphysical questions concerning the status of the *jiva* (the individual, phenomenal self) in relation to *ātman* (the liberated, enduring self) that not infrequently appear in traditional Indian thought. And so on. Universality is not found at this level of philosophic concern.

We also have emerging in this context the interesting question, "Do we have the same philosophical problem in two or more traditions when what counts as a solution to, or resolution of, the problem may differ radically?" This difficulty is brought out most clearly in the well-known Humean/Buddhist parallels. What would count as a satisfying resolution of the problem of the unity of the self for Hume (namely his being able, in the face of his denial of necessary connections in experience and his affirmation that experience consists of "distinct existences," to identify precisely that factor which could account for the unity) would by no means satisfy the Buddha, whose initial analysis of the self into its constituent elements is similar to Hume. Buddhism looks for what we might call a "saving answer." Human beings are afflicted with a suffering largely of their own making, which suffering is assuaged by a right view of the self and of other things and a corresponding mental-moral discipline. In Buddhism there is an urgency about the inquiry into the self, and any answer must be therapeutic. Do we, then, have the same philosophical problem?

The answer, I think, is both "yes" and "no" — the two being applicable at different levels of analysis and experience. Let me explain. There must surely be a sense in which differences in presuppositions and differences in criteria of

intelligibility and the rest make for a real difference in the very philosophical problems being addressed. Put simply, East Asians, South Asians, and Westerners frequently are talking about different things in their various treatments of problems regarding the self. And yet, at a deeper level, we do find, and philosophically we are compelled, as it were, to believe, that there is a common core of human experience, a range of possibilities that cuts across differences in cultures and indeed differences (by gender, class, education...) between individuals in the same culture, a range that gets articulated in diverse ways but which nevertheless serves as a kind of "deep grammar" of experience.

In any event, we do need to recognize in strong hermeneutical and pluralistic terms that we inevitably bring our own "prejudices" or predispositions to interpret and judge what is initially alien to us as these are informed by our cultural and personal experience. We need then to develop a negotiating process, as it were, between our prejudgmental forms and patterns and the conceptual content and structures of that tradition that get disclosed to us as we enable that tradition to speak to us in its own terms. We aim thus to alter our prejudices in the light of that negotiation or encounter.²

The cross-cultural hermeneutic engagement, though, does not demand that one "goes native" — that one should attempt to think and act as if one were an indigenous member of that other culture or society. We seek rather, and sometimes attain, understanding of another tradition in terms of what we share and what we find distinctive — for better or worse — in it, but always within the altered background framework of the integrity of our own philosophical being.

This calls, then, for a kind of contextualized translation whereby we seek the meaning of key terms and concepts initially in the manner in which they function in the other tradition. Special attention may be given to the basic metaphors which inform particular ways of thinking,³ or to concepts which serve both as theories and as guides to a particular way of life⁴ — and from these inquires to uncover features of our own culturally-informed presuppositions which may be called into question. From this questioning, it is anticipated, we may attain an openness to develop new and better forms of philosophical understanding.

III

Let me, in the time-space constraints of this short paper that remain, try now to *show* (and not merely *tell*) what I mean by creative comparative philosophy by reference to a particular issue in philosophical aesthetics, and one that is quite appropriate to my general topic, namely the problem of the creative artistic process.

Artistic creativity is understood in East Asian experience primarily as a disciplined spontaneity which is carried out in obedience to nature, whether the latter is understood in the Taoist "ontological" terms of *dao* and *de* or the (Neo-) Confucian *li* (inherent principle or structure). This has resulted in the famous primary canon, set forth by Xie He in the fifth century, *qiyan shengdong* (translated by Lawrence Binyon, for example, as "rhythmic vitality, or spiritual rhythm expressed in the movement of life"). The canon demands that the artist identify himself completely with a spiritual vitality or movement of life that is ubiquitous in nature and that this subtle natural-spiritual rhythm, by means of his highly disciplined spontaneous mastery of the medium, resound in his work. Unlike some contemporary Western thinking, it is believed here that the creative process is always made evident in the work in a manner that rules out the possibility that a work of art and some other kind of object could ever be perceptually

indiscernible, in virtue of their apparently identical visual properties, to a knowing-sensitive observer. Such an observer would always *recognize* the creative process and the quality of the being of the artist *in* the work.

For Indian aesthetics, on the other hand, and to which I will pay somewhat greater attention, creativity is seen in the more “expressivist” terms of depersonalized emotion and religious insight with the artist aspiring to the status of a *karmayogin*, one who acts without attachment to the fruits of her action in a manner of loving concern or devotion (*bhakti*), which is informed by knowledge (*jñāna*) of self and reality, which action then becomes “skillful.” As with the making of worlds generally, artistic creativity becomes an illusion-making that is wholly conscious of itself.

Artistic creativity, it has often been pointed out in both East and West, is a kind of play; designated in Sanskrit as *līlā* — that sportive act of the creator god who, in creating, admits of no purpose and whose activity is thus a spontaneous overflow of his own superabundant nature. “Play,” however, does not mean a lack of seriousness or intensity; it means rather a kind of innocent, but not naive, illusion-making — an innovative and hence unexpected ordering and shaping. In creativity as play there is a felt voluntariness, which paradoxically perhaps is nevertheless felt as inwardly necessary, as something that is required to be done. Play, in short, is disciplined spontaneity. It is knowledgeable and insightful, but it answers to no formula. Creativity is a free, self-determining act; it is singular and unpredictable, and hence, in these terms, it defies any reductive or predictive causal explanation, but it is also disciplined and ordered and, in these terms, is amenable to intelligent understanding. The term “discipline” means ordering relations, through experience, to achieve just that rightness in relationship that is of the essence of form. Being formative, the creative act is necessarily a controlling of a medium — in play.

This leads us directly to the central “expressivist” concept in Indian aesthetics, which is that of *rasa* — “flavor” or that which is “tasted” in art. The theory allows that a number of basic life emotions can be distinguished (e.g., delight, humor, sadness, anger, fear) and that these are transformed in art into corresponding overall aesthetic qualities or *rasas* (e.g., the erotic, the comic, the pathetic, the furious, the terrible) which are no longer “personal” as such.

According to the classical Indian view, art is a kind of *mimesis*, an “imitation” not of actual things, events or happenings but of the potentiality, if you will, of experience in its broadest and deepest terms. It is an imitation which, albeit grounded in life emotion, gives rise to what is imitated. The *rasa*-theory suggests, then, that an adequate concept of imitation calls for artistic creativity to be “rooted in,” to be “influenced by,” to “partake of,” the essential character of that which is the source of the influence. Conflating this with the typical Chinese view, “imitation” means to have one’s creativity be in accord with, be derived from, a spiritual power or energy (*Śakti*) of being. “Imitation,” then, is to be understood more as a *property* than a *relation*; which is to say, as a quality that pervades the artwork rather than that which obtains (as does a copy or a representation) between the artwork and something external to it.

“Imitation,” in this sense, thus may help us to understand better the assertion so often made in our own times that a work of art is its own meaning, that art is autonomous. A classical Indian aesthetician would not hold, as Clive Bell and others in the West have done, that art need not draw anything from life, that “to appreciate a work of art we need bring with us nothing but a sense of form and color and knowledge of

three-dimensional space;”⁷⁵ he would argue rather that the aesthetic content of an artwork, if it is to be meaningful, must bear the strength and confidence of its being influenced by reality so that it can present a genuinely new reality. How is this possible?

The Schopenhauerian-like answer given by the Indian aesthetician would be that artistic imagination is among the most *objective* forms of consciousness. In contrast to fantasy, which works from the wish-fulfilling needs of the ego, imagination discloses and proffers a direct presentation of some essential feature of experience and reality. Imagination, creative insight, does not take place independent of its embodiment in form. Creativity in art has always to do with working with a particular medium, be it pigments, stones or words, and this requires, once again, that the action be skillful, the result of arduous discipline.

It is evident, I think, that the *rasa*-theory opens up new possibilities for what it means to express emotion in art. *Rasa* has nothing to do as such with the artist expressing (exhibiting, venting, articulating) his or her own private emotions, rather it concentrates on emotionality as it becomes the very aesthetic force of the work itself as experienced by a sensitive and knowing participant-viewer. Emotion in art may then be understood as a kind of performance, a presentation of its own affective qualities. It may be distinguished from life emotion in virtue of, among other things, its lack of a belief-based cognitivity. Life emotions involve in a very central way judgments about that which occasions the emotion, and we look, in ourselves and to others, for a certain proportionality to obtain between the situation that gives rise to the emotion and the intensity of the belief-induced response to it. Art emotions do not involve judgments about specific states of affairs; they stand rather in their own affective integrity, their “proportionality” being internal to the work and not a measure of some kind between the work and a situation external to it.

Again, let me stress that for *rasa*-theory, emotionality in art needs to be experienced by a sensitive and knowing participant-viewer. Although great works of art often have a compelling power which seem to reach out and take-hold of the experiencer of them, the emotionality and the meaning associated with it in art calls, according to the *rasa*-theory, for a respondent who is equal, as it were, to the work. Indian aesthetics often refers to the ideal of the *sahyādaya*, “one of similar heart.” Emotionality in art is present aesthetically only to one who is able to attend, with knowing concentration, to that which is presented as the work. The participant-viewer must transform his own private concerns and attachments to achieve precisely the impersonality associated with the *rasa*. The participant-viewer thus is not sundered from the artwork, but rather is seen to be essential for the work’s own completion. The *sahyādaya* does achieve a certain “disinterestedness” or “psychical distance,” but he is called upon to achieve a great deal more than having a certain “aesthetic attitude,” for he must in fact become part and parcel of the creative process itself.

The “expression of emotion” here clearly takes us in directions other than what we find in our traditional, if not entirely contemporary, expressionist and related communication theories of art. The Indian view challenges us, I think, to reformulate some of our basic notions of emotionality in ways that allow us to understand art emotion as *sui generis*, yet deeply grounded in life emotion, and as that which is properly realized as such only when certain stringent requirements are fulfilled by a knowing participant-viewer.

...
In sum: I have tried to sketch, however abbreviated, something of the rich diversity of aims, methods and styles that has informed the enterprise of comparative philosophy, with special emphasis given to its role in advancing creative philosophical thinking. The latter has a dual task. First, the achieving of an understanding of that which appears initially alien to one, through a hermeneutic engagement with it that brings about an alteration in the prejudgmental assumptions of one's own culturally-informed background. This understanding is achievable in many ways, but most generally it calls for a close reading of the philosophical work from other traditions that enables one to identify and appreciate what is of distinctive interest to those traditions and to the distinctive ways in which they formulate and address the philosophical problems that follow from those interests. Second, on the basis of that understanding, the striving to attain insight into new ways of formulating those problems and issues of interest to one that can be enriched by this hermeneutic engagement. As with creativity in general, there is no formula or method available for carrying out this task successfully, and it will, as it should, no doubt be carried out in a rich plurality of ways with diverse results — all of which is entirely commensurate with what “comparative,” “cross-cultural,” “trans-cultural,” or “global” philosophy is all about.

Notes

1. Eliot Deutsch, *Advaita Vedānta: A Philosophical Reconstruction* (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1969), Preface.
2. It has also become something of a commonplace now in comparative philosophy to note that one approaches another culture not only from within the general prejudices of one's own cultural background, but quite specifically from where one currently stands philosophically within that background. For example, it is quite apparent that German Indologists in the nineteenth-century, such as Paul Deussen, read Indian thought through the lens of Idealistic metaphysics, and that in our own times Western readings of Asian traditions have often been highly analytic in character. And also from East to West: one has only to read several texts of the Kyoto School of Japan to see how their interpretations of Western thought were highly colored by various Buddhist values and concepts that deeply informed the thinkers of that school, such as Nishida and Nishitani. Every generation, it seems, engages the thought of other cultures relative to the fashions and interests of its own time and place.
3. See Karl. H. Potter, “Metaphor as a Key to Understanding the Thought of Other Speech Communities,” in *Interpreting Across Boundaries: New Essays in Comparative Philosophy*, edited by Gerald James Larson and Eliot Deutsch (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 19-35.
4. See Ninian Smart, “The Analogy of Meaning and the Tasks of Comparative Philosophy,” in *Ibid*, 174-83.
5. Clive Bell, *Art* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1928), 16.

The Purposes and Functions of Comparative Philosophy

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There are many reasons for comparative study of philosophies that represent different traditions and possibly originate in different cultures. The two that stand out are (1) appreciation, including deeper understanding of philosophical texts, and (2) the suggestiveness of philosophy in an unfamiliar tradition, providing new prompts for philosophical investigation. The first can grow out of fascination with great philosophy of a variety of kinds. The second can emerge in a working life, part of which is designed to create new philosophy.

The contrast here is between interests that are primarily scholarly and those that are primarily philosophical. How deep is the difference here? One of my teachers, Richard Braithwaite, once deflected a question about a text by remarking that he was a philosopher, not a scholar. But, as he (someone in fact who was a good scholar and a fine teacher) knew full well, every philosopher is to some degree a scholar. For one thing, almost all of us are paid for explicating philosophical texts to students. Also it is very uncommon to write anything that is purportedly original that is not at the same time noticeably informed by good prior philosophy. Even the most original philosophical work will emerge in a framework in which some previous philosophy provides reference points; and the understanding and interpretation of some previous philosophy will be part of the process. If we cannot keep straight what the people said that we are largely agreeing or disagreeing with, or attempting to go beyond, the prospects for original work of any value look dim.

Scholarly work, for its part, requires a sense of what the problems are that a text is dealing with. There can be layers of engagement with a variety of problems, so that the full range of issues often is not so obvious. Philosophical acuity can contribute to discernment of what the issues are. It helps, in reading a philosopher, to have been worrying about questions that have some connection with (or similarity to) those of the texts read. The interpretation of philosophy is hardly a mechanical activity, and the reader's independent philosophical activities can provide important clues that contribute to the process.

Hence comparative philosophy, like any enterprise in the field of philosophy, inevitably will mix scholarly and philosophical concerns. The contrast I intend is not a matter of all or nothing. Rather it is between comparative study in which scholarly understanding is the dominant goal and comparative study in which philosophical concerns are dominant. My own work in comparative philosophy falls in the latter category.

It seems clear that a case can be made for a comparative study of Asian and Western philosophies that is based simply on the quality and intrinsic interest of the best Asian texts. These represent voices that should be heard in philosophical discussions of a general sort. This is a modest and reasonable case, and in it philosophical motivation can loom larger than scholarly interest.

My own view however involves more radical claims. Its starting point is the contention that much recent Western ethical philosophy distorts the realities of ethical life, in a way that promotes pathological insensitivity. Help is needed. Classic Asian philosophies, especially that of Confucianism,

can play a suggestive role in finding a way out. To have such a view is to think that, while of course there are important scholarly interests in study of Asian philosophies, philosophical interests loom very large indeed.

The Interstices of Life, and Formation and Revision of Self as a Central Topic in Ethics

A position this extreme needs a good deal of explanation. Let me begin by saying a little bit about the central concerns of Confucius' ethics, as a way of introducing some elements that I think should be important to ethical philosophies. Confucius' ethics reaches out to political philosophy, in that there is repeated emphasis on an ideal of good government as representing intelligent benevolent concern for the well-being of the people; and Confucius also believes that high-ranking people set the moral tone for a society. When the dictator of his home state, Lu, tells Confucius that he has a problem with thieves, Confucius tells the dictator that if he did not set an example of greediness there would not be such a problem (Confucius, *Analects* 12.18).

At the heart of Confucius' philosophy, though, underpinning the political philosophy, is a running discourse on what is required to become, or to be, a really good person. As many philosophers know, there are ongoing controversies in social psychology between situationists (who assign the situations that agents are in the dominant role in explaining why they act as they do) and personologists (who give some emphasis to the personal characteristics of individual agents in explaining behavior). Confucius makes a number of remarks that indicate openness to a situationist account of how the vast majority of the population behaves. There is a long passage along these lines in the book of Confucius' great follower Mencius, which begins "In good years the young men are mostly lazy, while in bad years they are mostly violent." (Mencius, Book VI Part A 7).

Confucius (and his followers) believe however that it is possible for a very small elite to become sage-like. The ideal is someone who is reliably good. Mencius remarks that for you to be such a person, there have to be some things that you simply would not do. This opens the door to a claim that there are some people (perhaps not a very large number) whose behavior the personologist account fits well. In explaining why so-and-so did not do such and such, we can say simply "She (or he) would not do that sort of thing."

To become sage-like requires a good deal of study, self-discipline, and reflection. The *Analects* of Confucius is full of discussion of how the process is supposed to work, and of what the ultimate gains should be. Ritual plays an important role in the self-shaping process, but Confucius makes it clear that there is much more to ritual than any formalistic elements, just as (he says) there is much more to music than bells and drums (*Analects* 17.11). Proper learning indeed points toward becoming at home in the ritual and genuinely expressive in it. Compare, in our culture, the process of learning to thank people for favors in a way that is not mechanical and reflects a real capacity for gratitude. The result should be, if the process is successful, a second nature that gives rise to a variety of expressive responses to kindness or help.

The one thing that most strongly drew me to Confucius' philosophy originally is this. Much of recent Western ethical philosophy, including most of what is in the Kantian or the utilitarian tradition, focuses on moral decision procedures, which sometimes are understood (in my opinion, over-simply) as like morality software or algorithms for being a morally good person. At the same time, one gets the impression that most ethical philosophers—and most non-philosophers as well—

assume that the occasions on which these moral decision procedures will need to be employed are hardly incessant. Perhaps you can go for a whole day or longer without making a conscious moral decision.

It should be emphasized here that, of course, there is an enormous variety of Western ethical philosophy, and that what I say is characteristic of much or most recent Western philosophy need not be characteristic of every single writer. It is not difficult to think of living Western philosophers, starting with Peter Singer and Shelly Kagan, whose work conveys the image that moral decisions are extremely frequent in our lives, whether we realize it or not. Possibly Kant held a view a little like this: much depends on how seriously one takes the imperfect duty of self-improvement, or the way in which being late for an appointment apparently violates the categorical imperative. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that the dominant image in recent Western philosophy has been that moral choices come up for most of us (those of us who do not hold unusually responsible positions of power, or lead unusually difficult lives) only from time to time.

Because of this, it seemed to me that most recent Western ethical philosophy provided what I called "big moment" ethics: you could have the occasional test of moral worth, and the rest of life was like a "free play" zone. Most recent ethical philosophy had very little to say about life apart from the big moments of moral testing.

Again it should be emphasized that the complaint here is against most—by no means all—recent Western ethical philosophy. One can certainly think of some Western philosophers to whom these strictures do not apply, starting perhaps with Nietzsche and with leading feminist philosophers. Nietzsche was very mindful of ways in which apparently inconsequential gestures or thoughts could express personality structures, and also emphasized the value that an entire life (not merely some peak moments) should be experienced as having. Much feminist ethics gives due attention to the textures and requirements of ongoing personal relationships.

Also the word "recent" needs emphasis. My sense is that things began to get worse in the late eighteenth century, after Hume. Hume refused to draw a sharp moral/ non-moral contrast, defiantly classifying cheerfulness as a virtue; and much of Hume has implications for the values of ordinary life. Certainly classical Greek philosophy—which in a bit of temporal imperialism has been annexed by Western philosophy, although Islamic philosophy also has its claims—generally also gave serious attention to the values of life in between the moments of what we would consider moral choice.

My claim is not only that there is something missing from most recent Western ethical philosophy, but also that what is missing is supplied more conspicuously and in a more satisfactory way by the great Confucians than even by those Western philosophers who have given attention to it. Neither the great Greek philosophers nor Hume gave the kind of sustained, nuanced treatment of the interstices of life—the moments in which people are simply being themselves, perhaps in social interactions, without making moral decisions—that can be found in the great Confucian texts. This focus on the interstices of life, as an important area for ethical philosophy, seemed to me long ago to be worth importing into Western ethical philosophy. Later I realized that there was at least one major recent Western philosopher, Nietzsche, who does give considerable attention to the interstices of life; but, for reasons (which include Nietzsche's anxiety of influencing)

that are too complicated for any brief treatment, I think the Confucian accounts offer things that Nietzsche does not.

There are a number of problems with ethical philosophies that stress occasional moments of moral decision and slight the interstices of life. The most basic is that so much of what makes life worth living is not given a sufficiently thoughtful treatment. But another is that they support a cultural framework in which a conspicuous figure will be the individual who is virtuous-but-sour. This person is given high marks on what really matters to most ethical philosophies; he or she makes the right decisions in a number of moral test cases. But there is not much joy in it—after all, morality is supposed to be hard—and the virtuous person may well feel insufficiently rewarded by life.

Such is an image entrenched in the culture. The image rests on debatable assumptions. Indeed it is clear that Confucius and Mencius, and for that matter Plato and Aristotle, would be extremely doubtful that the person viewed as virtuous-but-sour really has the highest order of virtue.

It is clear also that one of the limitations of many people who would be viewed as virtuous-but-sour is that many of them have a limited view of what is the best that life can have to offer. This is encouraged by philosophies that view positive values simply in terms of pleasure or of preference satisfaction. A blinkered view of what has value leads to a blinkered view of what the virtuous person deserves and perhaps has a right to expect. The virtuous-but-sour person may behave better than most people do, but his or her values (in the sense of what he or she would like most in life) may be very like those of most people. This lack of fit—ordinary values, but stricter than ordinary personal standards—is part of the problem.

Reflection on the nature of happiness would help. A major difference between happiness and pleasure is, as the psychologist Michael Argyle has brought out, the role in happiness of one's attitude toward oneself and the general character of one's life.¹ Ethical philosophies, like those of Confucius, Mencius, Plato, and Aristotle, whose central focus is on the shape of an entire life, and on the project of forming or revising the nature of the self so as to ensure a highly satisfying life, are in much better position to appreciate this than are philosophies that present the subject of ethics as a series of isolated moral tests. Someone who appreciates it will be in a much better position than the virtuous-but-sour person to be aware of the "internal" rewards of genuine, ingrained virtue.

Let me add to this the generalization that virtually every major classic Indian or Chinese philosophy has a central ethical interest in the project of forming the right kind of self, or (if one imagines an adolescent or a mature person who wishes to change life so that it is more fulfilling) of revising one's self in the proper direction. Views then differ considerably, from philosophy to philosophy, as to what kinds of self would represent success in this project. All the same, there is a basic contrast between persistent emphases in classical Indian and Chinese philosophy on formation and revision of the self as central to ethics, and the relative neglect in recent Western philosophy of attention to this. To avoid misunderstanding, let me emphasize that I am not saying that *every* contemporary Western philosopher (even within Anglo-American traditions) neglects formation and revision of the self as an ethical topic. One might consider for example some of Alasdair MacIntyre's or Charles Taylor's work as an exception to the general pattern, and there are some others; further afield of course there are philosophers like Heidegger. Nevertheless, there is a striking contrast between the persistent centrality in classic Asian philosophy of a whole-life view that

focuses on formation and revision of the self, and the frequent neglect of this in recent Western ethical philosophy, especially in Anglo-American traditions.

An example of the classic Asian fixation on formation or revision of the self is to be found in the philosophy of Mencius. There are some remarkable similarities between Mencius' ethical thought and that of David Hume. Both advance the thesis that human nature contains an innate element of benevolence, and argue for it in similar ways. If we take into account the context of inquiry, though, there are major differences behind this strong similarity. Hume's thesis of an innate element of benevolence is part of an ongoing polemic with Hobbes, and provides support for a rival account of the origins of society and of moral discourse. Mencius wishes to emphasize the gap between the innate "sprout" of benevolence and what it would be to be a really good person. This leads naturally to the traditional Confucian project of analyzing methods of transforming oneself into a really good person—a very different project from Hume's.

Perhaps the recent Western relative neglect of a whole-life view, and of issues of the formation or revision of self, counts as a minor pathology, in a culture and in philosophies that support it. But let us explore some other pathologies that can be linked to ethical philosophies that place heavy emphasis on occasional moments of moral decision, and on formulating decision procedures to use in them, and that ignore the interstices of life. One is linked to a tendency to present moral choices in extremely decontextualized fashion. Another is a tendency to slight the role in moral judgment of judgments of values of outcomes.

The Dangers of One-Sided Examples

My target here is the kind of textbook example of a moral choice, which is presented in a way that does not include any information on the prehistory of the quandary (i.e., what led to the moral choice having to be made), or the general policies and commitments of agents making the choice, and in a way that does not suggest any reflection on the values of various possible outcomes. The most familiar example currently is the runaway trolley case. Cases of this sort lead to exercises in what David Wiggins, in a nice phrase, has called "the casuistry of emergencies."²

Yet again, it is important to avoid misunderstanding. Sometimes situations arise in which an important choice has to be made, and in which (a) there is no significant prehistory, (b) the general policies and commitments of the agent do not seem to require much examination in determining what the best choice would be, and (c) we normally would think that only the most minimal reflection on values is required. There are cases of this general sort in real life, and what is done in them really matters. Further, examination of such cases, even if they are merely fantasy examples, can tell us something important about moral reasoning. There has been brilliant work of that sort, notably on the trolley problem. In short, none of what I say is intended as criticism of philosophical study of such cases. There is no reason not to take them seriously.

My claim rather is that the cumulative impression in the literature—that cases that lend themselves to an extremely decontextualized treatment, with minimal reflection on values, are the norm—involves serious distortions. Let me suggest some rough generalizations. Most significant choices that most people make in their lives occur as a result of a pattern of their behavior: much of the choice is whether to continue in that pattern or instead to deviate, and the agent's reflection on her or his commitments and habits of mind will be part of

the decision process. In some cases, a disturbing choice may be required because of a situation that the agent got herself or himself into; and reflection on that process will be part of an intelligent decision. Often much of the reflective activity of decision will center on the question “What kind of person do I want to be?” What we do sometimes really changes our lives and ourselves, and the values of various life courses open to us can be highly relevant.

This is a generalization about most significant decisions that most people make in their lives. It is instructive that there are exceptions. In the runaway trolley case, for example, the imagined agent faces a terrible choice that hardly represents a result of the agent’s prior behavior; it is very likely discontinuous with anything prior in the agent’s life; any reflection on the future values in the agent’s life may well dwindle in significance compared to other factors (human lives are at stake); and there is so much presumed consensus on the general value of human life, that reflection on values may not seem much called for. The case reasonably then can be viewed as isolated at the moment, and can be approached at a high level of abstraction.

This can be attractive for all sorts of reasons, some of them embedded in our culture. My reflection on the (usual) importance of context to ethical judgment, and on the ways in which philosophers often ignore this, is consonant with contrasts at the heart of a forthcoming book by the psychologist Richard Nisbett.³ One of its themes is a general contrast between East Asian and Western (especially American) typical patterns of experience. East Asian subjects are much more likely to notice contextual detail. There is a stronger tendency among Western subjects to isolate a prominent item and perhaps also to treat it by means of abstractions. Nisbett has fascinating data that support his claims.

Clearly there are trade-offs in different approaches to experience. Anyone with a pragmatic streak may think that the advantages and disadvantages of the mindset underlying a pattern of experience may depend on the subject matter. There can be great advantages in a habit of mind of isolating items and treating them by means of abstractions, if what are sought are fundamental laws of physics. Such a habit of mind also can be useful in relation to establishment of general moral laws of the sort that can be informally enforced throughout a society by the pressure of moral judgment. Indeed, this is related to the achievements of modern Western philosophy in the working out of an impersonal sense of justice, which is conducive both to personal freedom and economic prosperity. But, let me suggest that a habit of noting contextual elements and taking them into account can be more useful in thinking broadly about life, especially the parts that involve ongoing relationships with other people, and especially also the interstices of life.⁴

All of this said, it has to be admitted that there are a number of reasons why extremely decontextualized examples are so prominent in the literature. Typically they are highly dramatic and attention-grabbing. Also they can be presented briefly: it is cumbersome to have to read a novel or a biography in order to consider an interesting case of ethical choice. In the light of these advantages, plus the fact that important points do come out in consideration of them, it would be unrealistic to expect—or even to want—extremely decontextualized examples to lose their dominant position in the literature. Nevertheless, we need to be far more mindful of the ways in which they distort our sense of the nature of most people’s ethical decisions. There are many ways in which we can retain our balance and remain mindful of normal patterns of life choices. The best, in my view, is comparative study of classic

Asian philosophies, which in many cases give subtle and intricate accounts of elements of ethics that are so often slighted in recent Western ethical philosophy.⁵

Endnotes

1. Michael Argyle, *The Psychology of Happiness* (London: Methuen, 1987), 124.
2. David Wiggins, “Truth, Invention and Meaning of Life,” *Needs, Values, Truth: Essays in the Philosophy of Value*, 3rd edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 88.
3. Richard Nisbett, *The Circle and the Line. The Geography of Thought* (New York: Free Press, 2002).
4. Cf. my “Tradition and Moral Progress,” in *Culture and Modernity*, ed. Eliot Deutsch (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1991), 313-28, reprinted in my *Learning From Asian Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 131-44, which argued for a “bifocal” ethics.
5. A first version of this paper was read at the APA Pacific Division meeting in March 2002. It has been revised in response to helpful remarks by the commentator, Peimin Ni.

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Analytic and Continental

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I. Introduction

In this essay I outline and illustrate a Quinean-Davidsonian account of “comparative philosophy.” I understand comparative philosophy to be the interpretation of a philosophical tradition from the standpoint of another tradition. The example of “comparative philosophy” will be one I am familiar with.¹ I will discuss the “comparison” of analytic philosophy, primarily the thought of W.V. Quine² and Donald Davidson,³ with some of the texts of Jacques Derrida.⁴ Given their common origins, the interpretation of “continental philosophy” and “analytic philosophy” ought to be an especially easy case, analogous to the interpretation of one Indo-European language with another. The position from which I will discuss some questions about “comparison,” as well as describe the comparison itself, is, roughly speaking, Davidsonian, so also, to a large extent, Quinean.

Briefly, I will argue that comparative philosophy as I understand it is possible and is a way of doing philosophy. This argument will be pretty general and pretty theoretical. After some discussion of how it could be that analytic and continental philosophy have become so separate that “comparative philosophy” is appropriate, I will illustrate some of the theses in the general and theoretical section by citing some of the results of my work on Quine, Davidson and Wittgenstein in relation to Derrida. Finally, I will suggest how the view of comparative philosophy can be relevant to the question of whether doing the History of Philosophy can be doing philosophy as I understand it.

II. A Dilemma about Interpretation as Philosophy

The project of comparing one philosophical tradition with another can seem to be either philosophically unproblematic or impossible. The basic question is “Is comparative philosophy a way of doing philosophy?” The underlying issue is, “Are there philosophical positions and arguments that are the same in distinct traditions?” This, of course, is a special

case of a fundamental philosophical issue in the theory of meaning.

Most practitioners of comparative philosophy would say “yes.” On most ways of justifying the “yes” answer, comparative philosophy might be interesting and a good source for developing one’s philosophical projects. Unfortunately, the philosophical view of philosophical problems presupposed by most advocates of the “yes” answer typically presupposes a philosophical conception of meaning as trans-linguistic entities. The existence of such trans-linguistic entities is denied by Quine, Davidson, and many others. I agree that there are no such entities.

To many thinkers, it seems that, if there are no trans-linguistic meanings, comparative philosophy is not a way of doing philosophy. Alien practices that we label “philosophy” cannot bear on “philosophy” as it is practiced in America today. Comparative philosophy would be a project analogous to trying to apply the thought of William Parcells to chess. Chess and football do both have winning and losing, and determination makes a difference in both, but it would seem unlikely that significant advances in chess are available from that source.

Many who deny trans-linguistic meanings would grant that we call chess and football both “games,” just as we call Norse practices and Judaism “religion” and parts of Eastern and Western thought “philosophy.” But just as a Talmudist will get little guidance in his projects from reflection of Odin-worship, so we should expect little advance in our projects by understanding these other projects.

A) A standard “yes” answer:

The “yes” answer to the question “Is comparative philosophy a way of doing philosophy?” also requires a “yes” answer to the question, “Are there philosophical positions and arguments that are the same in distinct traditions?” Most philosophers who would give “yes” answers to both questions believe in shared trans-linguistic meanings that underlie cultural and linguistic practices. Such meanings are what Frege posits,⁵ Quine disparages, and Derrida labels “logoi.” If there were such meanings, then philosophical problems and the arguments that bear on them would be strictly common elements in different material embodiments. The problem of skepticism, for instance, would be a problem intrinsic to any thought about the world. The problem would emerge as soon as a culture had the leisure or inclination to reflect.

Comparative philosophy, on this view, would be largely uncovering identities and differences among philosophical discourses in disparate cultures. We would find out that, for instance the problematic of Mosaic monotheism⁶ is implicit in the writings of the priests of Aton, or that Plato’s arguments in the *Theaetetus* are to be found in Sanskrit writings.

On such a “meaning as essence” view, comparative philosophy could illuminate philosophical problems and issues. Occasions where the other tradition had happened to think of arguments that are different from the arguments of one’s own could yield a gain of philosophical understanding of one’s own projects. Roughly speaking, on this conception of meaning, doing comparative philosophy would be akin to discovering that there were a number of excellent journals with intelligent contributors, to which American libraries had not been allowed to subscribe. Those journals could be expected to contain significant novel contributions to philosophical issues.

B) A standard “no” answer

Many of those skeptical about trans-linguistic meanings likewise give “no” answers to the questions, “Is comparative

philosophy a way of doing philosophy?” and “Are there philosophical positions and arguments that are the same in distinct traditions?” The basis for the “no” answer is a conviction that there are no meanings in the required sense, and therefore no such thing as “the same problem” or “the same argument” across traditions. Quine, Derrida, and Davidson have attacked such trans-linguistic meanings in a variety of ways, to my mind successfully. What we can call “philosophical relativists” take Quine’s, Derrida’s and Davidson’s attacks to show that both comparative philosophy and the history of philosophy cannot be ways of doing philosophy.

A philosophical relativist denies the possibility of comparative philosophy as philosophy, by arguing that “philosophical positions” and “philosophical arguments” are thoroughly imbedded in, or a function of, the practices of the culture in which they emerge.⁷ There is therefore no sense in which disparate cultures could have “the same philosophical problem.” “Philosophical arguments” would be “arguments” only within cultural practices, that is, relative to standards of strength of connection that are relative to a particular “discursive practice.” Thus one response to the denial of meanings is the denial of genuine cross-cultural philosophical problems and arguments. Such common philosophical problems and arguments seem to presuppose a language of thought independent of cultures and traditions. If there are no common meanings that different traditions share, there would seem to be no possibility that two cultures or traditions could address the same issues, since “the same issues” require “the same language” at some level of representation.

C) Davidsonism

The first deconstructive point to make is that positions A) and B) both accept the thesis that “saying the same thing” requires meanings. A Davidsonian position denies this. That is, even the view that argues from the *absence* of logoi or meanings to the impossibility of identity of philosophical problems implicitly accepts the logocentric thesis that only such meanings will account for the possibility of two discourses in disparate cultures “saying the same thing.” Thus the alleged consequence the relativist draws from denying essentialism itself presupposes that essentialism about meanings is required for a shared world and sharing of meaning.

A Davidsonian account of interpretation between traditions and cultures is analogous to the Davidsonian account of interpretation of one language in terms of another. A correct interpretation of one language in terms of another does not presuppose meanings that are identical across languages. Given that communication is the fundamental linguistic phenomenon, “saying the same thing” must be possible even though there are no trans-linguistic meanings conveyed by language. So, for instance, to use Saussure’s example, we can correctly interpret “Voilà un mouton” as “There’s a sheep” even though “sheep” is not synonymous with “mouton,” since “mouton” applies to mutton as well as to live animals.

Davidsonian interpretation rests on understanding other people by ascribing to them interests and beliefs as much as possible like the interpreter’s interests and beliefs. Only relative to enough agreement to allow identifying the topic is it possible to ascribe disagreement about that topic. Davidson famously denies that there are “alternative conceptual schemes” precisely because there is no pre-linguistic given relative to which to construct alternatives.

Davidsonian comparative philosophy, then, does not presuppose that, for instance, the Continental “problematic” of knowledge is the same as that of Analytic philosophy. Rather,

given that philosophy is something that arises from natural questions that are naturally built into human thought and life, we can expect that human cultures will ask questions and propose answers that are “the same” in the Davidsonian sense of “same-saying.” Philosophical problems, we suppose, are by and large problems that arise in thinking about central human concerns. Such central concerns are exactly what Davidsonian interpretation is by and large constrained to ascribe to every other human individual and group. A Davidsonian can talk about “philosophical problems” without supposing that such problems correspond to trans-linguistic propositions, just as we can talk about French sheep-raising practices without supposing that there is an intentional object “being a sheep” that the two languages express.

Of course, some philosophical discussions will be special to cultures. The aesthetics of ballet will not have an Ancient Chinese discussion, but what is going on in discussions of the aesthetics of ballet will be comprehensible because it is an art, and evaluated as such, and that is comprehensible.

D) What a Quinean-Davidsonian learns from Comparative Philosophy

Quinean-Davidsonian interpretation is always “situated” in that the interpretation is done from a particular specific cultural standpoint, which we can call a “theory.” That “situation,” though, changes during interpretation. I learn something when I grow to understand the discourse of physicists or firemen. Learning something is changing my “theory.” That learning is a change in my theory, my standpoint of interpretation. That is, one of the ways of maximizing agreement with the other is to change one’s own views. Part of the point of communication is the improvement of one’s theory.

For a Quinean-Davidsonian, then, interpreting other philosophical traditions typically changes one’s own idio-tradition, one’s particular way of being, for instance, an analytic philosopher. So, on this account, interpretation of another tradition is not just finding new arguments, or finding that another tradition has come up with some of the same arguments or views as one’s own. One’s own version of one’s own tradition is different as a result of taking seriously another tradition’s philosophical argument and discourse. I will illustrate how this can happen with the one example I know something about.

III. Analytic and Continental

The division between the analytic and continental traditions ought to be trivial and minor, compared to the contrasts that are usually dealt with in comparative philosophy. For one thing, philosophers with substantial acquaintance with both traditions are not rare, even though they are a small minority. For another thing, both groups share most of their philosophical historical texts, from Plato through Kant, at least. Finally, the origins of the division are only about a hundred years old. Frege and Husserl, who can be regarded as starting the opposing “schools,” were in substantial agreement about the issues facing philosophy in their time. Their projects were much the same—establishing the theory of reference. So why the vast mutual ignorance and contempt?

First, historically, Frege’s and Husserl’s strategies were different, and this difference, with many other contributing factors and developments on the continent and in Anglo-America, led us to the current situation where the majority of very prominent analytic philosophers know little or nothing of continental philosophy and the majority of very prominent continental philosophers know little or nothing of analytic philosophy. In “normal” philosophical cultures, perhaps, such difference in approach, and the different projects they would

inspire, would result in two schools each familiar with the other. In the philosophical culture of the twentieth century west, however, something else has happened, and in the short span between Frege–Husserl and Quine–Derrida.

I speculate that the reason for the rapid division and mutual ignorance is the professionalization and consequent specialization of philosophy. There were more twentieth century professional Western philosophers, probably, than in the entire previous history of the West. A significant number of those philosophers take as their project advancing philosophical projects rather than merely transmitting what they learned in graduate school.

Thus the philosophical projects become more and more differentiated and detailed, and to be a “player” in one of these projects becomes, for most philosophers, a larger and larger undertaking as the literature in the specialties grows. Given the demand for expertise in the literature, few philosophers are able to keep up with more than their own (relatively narrow) field. While related projects will be comprehensible, unrelated projects will not. In over-simplified schema, the split between analytic and continental is the result of rapid differentiation of the different approaches to the problem of representation.

After a few decades, projects from the other family are too remote to be comprehensible. Different texts are presupposed as background for the intended reader. Eventually, what counterfactual conditionals have to do with the problem of Being is obscure and why an account of counterfactual conditionals counts as a philosophical investigation is obscure. On the other side, what in the world Greek temples could have to do with conceptual schemes is equally obscure.

The drift apart is also exacerbated by the development of different expository traditions and styles. Both sides seem to the other not to write clearly.

IV. Derrida as Quinean; Derrida as Davidsonian

Given that one is in one tradition or the other, how does one get in a position to interpret another? Obviously, one must start by coming up with an hypothesis. In this case, the interpretive hypothesis was that Derrida is attacking Fregean senses in something like the Quinean way. This interpretive wedge then generated further hypotheses about what the point of the various discussions and arguments is. To see whether these hypotheses are appropriate, one must interpret some of the texts that Derrida presupposes. In Derrida’s case, this is facilitated by his procedure of dealing with particular texts. A further interpretive hypothesis explains why Derrida chooses this method: If he indeed holds with Quine that language has to be understood as language, rather than as the embodiment of trans-linguistic senses, and is something like a Quinean holist about meaning, then particular texts will be the only really appropriate objects of study, rather than the ideas or logoi *behind* the text. Thus Derrida’s practice fits the hypothesis that his approach to language and meaning is in some sense Quinean.

At this point, one’s own Quinean views begin to undergo some modification. If Derrida’s thought is analogous to Quine’s and Davidson’s, perhaps that sheds some light on his other apparent theses and on the parts of his argument that do not seem to be arguments. This hypothesis turns out to be productive. On Quinean principles there is no line between rhetorical connection and logical connection. In that case, ways of reaching conclusions are legitimate that Quine and I had never thought of. Derrida apparently has thought of them, and his discussions of texts therefore often turn on features of

the text other than the meaning. But, according to both Derrida and Quine, there is no isolable “meaning” as opposed to other features of the discourse. If Derrida holds something analogous to the Quinean denial of trans-linguistic meaning, then his practice not only makes sense, but expands the range of things “argument” can be. This interpretation of Derrida as Quine, then changes one’s Quineanism. The interpreter ends up modifying his interpretive starting point.⁸

Endnotes

1. See my *Deconstruction as Analytic Philosophy*, Stanford UP 2000.
 2. Quine, W.V., especially *Word and Object*, MIT Press, 1960.
 3. Davidson, Donald, *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*, Oxford University Press, 1984, and *Essays on Actions and Events*, Oxford University Press, 1980.
 4. See for instance Derrida, Jacques, *Speech and Phenomena and other essays on Husserl’s Phenomenology*, Northwestern University Press, 1973, *Writing and Difference*, tr. Alan Bass, University of Chicago Press, 1978, and *Margins of Philosophy*, University of Chicago P, 1982.
 5. Frege and Husserl have many predecessors and successors in postulating such entities. The most important predecessor is Plato, as usual. For purposes of setting up a dilemma, we have to abstract from Husserl’s attempt to incorporate culture into meanings. In very many ways, actually, Husserl’s view of “the same idea” in disparate cultural settings is compatible with Davidson.
 6. “Mosaic monotheism” is Maimonides take on Exodus 3:24, which Maimonides takes to be an identical component of the monotheism that Plato and Aristotle arrive at, supplemented by revelation.
 7. An example of a subtle version of this general view is the position of Richard Rorty. See especially his “The Contingency of Philosophical Problems: Michael Ayers on Locke,” in *Philosophical Papers Volume 3: Truth and Progress*, Cambridge University Press, 1998.
 8. This interpretation of “comparative” philosophy also explains how and why, for many philosophers, doing history of philosophy is doing philosophy. Doing the history of philosophy is comparative philosophy across times. According to a Davidsonian perspective, studying the history of philosophy is a way of making progress in philosophy. Other practitioners, usually specialists in the history of philosophy, regard such “application” as resting on a mistake. According to this way of construing the history of philosophy, the historical situation in which historical texts are written makes the problems and arguments of historical texts unique and time- and place-specific. Since there are no trans-historical concepts, the discourse of every intellectual period is special to that period. Thus it is a distortion and mis-representation to take Plato to be addressing modern problems in epistemology, or to take Hume’s theory of ideas to be relevant to modern theses about the language of thought. This application of (surprisingly) “post-modernism” allows the history of philosophy to function as a field of pure history, immune from intrusions of philosophical interest. The null hypothesis in such investigations is that theses held by the historical Plato, for instance, are philosophically uninteresting, from a modern point of view.
- One way of resisting this kind of contextualism is to assert the existence of logoi. Fodor’s forthcoming work on Hume, of course, presupposes (since it is by Fodor) that there are logoi, so that Hume could have exactly the thought that Fodor has. This presupposition, however, is controversial enough so that this would be a slender thread on which to hang the long tradition of learning philosophy via the history of philosophy.
- The Davidsonian alternative outlined above allows the history of philosophy to be a part of philosophy even though the language (and therefore the concepts) in terms of which any part of the history of philosophy came into existence is thoroughly dependent on the un-repeatable context that gave rise to it. Such interpretation must avoid the temptation to “read in” contemporary concerns and miss the particularities of the actual discourse of the historical time, but it must also avoid the trivialization of missing what is philosophically interesting in the forest of contingent historical particularity. A subtle and difficult kind of history of philosophy, at which the best modern historians of philosophy are quite skilled.

Comparative Philosophy as Feedback Loops and Fractals of Philosophical Space: The Butterfly Effect Meets the Butterfly Dream

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Introduction

The following discussion of ‘comparative philosophy’ is based on three assumptions that I make relative to my own experiences as teacher and philosopher. The first assumption is that a human being is a synthesis of physical and mental aspects of a ‘nature/mind’ continuum. The mind is that aspect of this continuum which is the source ‘in’ nature of human concepts ‘of’ nature. These ‘in the world’ and ‘of the world’ conditions are inseparably linked in what the physicist, John A. Wheeler, calls a “participatory universe.”¹ Different philosophical traditions tend to emphasize different elements in this participatory continuum as ‘objective,’ ‘subjective,’ ‘situational,’ or ‘process’ aspects. For me, the most important justification for the comparative approach to philosophizing is that in understanding these aspects, we come closer to understanding the whole.

The second assumption is that this nature/mind continuum evolves and manifests itself in ‘imitations’ and ‘imitating processes.’ For example, DNA carries the ‘imitation recipe’ for all species, for the color of insects, the songs of birds, and the divisions of amoebae. However, DNA also carries the ‘recipe’ which leads in human beings to imitating and imagining in symbols and concepts or ‘images.’ The terms imitate, imagine, and image are all akin to the Latin root ‘imitari’ and I believe that they more clearly express the relation of ideas and symbols to the world of experiences than do the terms ‘abstract’ and ‘abstraction’ which are often associated with a privileged position for the intellect as somehow ‘in’ the world but not ‘of’ the world and so theoretically possessed of a special and axiomatic, linear take on ‘reality,’ ‘essence,’ ‘existence,’ and ‘truth;’ whatever these words may mean. In the images and imagination of human reflexive self awareness there is, however, an awareness of ‘imitating’ and ‘imagining’ which provides human beings with the potentiality for developing perspectives upon imitating processes. This second assumption is particularly relevant to comparative philosophy which deals with various aspects of the nature/mind continuum as these are expressed in the conceptual images of the world in different traditions.

The third assumption is that human beings live and move in related but differing ‘spatial aspects’ of this nature/mind continuum: *Physical Space*, *Mental Space*, *Philosophical Space*. In physical space we walk and talk and watch the sun go round the earth. Physical space is the place space of sensations and bodies. Its dimensions reflect physical experiences of shape and weight, size, distance, direction, etc. It is where we are born, grow old, and die.

In mental space we move in and among ideas. Mental space is memory and interpretation space and its dimensions are the images and concepts reflected in definitions, descriptions, and categorizations of human mental and physical experience. Here we associate the same and the similar, distinguish the different and dissimilar. Here we believe the earth goes round the sun.

In philosophical space we live and move in and among philosophical systems and their assumptions, their

interpretations and explanations of ourselves and our experiences. The dimensions of philosophical space are the approaches in different traditions to different aspects of the nature/mind continuum. For example, in ‘object approaches,’ the object world and object knowledge are seen as more basic than the experiencing, interpreting subjects who experience objects. Here the emphasis may be upon the conservation of matter. In ‘subject approaches,’ the knowing subject as consciousness is stressed over the objects of knowledge. Here the emphasis may be upon the conservation of consciousness as in rebirth and transmigration. In ‘situational approaches,’ the situational contexts of subject/object encounters are stressed over either subject or object in isolation. Here the emphasis may be upon conservation of situationality, as in the Buddhist views of ‘anatta’ (no self), ‘anicca’ (impermanence), and ‘pratitysamutpada’ (dependent origination). And in ‘process approaches’ subjects, objects, and situations are seen as aspects of a process continuum. Here the emphasis may be upon conservation of the continuum as in the case of the Chinese Yin, Yang, and Tao. These emphases become essential aspects of the conception and perception ‘feedback loops’ of human experience.

In physical space, I hold a watch, in mental space I learn, to tell time and in philosophical space I ask ‘time, what is it?’

The dynamic interplay of these three assumptions can be illustrated with two examples, one taken from modern chaos science, and the other from the 4th Century BCE Chinese Taoist philosopher, Chuang Tzu.

The Butterfly Effect and Physical Space

One of the most important transitions in modern physical science has been the evolution from a linear, deterministic and reductionist view of the world to a dynamic, often random, and nonlinear one. For Newton, motion could be considered absolute in linear space where the motion of any two bodies within a closed system, e.g., moon and earth, or earth and sun, could be charted and predicted with certainty. But by 1890, Henri Poincare had begun to wonder about the stability of the Newtonian solar system, as well as the limits of linear equations in describing it.²

Then in 1960 at MIT, Edward Lorenz, who was modeling earth’s atmosphere in nonlinear equations, switched from rounding his equations to the sixth decimal point to doing so to the third. To his amazement, what emerged was a totally different system! He attributed the difference to a combination of the iteration of his equations plus the sensitivity of the system to initial conditions—in this case, the changes in the terminal decimal points. Lorenz named this randomness within his non-random weather models the ‘butterfly effect’ in a paper he wrote entitled “Can the flap of a butterfly’s wing stir up a tornado in Texas?” The discovery of ‘sensitive dependency on initial conditions’ coupled with the ‘iteration of patterns or data’ which produce random irregularities in deterministic systems is the beginning of the contemporary science of “deterministic chaos.”³

The mathematician, Benoit Mandelbrot coined the term ‘fractal,’ from Latin *fractua* ‘irregular,’ to refer to the results of this combination of iteration and sensitivity. And it was Benoit Mandelbrot who provided the pictures of this deterministic chaos in his computer generated fractal images—what James Gleick describes as “...a way of seeing infinity.”⁴

We discover these irregular nonlinear fractal structures and patterns throughout nature, in the iterations of buds in Romanesco broccoli, the arterial and venous systems of kidneys, lungs, brains, coast lines, mountain ranges, root systems, turbulences in fluids. For example, I might ask the

length of a head of cauliflower or a coastline. At one level, the answer might be eight inches or 580 miles. However, at the fractal level of iteration of growth patterns and/or ocean forces, both can be seen as infinite.

In most, perhaps all of nature, we encounter a kind of deterministic chaos in a world described by ‘fractal geometries’ which have “...become a way of measuring qualities that otherwise have no clear definition: the degree of roughness or brokenness or irregularity in an object.”⁵ This is the heterogeneous and nonlinear world of the branching of buds in the cauliflower head, the spongy tissue of the lungs, the indentation on the beach. The German physicists, Peitgen, Jürgens, and Saupe suggest in their *Chaos and Fractals*, that “...chaos is more like the rule in nature, while order (=predictability) is more like the exception.”⁶

The Butterfly Dream and Philosophical Space

Where the ‘butterfly effect’ relates to sensitivity to initial conditions and the iterations of patterns and equations in physical space, the ‘butterfly dream’ reflects sensitivity in a philosophical system to initial presuppositions and their iterations in philosophical space. The ‘butterfly dream’ is found in the work of the 4th Century BCE Taoist philosopher, Chuang Tzu, who claimed to have fallen asleep and dreamt he was a butterfly. Upon awakening, however, he wondered whether he was a man who had dreamt he was a butterfly, or whether he was a butterfly dreaming it was a man.⁷

Perhaps nothing so clearly illustrates the application of chaos theory and nonlinearity to philosophical space as Chuang Tzu’s ‘butterfly dream.’ This story, like so many in Chuang Tzu, calls attention to those presuppositions with which we create our philosophical distinctions and dichotomies like true and false, real and apparent, existence and non-existence. We enter this dynamic world of initial presuppositions and iteration when in assigning ‘true/false’ we wonder if there is a ‘true’ definition of ‘truth,’ ad infinitum. We may insist that ‘dream’ is not ‘reality,’ and reality is not dream. However, if one subscribes to the view that the world is ultimately atomic in nature, then do physicists dream of particles or do particles dream of physicists?

Just as the 20th Century has opened new perspectives on nature, with the butterfly effect, so have the discoveries and translations of the presuppositions of different philosophical systems with different emphases opened new perspectives on mind and philosophy. In physical space, fractals appear in the dynamic processes of nature. In philosophical space they appear in dynamic paradoxes of fixed and absolute systems and their positions, schools, and movements which generate iterations within initial sensitivity to fundamental philosophical presuppositions—often expressed as some sort of ‘ism,’ e.g., realism, idealism, nominalism, empiricism, rationalism, post-modernism.

In philosophical space we discover this iterating fractal world of paradoxes at the level and scale of the philosophical presuppositions behind the philosophical questions we ask and statements we make. A simple example of the combination of iteration and initial sensitivity to philosophical presuppositions (conditions) would be the famous ‘liar’s paradox,’ i.e., ‘I always tell lies.’ Or one might illustrate the combination with the insight that there are at least three sets of answers to the question ‘which came first, the chicken or the egg?’ One is the Aristotelian and creationist answer which claims that the chicken must come first. Another is the evolutionist’s answer that the egg or genetic material must come first. A third answer is that the ‘question’ must come first for it provides the dependency upon initial presuppositions

within which the other two systems begin their iterations of answers and proofs.

Judaism, Christianity, Islam and their hundreds of sub-groupings can be seen as fractals based on iterations sensitively dependent upon initial presuppositions in monotheism. And given the presupposition of the 'conservation of consciousness' in Indian philosophy, then Advaita Vedānta, Smakhya, Jainism, Buddhism, Carvaka, etc. and their commentaries are iterations within initial presuppositions, which in turn provide iterations upon the nature of life, knowledge, ethics, ad infinitum.

In physical space, the infinite lines which can occupy a finite space in the lungs, in philosophical space become the infinite iterations of schools, positions, questions, within different traditions—some of which emphasize the conservation of matter, others the conservation of consciousness, others the conservation of situationality, others the conservation of a nature/mind process continuum. Thus philosophizing on Post-modernism, Kant, Plato, Sankara, Confucius, the Koran, the Bible, depends upon the initial presuppositions of systems in philosophical space combined with the iterations in countless books, seminars, dissertations, monographs, lectures, arguments, and reinterpretations. These are the fractal cauliflower heads, coastlines and kidney stones of philosophical space.

As philosophers, we often tend to connect meaning to the static identities of terms and fixed concepts in systems which determine for us what the world is and how we know it. We may even insist that our terms and ideas enable us to draw clear identity lines between reality and non-reality, to distinguish the meaningful from the meaningless, and knowledge from opinion in an old fashioned linear Newtonian deterministic box. I would propose that it is now time to turn our attention to exploring the nature of chaos and the philosophical fractals that arise in the iterations in different traditions and systems in the 'minding' aspect of the nature/mind continuum.

Feed Back Loops, Fractals and Logics⁸

Depending upon initial presuppositions, philosophical question/answer feedback loops can generate great complexity and infinite iterations of terms and concepts. Recognizing the initial sensitivity to the presuppositions within which philosophical iterations occur, we should be able to better understand and appreciate the fractals that occur as paradoxes in our own traditions and in those of others.

To illustrate this discussion of the inter-relationship of the 'butterfly effect' and the 'butterfly dream' in the fractal nature of philosophical space, I would like to examine four logics which demonstrate iterating positions within their dependency upon initial presuppositions. These logics represent four approaches to reasoning about the 'butterfly effect' world within four 'butterfly dream' emphases on object, subject, situation, and process. They reflect an awareness of the chaotic and irregular nature of philosophizing in a nature/mind continuum. However, they also demonstrate that this chaos can be creatively ordered in developing understanding, without denying the dynamic mental aspect of the whole.

Greek and Roman Skeptics: 'The butterfly effect/dream in an object emphasis'

Skeptic philosophers like Pyrrho, Sextus Empiricus and Agrippa organized logic in philosophical space with the practice of 'skeptis' and 'epoche.' The term skeptis means to 'inquire,' and in order to assure that understanding and not dogma accompanies inquiry, they qualified inquiry with 'epoche,'

which means to 'withhold judgment.' One does not pass judgment until exhaustive inquiry renders it possible. And to make sure that skepticism itself does not become dogma, Sextus Empiricus insisted that when inquiry is complete and judgment need no longer be suspended, then skepticism must also be turned upon itself like a purgative whose task is accomplished and so flushes itself out. This it seems to me affirms the dynamic of chaos without being trapped in it.⁹

In clarification of the iterations of skeptis/epoche process, Agrippa, a fifth Century Skeptic, offered five justifications for suspending judgment: The first relates to disagreements as to knowledge versus opinion among those who claim to know with certainty. The second refers to the infinite regression of definition and judgment that arise in claims for certainty. The third is based on the relativity of observation. The fourth is based on the nature of hypothesis and dogma, for sooner or later any proposition in its use of terms requires some undefined term be assumed as absolute and so stands outside of the reasoning system. The fifth reflects the circularity in any argument whereby in reasoning from premises to conclusions, some aspect of a premise (including definitions) is already contained in the conclusion, and vice versa.

The Jain and the Saptabhangi: 'The butterfly effect/dream in a subject emphasis'

The Jain devised two logics that emphasized the subject as central to the knowing process. The first is used to eliminate ignorance of the relative nature of 'points of view.' This is 'nayavada' which recognizes that all statements and knowledge reflect points of view—one might say the 'fractal nature of points of view.' The second logic then incorporates the relativity of point of view in the iterations of the 'saptabhangi' or seven step logic which affirms from a point of view in one step, negates from a point of view in a second, both affirms and negates from a point of view in a third. In its fourth step, however, it asserts that from a point of view whatever one is processing through the system is ultimately indescribable. In a fifth step the logic returns from a point of view to the first step, but couples affirmation with the insight into indescribability. In a sixth step it negates from a point of view and couples this negation with indescribability. And in a seventh step from a point of view both affirms and negates and couples this combination with indescribability. Here again, it would seem, is a fundamental awareness of the fractal branching nature of philosophical space in affirmation, negation, describability and indescribability. This reflects an insight which the 'Jiva' or 'possibility of consciousness' develops throughout the system to the end that Jiva does not confuse thinking with any of the 'fractal possibilities for thought.'

Buddhism and the Catuskoti: 'The butterfly effect/dream in a situational emphasis'

In the *Aggivacchagotta Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikaya*, the Buddha is asked several sets of questions by the wanderer Vaccha who wonders about the doctrine of 'no self' and wants to know what the situation of the Buddha will be after death. Do you hold the view that after death a Buddha exists and only this view is true? Do you hold the view that after death a Buddha does not exist and only this view is true? Do you hold the view that after death a Buddha both exists and does not exist and only this view is true? Do you hold the view that after death a Buddha neither exists nor does not exist and only this view is true? To each of Vaccha's iterating questions, the Buddha answers 'no,' and explains that asking and answering such questions is like asking and answering where the fire goes when it goes out.¹⁰

Nagarjuna, in the 2nd Century CE, refined this question/answer sequence into a four-part reasoning technique, the ‘tetralemma’ or ‘catuskoti’ which by focusing attention on different stages or possible aspects of awareness keeps the philosopher from mistaking the possibility of thinking and speaking for the thought and spoken. The catuskoti is both a technique for avoiding extremes and a technique for voiding itself as an extreme. This technique at one level affirms a possibility or state of affairs: ‘something or everything is so....’, at a second level this first is negated: ‘something or everything is not so....’, the third level combines affirmation and negation (which are also sources of infinite fractal branching), ‘something or everything is both so and not so ...’ and at its fourth level there is negation of both affirmation and negation, ‘something or everything is neither so nor not so....’¹¹ Nagarjuna too, like the Skeptic uses the logical system, but refuses to limit awareness to one of its absolutes or assertions.

Chinese Continuum Logic: ‘The butterfly effect/dream in a processing emphasis’

My fourth example of a logic which inter-relates and orders the regularity and irregularity of system contexts in philosophical space is taken from traditional Chinese philosophy where the fundamental presupposition is that the human is not isolated from nature but is an aspect of nature aware of nature. Any observation or statement about the world reflects at least two aspects of the world: (1) that particular aspect of experience which is its focus, and (2) it is an aspect of the world as the ‘possibility of focusing and observing.’ In the words of the Neo-Confucian philosopher, Wang Yang-ming speaking of the ‘principle of nature’: “What is called your mind is that which makes seeing, listening, speaking, and moving possible. It is the nature of man and things; it is the Principle of Nature.”¹² A similar view is expressed in the 20th Century by the historian of Chinese philosophy, Prof. Fung Yu-lan: “...one must think about totality in order to realize that it is unthinkable. One needs thought in order to be conscious of the unthinkable. ...One must think about the unthinkable, yet as soon as one tries to do so, it immediately slips away.”¹³ The continuum logic that develops in the Chinese tradition as with the Jain and the Buddhist, occurs on different levels, rather than within absolute categories of the two valued systems of Western formal logics with which the Sceptics were concerned.

The logic, rather than focusing upon value dichotomies, relates on different levels the aspects of experience and perspectives upon them. On one level, minding focuses upon the aspect of the harmonious whole of naturing and minding and achieves thereby a perspective upon this whole or Tao. On a second level, minding begins to distinguish mind from nature while maintaining perspective upon ‘distinctions,’ for, as the Confucian philosopher Hsun Tzu maintained, every distinction is also a potential obsession.¹⁴ On a third level minding is focusing upon the various aspects of thinking and the nature of thinking as a synthesis of intending and attending. At this level, one develops perspectives upon the relationship of intention and attention, connotation and denotation, induction and deduction. On a fourth level, the perspectives of the other levels are now applied to the practical acquisition of knowledge. This is an application process consisting of five aspects and corresponding perspectives: in all knowledge there is (1) a ‘knower,’ (2) the ‘known,’ (3) the ‘knowing process,’ (4) the resulting ‘knowledge’ which is symbolized and communicated. The fifth aspect (5) is the intuitive awareness of the other four aspects, and perspectives upon their inter-relationships and the priorities assigned by mind. Is one more significant than the other? Can one be separated out from the others? Each of these logic levels develops in the

‘totality’ within which it began and to which it returns at the completion of the fourth level.

Conclusions

The physicist, Erwin Schroedinger once said that “...it may perhaps be possible for logical thinking to disclose at least this much: that to grasp the basis of phenomena through logical thought may in all probability be impossible, since logical thought is itself a part of phenomena, and wholly involved in them.”¹⁵ The molecular biologist, Friedrich Cramer in applying chaos theory and the idea of fractals to ‘living systems’ maintains that “Systems are *fundamentally complex* if, despite deterministic initial conditions, they have indeterminate or chaotic solutions. In these systems, predictability fails not only for practical reasons but also for fundamental ones.”¹⁶ I would suggest that just as the discovery of chaos and fractals in physical spaces offers a new access to and awareness of the nature aspect of the nature/mind continuum, so do chaos and fractals as paradoxes in philosophical space offer a new access to and appreciation of the mind aspect of the continuum.

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The Problem of Induction: A Comparative Approach

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The classical problem of induction was introduced into Indian philosophy fairly early. The legendary figure commonly associated with this is Carvaka (6th century BCE?). His own writings are lost. But many later writers have carefully developed his views. The following is an excerpt from Udayana (11th century CE), a great Nyaya philosopher, who is critical of Carvaka and still presents the viewpoint precisely.

“Since there is no discriminating factor, how can it be known that although there is deviation in a certain case, there is no deviation in some other case? Since there is no reason that can settle the matter one way or the other, the observation of togetherness itself is the ground of apprehension of deviation. For what is confirmed in hundreds of cases is also found to be refuted. From the fact that no counter-example has been found so far, who can legislate that none will be found anywhere and anytime? ...Common activities can be carried out on the basis of expectation alone. Coherence is mistakenly thought to justify the claim of knowledge.” [NK 334, 339]

When two things like smoke and fire are observed together in some cases and at least one of them is never observed without the other in any known case, one may generalize that at least one of them is pervaded by or always together with the other, e.g., that all smoky things are fiery. In other words, observation of co-presence (*sahacara-darsana*) and non-observation of any deviation or counterexample (*vyabhicara-adarsana*) may be thought to be an adequate method of generalization (*vyapti-graha-upaya*). The point of Carvaka is that this is not acceptable. Two things that are observed together in hundreds of cases are still found sometimes to deviate. So there is such possibility of deviation even when deviation is unobserved so far. Since the possibility of a counterexample to the generalization cannot be ruled out, one is not justified in claiming that the induction is true. This has no adverse implication for everyday activities that take inductions for granted. When two things are repeatedly observed together and no counterexample is observed, we expect at least one of them to be together with the other in the future. Such expectation is based on probability and suffices for everyday life. But this falls short of justifying any claim of knowing that a generalization is true.

Here is another excerpt from Prabhacandra, a Jain philosopher, who too is critical of Carvaka but presents the latter viewpoint succinctly.

“If knowledge of pervasion (*vyapti*) were based on inference (*anumana*) where inference presupposes knowledge of pervasion, there would be infinite regress or circularity.” [PKM 178]

If observation or perception fails to justify induction, could it be justified through inference? No, says Carvaka. An inference must be based on premises. If such premises are merely confined to what is observed, they can do no more than what observation can do and observation has already been seen to be inadequate for the purpose. On the other hand, if the premises go beyond observation, they themselves must incorporate inferences that, in their turn, must be based

on further premises. This leads to an infinite regress. If, however, the regress is stopped at some point and something is accepted without justification, there is begging the question. Thus induction cannot be justified through inference or any non-observational means of knowing either. It follows that the claim that any induction, however often confirmed, is true, is not justified.

Similar issues are raised in Hume’s critique of induction. Below is an excerpt.

“For all inferences from experience suppose, as their foundation, that the future will resemble the past... It is impossible, therefore, any arguments from experience can prove this resemblance of the past to the future; since all these arguments are founded on the supposition of that resemblance.” [EHU, 36-7]

We do not imply that Carvaka and Hume hold exactly the same views. [For example, one difference is that for Hume but not for Carvaka, memory is knowledge.] But the similarities are patent enough to merit a comparison. For Hume, the inductive leap from observed to unobserved cases cannot be justified unless one assumes the principle of uniformity of nature and that the future will resemble the past; this involves begging the question. For Carvaka induction cannot be justified by observation alone because the inductive leap invariably goes beyond observation. At the same time, induction cannot be justified by inference or any other non-observational means. The latter must depend on premises that go beyond observation and are themselves dependent on further premises that too go beyond observation. This is doomed to end in infinite regress or circularity; this is similar to Hume’s argument. Both again hold that this has no bearing on practical activities that can go on from expectation or habit based on probable opinion rather than knowledge.

The Carvaka critique of induction led to a great deal of philosophical activity in the Sanskrit philosophical tradition trying to justify induction just as Hume’s critique of induction has led to many attempts to rehabilitate induction in modern and contemporary philosophy. First we look briefly at some twentieth century responses (for references see DI, chapter 9) to Hume. This brief discussion is not exhaustive but rather gives samples of some different positions. Also, since the space is very short, we leave out the so-called new riddle of induction suggested by Goodman. We begin with Russell.

Russell holds that all factual opinions about the future presuppose the inductive principle that experience cannot confirm or disconfirm. To quote: “We must either accept the inductive principle on the ground of its intrinsic evidence or forgo all justification of our expectations about the future.” [PP, 68]. But if this were sound, both Carvaka and Hume would have a cause to celebrate; it is unlikely that either would be persuaded by an appeal to accept the inductive principle on the ground of its intrinsic evidence.

Strawson argues as follows: the Humean critique of induction assumes that only deductive arguments in which, if valid, the conclusion follows necessarily from the premises are rational. But the aim of induction is to produce factual knowledge that is not contained in the premises; hence the conclusion of an induction cannot necessarily follow from the premises. Rather an induction is justified when it is reasonable and proportionate to the multiplicity and variety of empirical data. But this amounts to claiming that being justified means being reached by the recommended method. How can then the method be subject to evaluation and criticism? If the method is subject to revision, it must make sense to ask if the

accepted method is rational and justified. This implies that being rational and justified cannot mean the same as satisfying the currently adopted technique.

Braithwaite takes another position. He points out that inductions using accepted procedures have been true or largely true. This shows, he claims, that induction is justified. But the moot question of Carvaka and Hume is whether the observed regularity in the past can be the proper reason for claiming regularity in the future. Such an inductive justification of induction, then, is circular.

Reichenbach takes yet another position. The inductive rule allows us to go from observed to unobserved cases and to go from smaller to larger percentages (including 100%) of a given class. This suggests that the probability value is equal to observed frequency. That is, $P(A/B) = m/n$ where n is the number of observed events B and m is the number of those observed B which are also A . If there were any laws of nature to be found, persistence with the inductive rule (also called the straight rule) would lead to their discovery. But if the rule is disowned, there is no certainty that the laws of nature will be found. Thus the inductive rule will work, if any will. But such pragmatist justification of induction is also open to the charge of circularity if it is claimed to show that induction is rational (a claim disowned by Reichenbach himself). It may be true that the continued use of the inductive rule would lead to the discovery of scientific laws. Still it does not follow, unless one assumes that the future will resemble the past, that this trend will be maintained. Further, even if the inductive rule leads to the discovery of any laws of nature, we do not know how many observations will be needed and hence we cannot possibly know when they have been found. Again, scientists try to predict short-run relative frequencies; it is unclear how the inductive rule can ensure that such predictions are correct.

Finally, we take note of the view of Popper. He concedes that ampliative induction has no rational validity. The hypothetico-deductive model, Popper holds, should replace the inductive model of science. The aim of science is not verification of hypotheses (as inductionists suppose) but their falsification. This can be achieved without induction: if a prediction deduced from a hypothesis comes out false, the hypothesis is falsified. But although the hypothetico-deductive method and falsifiability have their roles to play in science, these do not tell the whole story and do not rule out induction. The more severe are the tests to which a hypothesis is put, the better confirmed is it. The hypothesis does not logically follow from the test although the latter does confirm the former. Further, the choice among competing hypotheses that are not falsified depends on such factors as which hypothesis has the richer information content, is formulated more precisely and rigorously and explains a larger number of facts. This shows that induction remains an indispensable part of the scientific method, for the confirmation of hypotheses by tests and the principles of choice among surviving rival hypotheses utilize induction.

The short survey above shows how challenging and yet how difficult the classical problem of induction has turned out to be. Below we offer a solution that appears to be the most promising. However, if induction is understood in the broad sense of any non-demonstrative inference, a solution may not be possible. But if induction is understood in a narrow sense, a solution may be attempted. In the narrow sense, induction should be understood as generalization from particular observations correlating two distinct states or events or things such as smoke and fire. Both Carvaka and Hume deem particular observations as reliable in some of their remarks. For this to make sense, the following empiricist

principle of observational credibility (OC) is needed: of two factual claims, the one with observational support should be preferred to one without it. If OC is accepted and certain logical laws are granted, the following subjunctive argument (*tarka*) provided by Gangesa—a great Nyaya philosopher of the 13th century CE called the founder of the Navya-Nyaya school of Indian philosophy who does not state either OC or the logical laws explicitly but implies them frequently—is to the point: “If smoke were not produced by an aggregate that either includes fire or excludes fire, smoke would not have been produced” (*Dhumo yadi vahni-asamavahita-ajanyatve sati vahni-samavahita-ajanyah syat, na utpannah syat*, TCM, section on *tarka*).

This argument implicitly makes use of the rule of double negation, the De Morgan rule, the rule of disjunctive syllogism and the rule of *modus tollens*. The argument may be reformulated and the formal structure exhibited as below. Let P symbolize ‘smoke is produced by an aggregate including fire,’ let Q symbolize ‘smoke is produced by an aggregate excluding fire’ and let R symbolize ‘smoke is produced.’

1. $(\sim P \ \& \ \sim Q) \ \sim R$
2. $\sim \sim R$
3. $\sim Q$
4. Therefore $\sim(\sim P \ \& \ \sim Q)$ 1, 2 (*modus tollens*)
5. Therefore $\sim \sim P \ V \ \sim \sim Q$ 4 (De Morgan)
6. Therefore $\sim \sim P$ 3, 5 (disjunctive syllogism)
7. Therefore P 6 (double negation)

The formal part of this argument is historically interesting. Gangesa belongs to a period long before the rise of modern logic. This is one of the earliest records in which the use of sophisticated laws like the De Morgan law along with other laws within a single argument is clearly implied.

But our main concern here is the relevance of this argument for the problem of induction. The first premise plays a crucial role. It asserts that if smoke is not produced by an aggregate that either includes fire or excludes fire, smoke is not produced. The obvious implication is that if smoke is produced, it is produced by an aggregate that either includes fire or excludes fire. Smoke and fire are replaceable by any effect and any causal condition respectively. The generalized and equivalent version of the first premise then is: if an effect is produced, it is produced by an aggregate that either includes some causal condition or excludes it. The negation of this amounts to that an effect is produced but is not produced by an aggregate that either includes or excludes fire. The second conjunct here is that an effect is not produced by an aggregate that either includes or excludes a causal condition. The negation of this is that an effect is produced by an aggregate that either includes or excludes a causal condition. We have then two rival factual claims: (1) an effect is produced by an aggregate that either includes or excludes a causal condition and (2) an effect is not produced by an aggregate that either includes or excludes a causal condition. OC favors (1) and not (2) and thus lends support to the said conditional and not its negation. Further, the consequent of the conditional derives support from the law of excluded middle; the antecedent and the consequent are non-trivially and appropriately connected in meaning; thus the conditional is acceptable (although what makes a conditional acceptable is a debatable issue that cannot be addressed within the limited space here). Needless to say, the conditional is also acceptable for the same reason in the particularized version with smoke and fire.

The second premise says that it is not the case that smoke is not produced or that smoke is produced. Since we observe that smoke is produced, we may assert that as long as

observation is accepted as reliable, as both Carvaka and Hume say in some of their remarks.

The third premise says that it is not the case that smoke is produced by an aggregate that excludes fire. OC is of help here. There is no observational support for the possibility that smoke is produced by an aggregate that excludes fire. On the other hand, there is massive observational support for the claim that smoke is produced by an aggregate that includes fire. We have two competing factual claims: (1) that smoke is produced by an aggregate that excludes fire and (2) smoke is produced by an aggregate that includes fire. Based on OC the first is rejected and the second is accepted. The steps 4 through 7 spell out the formalities.

Needless to say, we do not have the space to defend the logical laws or OC. Philosophical problems are interconnected and neither those laws nor OC are above controversy. But each one of those laws belongs to classical logic and is widely accepted. One need not also be an empiricist and hold that observation is a (or the only) source of knowing. But as long as one is an empiricist (as both Carvaka and Hume are in some of their remarks), OC is indispensable. Further, neither Carvaka nor Hume rejects the classical logical laws. So granting these, we have a solution to the classical problem of induction.

The second premise in the above argument is that smoke is produced and the third premise is that smoke is not produced by an aggregate that excludes fire. Both of these premises imply causation. But both Carvaka and Hume reject causation as a necessary or objective connection between two events. Does not the argument then beg the question?

This is a fair objection. But is it fatal? Nyaya philosophers do not think of a cause as a necessary ground as some rationalists do. They also explicitly reject the doctrine of causal power favored by some empiricists like Locke. The Carvaka-Humean critique of causation may be pertinent for some views of causation but is not effective against the Nyaya viewpoint. For the Nyaya a causal condition is a regular and contiguous antecedent of the effect (*karya-niyata-purvavrtti-karanam*, TS, section on causal condition). This is similar to Hume's own view of causation as regular succession and is gathered from observation. For example, fire is repeatedly and without any known exception observed to be already present where and when smoke is produced. This suffices as the ground for asserting that fire is a causal condition of smoke or that fire is a regular and contiguous antecedent of smoke. In other words, for the Nyaya to say that fire is a causal condition of smoke implies that fire is repeatedly and without any known exception observed as a contiguous antecedent of smoke. [There is much more that the Nyaya has to say about causation but a fuller discussion is not possible in the available space]. Similarly, an effect is defined as something that comes to exist after being non-existent before (*pragabhava-pratiyogi-karyam*, TS, section on causal condition). This much is also gathered from observation. For example, we do observe smoke to come out from a burning fire where there was no smoke before.

In the light of this analysis to say that smoke is produced is to say that it is something that exists after being non-existent before. We do have the warrant from observation to assert this. Thus the second premise does not beg the question. Similarly, to say that smoke is not produced by an aggregate that excludes fire is to say that smoke is not regularly and contiguously preceded by an aggregate that excludes fire. On the other hand, to say that smoke is produced by an aggregate that includes fire is to say that smoke is regularly and contiguously preceded by an aggregate that includes fire

and (2) smoke is regularly and contiguously preceded by an aggregate that excludes fire. Given OC we must reject (2) and accept (1). Thus the third premise too does not beg the question.

The first premise may now be restated as follows: if smoke comes to exist after being non-existent before, it is regularly and contiguously preceded by an aggregate that either includes fire or excludes fire. The negation of this amounts to that smoke comes to exist after being non-existent before and is not regularly and contiguously preceded by an aggregate that either includes or excludes fire. Again, the second conjunct has no observational support. On the contrary, in each known case smoke is regularly and contiguously preceded by an aggregate that includes fire. This suffices (given OC and the standard interpretation of disjunction in classical logic) to make the negation of the said conjunct acceptable, viz., that smoke is regularly and contiguously preceded by an aggregate that includes or excludes fire. Accordingly, the said premise rather than its negation is acceptable. Thus the subjunctive argument is defensible. It provides a rational justification of induction without appealing to human expectations, habits or propensities—something that Hume said was impossible. Hume declared that the outcome of the skeptical arguments is “a philosophical melancholy and delirium” with a sense of being “confounded” (THN 269). Perhaps the subjunctive argument is a cure for the malady.

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Analytic versus Comparative: A bogus dichotomy in Philosophy

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“If what is justified is asserted in brief logically potent words,
If refutations are made with an appeal to the fallacies,
tricks and cases of defeat,
With no malice in the heart, no harshness of speech
and no frown on the face,
Then we are always ready to take part in any such
discourse of civil people.”

— Jayanta Bhatta (from “A Tumult of Tradition,” a philosophical four-act play, 9th century Kashmir)

1. General Remarks

Quoting Borges, Foucault wonders at “a certain Chinese encyclopedia’s” division of animals into (a) belonging to the emperor, (b) suckling pigs, (c) stray dogs, (d) innumerable, (e) frenzied, (f) fabulous, etc. The usual taxonomy of types of philosophy that one can teach or learn in contemporary American academia is no less wondrous. Philosophy courses and philosophers are standardly divided into (a) Analytic (b) Continental (c) Feminist and (d) Asian/ Comparative. Sometimes the species “American philosophy” (which one might expect to be the over-arching genus!) is added to this list with the intention of recognizing Process Philosophy and Pragmatism.

Yet everybody knows that some feminist philosophers are formidably analytic, that some very good analytic philosophers are pragmatists, that wonderful work in analytic philosophy of mind or language or mathematics is routinely produced on the European continent, and that some comparative philosophers are very continental in their phenomenological or deconstructive style of doing philosophy. The only place where this category-mistaken cross-division is often thought to have a modicum of justification is the alleged rift between the analytic and the Asian/comparative. “I have done enough of left-brain exercise through analytic philosophy,” one senior philosophy professor from a liberal arts college told us at the start of a NEH Institute on Indian philosophies and religions, “now, I want to develop my right brain through learning about Indian thought.” The rift between reason and intuition, between argumentation and direct experience, between conceptual clarification and supra-conceptual edification resurfaces regularly in the form of this conviction that the gulf between analytic philosophy and Indian-comparative philosophy could not and should not be bridged. This paper has the modest goal of proving, with one example of fruitful practice of comparative analytic philosophy, that the above mentioned rift is a figment of politically motivated or blinkered imagination.

Of course everyone knows that such great comparative philosophers as Bimal Matilal and Karl Potter have been uncompromisingly analytic in their methodology. But, to the extent that they did and do Indian philosophy at all, the academia refused to regard them as straightforward analytic philosophers. In spite of his path-breaking work on the logic, ontology and epistemology of negation, Oxford University Sub-faculty of Philosophy hesitated a lot before listing Professor Matilal’s classes on Indian Logic or Indian Epistemologies in the philosophy lecture-list. Karl Potter’s seminal work on free

will and truth has never been anthologized in an analytic philosophy reader on those topics. This seems to be the price you pay for mastering and writing about hard-core Indian philosophy: Notwithstanding your perfect facility with and original contributions to analytic philosophy, you cease to qualify for the narrow sense of an analytic philosopher simply because you have crossed the cultural/historical border of the Frege-to-Quine tradition. Ignorance of Indian philosophy seems to be a necessary condition for qualifying as an analytic philosopher of good standing in the United States. I know of at least one very established American analytic philosopher who has not only studied and taught but even published on technical classical Indian philosophical semantics besides his major interests in Meinongian semantics and metaphysics of events. He has reported to me that when one of the topmost West coast philosophy departments was about to hire him, he told them of this newly acquired additional expertise and they pretended not to hear and thought that he was changing the subject.

That indeed is the fear: if we allow comparisons or fusions with a foreign tradition then the purity of the Aristotelean-Fregean-Kaplanian tradition will somehow get tainted. The subject would change. It would no longer be philosophical analysis as we know it.

Fear of degenerating into (comparative) religion surely does not explain this Euro-American myth-preservation about the spiritual-nonanalytic East! One no longer needs to be a radical atheist like Bertrand Russell in order to get a membership to the analytic club. Some of the stalwarts of current Anglo-American analytic philosophy are frankly Christian and proudly practice analytic philosophy of religion. Indeed, anti-theistic Western philosophers can find fresh chewable meat in the Buddhist (e.g., Santarakṣita) or Jaina (e.g., HaribhadraSuri) arguments against the existence of any sort of God. So the old uninformed argument about most Eastern philosophy being overly religious and hence unfit for secular rational analysis no longer holds any water.

Luckily, Indian philosophy as practiced for the last sixty years has not had the converse fears or insecurities. Much first rate philosophy in India has been done in English—and I am not talking about Sri Aurobindo or Tagore— using a mixed Western and Indian philosophical idiom, raising questions which revel in straddling traditions: such as: “What is the objectively graspable meaning of the first person pronoun ‘I’?” “Is pramāṇya truth or knowledgehood?” “Is apoha negative nominal essence or complement-set of particular images?” “Is the five-skandha self a Humean bundle?” “Is karma retributive causation?” “Is knowledge derived from verbal testimony reducible to inference?” Why have the Western philosophers of language, mind and knowledge not asked the converse type of trans-traditional questions? Why don’t we hear the enquiry “Does Russell’s theory of error and false belief count as an ‘anyathakhyati’ (misallocated predication) theory?” “Is Armstrong a Carvaka-style ‘dehatmavadin’?”

Now, we have grown up believing that liberalism, cosmopolitan non-hierarchical rationality and multi-cultural openness are typically Western ideals, whereas provincial insularity, considerations regarding who has the right to which kind of knowledge, and privileged access to special disciplines were features of caste-dominated Hindu sort of thinking. Yet, Western analytic philosophy has, in general, shown little interest in opening up to the vigorous and rich traditions of epistemological, metaphysical, linguistic and aesthetic analysis found in the—now translated—major works of Nyaya, Vedānta, Grammarian and literary theoretic traditions in Sanskrit. Indeed, I have heard both Richard Rorty, whose “linguistic turn”

has ended in a relativistic cul-de-sac, and Timothy Williamson, whose philosophical analysis has led to staunch metaphysical realism, remark that Western Analytic philosophy has nothing to learn from Asian thought. Unfortunately, some very sincere and competent specialists of Asian, even Indian, thought, agree with this precisely because they have a rather exotic soteriological (liberation-obsessed) image of “Indian ways of thinking” and a rather crude and narrow notion of what analytic philosophy is up to.

Four major arguments are given in different contexts in support of this persistent image of Indian thought as typically non-analytic: (1) Analytic philosophy is motivated by the Aristotelian search for pure theory whereas most Indian philosophies are motivated by the practical soteriological purpose of eradicating existential suffering. (2) Analytic philosophy is historically connected to the enlightenment project of individualistic anti-authoritarian free thinking, whereas all Indian thought is deeply rooted in unquestioning reverence to revealed tradition or prophetic authority. (3) Analytic philosophy reaches its conclusion on the basis of deductive, inductive and abductive arguments whereas Indian philosophies routinely base themselves on alleged intuitive mystical experiential knowledge. And finally, (4) there is no clear conception of formal logic, deductively valid arguments or *a priori* truth or analytic propositions in Indian thought, whereas analytic philosophy is crucially based on such notions. I have responded to each of these arguments separately in some detail elsewhere (“Rationality in Indian Thought,” chapter in Blackwells Companion to World Philosophies, edited by Deutsch and Bontekoe, 1997). Here I can only record my secure conviction that these objections against the very idea of Indian Analytic philosophy are very easy to answer.

Sometimes a more serious worry is expressed, not from the analytic (Western) side but from the authentic Indian philosophy side about doing Indian-comparative philosophy in an analytic vein. This is the worry (expressed by Stephen Phillips in “Counter Matilal’s Bias: The Philosophically Respectable in Indian Spiritual Thought” published in *Epistemology, Meaning and Metaphysics After Matilal*, published by Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Shimla, 1996) that, “success on the front of (analytic) legitimization may have come at the cost of distorting some of the history of Indian philosophies” and losing sight of the ‘mystic empiricism’ that grounds much Vedantic thought. But I wish to point out that this is a baseless worry. The intellectual clarity achieved by well-defined conceptual distinctions, intricate rational argumentation and sceptical flushing out of conflicting metaphysical beliefs, is very much at the service of that spiritual experience of direct encounter with the Self or emptiness that one hears about. A traditional Smakhya, Yogacara Buddhist or Kashmir Shaiva philosopher would not have any anxiety that such logical noise would be distracting for a mystical poise. Indeed, as Abhinavagupta (early 11th Century), the greatest champion of direct mystical experience, has maintained in his magnum opus *Tantraloka* (pt IV), good reasoning and analysis of one’s own doubts, errors and beliefs is the surest means to Yogic perfection: “tarko yogangam uttamam.”

In the rest of this paper, I propose to indicate a specific research-program in (what Mark Siderits, one of the finest practitioners of analytic comparative Indian philosophy has called) “fusion philosophy,” that derives its inspiration from an in-depth study of Abhinavagupta’s epistemology of self-consciousness. Such fusion philosophy is nothing very new. In a profoundly creative way, K.C. Bhattacharya practiced it when he wrote his “Subject as Freedom” although his writing style is more phenomenological than analytic. In our own

times, besides J.N. Mohanty who combines analytic clarity with phenomenological concerns and deep roots in Indian philosophy, Mark Siderits, Jonardon Ganeri and Roy Perrett have published quite a lot of Indian-Western fusion-analytic philosophy in the journals.

Just to give a flavor of how one can hit upon such a research project in comparative analytic philosophy, let me share two quotes from Abhinavagupta and John McDowell on what seemed to me to be very much the same issue: The currently hot issue of putatively non-conceptual demonstrative content of perception:

“Even at the time of direct sensory acquaintance, there is discursive spontaneity of consciousness (vimarsa). Otherwise, how can we account for actions such as running which are impossible without recognition or reidentification? In this case that linguistic-conceptual capacity which is the very soul of consciousness must take the form of something like a finger-pointing, otherwise the child will not pick up a language when it first sees others engaging in linguistic practice.”

—Abhinavagupta (Isvara-pratyabhijna-vimarsini
1/5/19)

“In the throes of an experience of the kind that putatively transcends one’s conceptual powers...one can give linguistic expression to a concept that is exactly as fine-grained as the experience by uttering a phrase like “that shade,” in which the demonstrative exploits the presence of the sample.” John McDowell (Mind and World, p. 56-57)

In the light of these two similar lines of thought from two very different times and climes, of totally different metaphysical persuasions, let me state the outlines of an eminently viable research program which, if undertaken with awareness of but not obsession with the historical cultural differences, should efface, once for all, the apparent chasm between analytic and comparative philosophy.

2. Two Controversies and a Possible Hidden Link, A Research Program in Fusion Philosophical Analysis

Whenever I cognize—more specifically—perceive a brown cat, must I directly, simultaneously and incorrigibly cognize—that is, perceive, that I am perceiving a brown cat? This is a live controversy in current Western philosophy of perception. Some answer yes to this question. I shall call them: “reflexivists.” You are a strong or Cartesian reflexivist if you believe that a state’s being a mental state or a state of consciousness consists, at least in part, in its being transparent, that is, in being immediately and incorrigibly known to the subject. A mitigated reflexivist is someone who holds that for rational beings to have a cognitive state is to be introspectively aware of it though introspection is not another optional inner perception of the initial cognitive state. According to this moderately Cartesian reflexivism one may be mistaken or self-deceived about one’s own mental states but one cannot be ignorant of them since they are self-intimating. Sydney Shoemaker is a mitigated reflexivist.

Those who answer “no” to our opening question would take a cognitive event to be as external to the subject’s mind as any other event (such as a stimulation of the C-fibres in one’s own brain) and therefore capable of happening without the subject’s knowledge. When one is aware of one’s own perceptual cognition, one must have noticed oneself perceptually but fallibly. I call these philosophers

“Irreflexivists.” Irreflexivism does not have to say that one’s own cognitive states routinely stay unknown to oneself and are only disclosed upon enquiry, because a totally outwardly absorbed cognizer who has no clue that cognition has happened within herself cannot possibly even ask herself “Have I seen or not?” Even irreflexivists concede that second-order apperceptive cognition may happen effortlessly on the heels of a first-order perception. They just insist that the existence of the first perception is not dependent on or constituted by any synchronous and necessary recognition by the possessor of the cognitive state.

Reflexivism took the form of Prabhakara Mimamsa theory of the self-illuminating nature of consciousness, in classical Indian epistemology. It is true, Salikanatha, a Prabhakara Mimamsaka, argues, that a knife does not cut itself and the eyes don’t see themselves. But, unlike material or sensory tools, awareness is conscious and self-luminous. Its job is to reveal. How can an awareness reveal and present its external intentional object to the subject, if it itself remains unrevealed and unrepresented to herself? The usual analogy used by the reflexivist often is of a lamp that lights up both other objects and itself, not needing another lamp to see it. Perhaps that is not all that safe an analogy because there are ways of lighting things up where the source of the light remains concealed. But generally it is only self-lit lights that can illuminate other things. If I don’t know that I have known, how would I know what I have known? All awarenesses arise in the form “I am aware of this” and not in the form “some awareness of this object has occurred” or “this is presented.” In the context of this primary immediate awareness, I, this and the cognition itself are all at once illuminated. The only difference is that the self and the object are other than the grasping awareness whereas the awareness is identical in both the roles of the illuminating and the illuminated. Having said this, the reflexivist hastens to add that the awareness does not actually become an accusative sort of object since it cannot turn itself around as it were to face itself as “that object over there which happens to be me.” The anti-reflexivist objection that self-illumination theory absurdly claims to “enable a finger-tip to bend back and touch itself” is wide of the mark because the cognition is not illuminated as its accusative (*karma*) but only as an immediate enjoyer of the fruit of the cognitive act. This point is made with a crisp example: If I carry a stone from one place to another, both the stone and I (its mover) enjoy the fruit of the motion: change of place. But I am not an object of my own carrying as the stone is. I don’t have to lift myself from one place to another. The stone has been moved. I have moved. Similarly, when I disclose an object with the light of my awareness both the object and the awareness get disclosed together (though not as identical entities). But while bathed by the same light, their distinction shines loud and clear: the object is an accusative of the verb “to cognize,” the cognition is the very constitutive meaning of that verb. The object is opaque, could exist uncognized and even when cognized it is not self-intimating. The cognition is transparent, without any form of its own, cannot exist uncognized and it is self-intimating. So, basically the reflexivist is rejecting the externalist observational model for our knowledge of our own cognitions.

In the classical Indian scene, opponents of reflexivism came in two major teams. The first group insisted that, unlike the brown cat that my eyes could see, my seeing of it is an event or act which even I—the first person—cannot directly perceive. The cognitive act, because it is an act, has to be inferred, even by the perceiver herself, from its effect. In this case the effect is the peculiar feature added by its being

perceived and then noticed in the cat besides its brownness and felinity. It is the occasion-specific feature: cognizedness.

The other group rejected both the self-illumination theory as well as the opposite extreme that cognitions are imperceptible even by the subject herself. They held that with a distinct but equally perceptual awareness-episode operating through the inner sense, my own perception of the cat can be known and ascribed to myself by myself. While the first cognition is verbalized as “That is a brown cat,” the second apperceptive one is verbalized as “I see a brown cat.” Thus, perceptions are neither self-intimating nor only inferable. They are accessible by a second “look within”—a kind of meta-cognitive glance.

Interestingly, the Prabhakara reflexivists and their two opponents were all three realists about external objects of perception. None of them took the cat’s *esse* to consist in my perception of it. Yet, because, upon the self-illumination story, the cat was never cognized minus our cognition of it, reflexivists were blamed for having conceded a crucial premise to the Yogacara Buddhist phenomenologists who argued from constant co-cognizability to identity. For the Yogacara Buddhists, a particular awareness episode makes itself, and nothing but itself, its own direct object, creating the illusion that its object is outside. But not all reflexivists need to be subjective idealists of this ilk. Now to come to the second controversy.

There is, on the face of it, a totally separate issue which too has proved its vitality by showing up, perhaps, in very different garbs, both in classical Indian epistemology and contemporary analytic philosophy of mind and cognition. This is the question of non-conceptual or pre-predicative content of perception. Philosophers such as John McDowell and Bill Brewer (and, in the Indian tradition, Bharthari and Vyasa-tirtha) have maintained that all perceptual cognitions (within the space of reasons) have conceptual content, whereas philosophers such as Christopher Peacocke, Jose Bermudez and Susan Hurley hold that there must be non-conceptual perception first if we are ever to be able to climb up to the level of verbalizable concept-enriched experience. In Sanskrit philosophical traditions the supporters of non-conceptual perception came in two varieties. The radical champions of non-conceptualism (as it has been recently named by Peacocke in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 1998) were the Sautrantika-Yogacara Buddhists who held that all genuine perceptions are concept-free and untainted by language which is the vehicle of imaginary generalities. When we make perceptual *judgments* we have already slipped into inferential cognition and lost touch with the pure self-featured or featureless particulars that are given to the senses.

More moderate non-conceptualists were the Nyaya realists who felt compelled to postulate a pre-predicative concept-free perception in order to explain the full-fledged predicative concept-endowed perceptions which also directly reveal the world as it is according to them. While the Buddhists were suspicious of concepts or generalities and therefore of words that mean them or mean things through them, the Nyaya direct realists considered publicly verbalizable determinate perceptual judgments to be their philosophical life-supports. So they simply held that perceptions can be non-conceptual or conceptual and only the latter can be correct or incorrect whereas the former is only a logical postulate that we can never apperceive let alone put into words. This last bit of the moderate non-conceptualist stance of Nyaya I find crucially significant. If the complex Nyaya argumentation about this issue is correct, then the price at which non-conceptual perceptions are accommodated in the theory is the admission

of a form of fully intentional perceptual cognition which is not only not self-intimating but is incapable of being apperceived or directly intuited in any fashion. Now, for deeply Kantian reasons, I find it inconceivable that a perceptual cognition of mine would be in principle such that I cannot apperceptively or introspectively claim it to be mine, that it would forever remain a matter of philosophical argumentation that I even underwent such a pre-conceptual experience. I therefore think that the idea of concept-free perception (either as the only variety or as also a variety of perception) must be given up unless we want to get committed either to reflexivism which collapses the perception with the apperception and therefore puts no constraint on its content, or to complete inaccessibility of an intentional cognitive state of mine.

Now, there could be dispositional properties of my own knowledge and all sorts of what is nowadays called sub-personal states that constitute my broad perceptual field and enable me, so to say, to have object-recognizing sensory cognitions. These could very well be un-apperceived precisely because they are not episodes of my perceiving something as this-such. What I find hard to stomach is a combination of direct introspectibility theory of cognitive states with the celebration of non-conceptual perceptions as full-fledged perceptions of objects and scenarios.

In any case, the two issues: “Is awareness necessarily self-aware?” and “Are there non-conceptual perceptions?” I think are deep down interlinked. I may be wrong in asserting the particular link that I have asserted in this paper. But there exists some link between them. Only an uncompromisingly analytic style of thinking that does not ask for historical or cultural causes of views but judges them for cogency and truth as seriously offered philosophical options, can do justice to the comparative insights that one can get by reconstructing the debates between Indian and contemporary Western reflexivists and non-reflexivists on the one hand and those between conceptualists and non-conceptualists on the other.

Three Orientations and Four ‘Sins’ in Comparative Studies

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Without pretending to exhaust all working orientations, I intend to highlight three major orientations and their distinct methodological approaches in comparative studies whose due examination, in my opinion, would be most helpful for a constructive development of comparative philosophy.¹ I plan to do this by discussing the appropriateness of four ‘sins’ that are oft-cited in critically evaluating a comparative project. The reason that I take this strategy is this: the appropriateness or legitimacy of the four ‘sins’ depends on the purpose and orientation of a comparative project that would decisively determine which kind of methodological approach should be taken and what kind of expectations are appropriate; the strategy is an effective way to identify how crucial aspects and purposes of those orientations and approaches are distinct and so, in treating one’s own comparative project or critically evaluating some other’s comparative project, to be more sensitive to its distinct purpose and orientation and thus to what it is appropriate to expect.²

When comparative projects are critically evaluated, there seem to be four sorts of complaint. The alleged ‘sins’ are these: (1) over-simplification; (2) over-use of external resources;

(3) exaggerated distinction; and (4) blurring assimilation. They, or some of them, are sometimes taken for granted in two senses: first, it is thought that any simplifying the object of study or using external resources to characterize it are doomed to be excessive and thus deserve to be charged with negative ‘over’-character; second, it is assumed that the four complaints may be made indiscriminately in evaluating any comparative project without regard to the orientation and methodological strategy of that study. A metaphilosophical examination of the four ‘sins’ will help to effectively identify the distinct character and objectives of a variety of orientations and their approaches.

1. Historical orientation aiming at historical description

The first orientation under examination aims to give a historical and descriptive account. That is, the primary concern and purpose of this type of comparative study is to accurately describe relevant historical matters of facts and pursue what thinkers in comparison actually thought, what resources were actually used (by them), and what *appear* to be similar and different. The orientation of this type of comparative study thus might be called ‘historical orientation,’ and its methodological approach aims at accurate description of historical matters of fact. The historical orientation requires its practitioners to cover a vast range of historical data to give such ‘factual’ description. It seems that this orientation and its corresponding methodological approach are typically taken in Chinese studies or Sinology as the primary approach to Chinese and comparative philosophy; they are also taken by some scholars in the field of philosophy.

There is no wonder that the aforementioned four oft-cited ‘sins’ would be assumed relevant to those comparative projects with the historical orientation. First, to accurately describe something, it is taken for granted that one should not simplify what is actually complicated; in other words, simplification is always oversimplification: any simplification is guilty of being negatively excessive; and simplification is thus identical with falsification. Second, as for over-use of external resources, any conceptual or explanatory resources which are used to interpret a thinker’s idea under examination but were not actually used by the thinker herself are rendered inadequate or excessive: use of external resources is always over-use of external resources. Third, in this approach, exaggerated distinctness often results from over-simplification of one or both parties under comparative examination in the direction of ignoring part(s) in one tradition or account that would share something in common in another tradition or account; in this way, insofar as the sin of over-simplification has been already legitimately charged, the charge of exaggeration of the due distinction (if any) between the two would be appropriate. Fourth, in this approach, blurring assimilation often results from over-use of external resources to interpret one or both parties under comparative examination, especially when the external resources used to characterize one party come from the other party; to this extent, insofar as the sin of over-use of external resources has been already legitimately charged, the resulting assimilation of blurring the distinction between the two would be also adequately charged.

There would be nothing wrong or inadequate with the historical orientation and its methodological approach *per se*, when the orientation/approach is adequately taken as one of a number of alternative orientations/approaches, instead of the exclusive one, and when one can see its limitations in serving other distinct purposes in comparative studies. In view of this, one question would be natural: Are there any

orientations and approaches other than the historical orientation that would be adequate, and, more importantly, necessary in view of certain purposes in comparative studies? With a positive answer to the question actually being presupposed in the preceding discussion, the question can be phrased in another way: How are other legitimate orientations and methodological approaches possible and necessary? In the following two sections, I will focus on two other orientations and their respective methodological approaches.

2. Interpretation-concerned orientation aiming at understanding and elaborating

The second orientation in comparative studies is concerned with interpretation⁴ through elaborating a thinker's ideas under examination; the primary concern, or purpose, of this orientation is to enhance our understanding of a thinker's ideas via some effective conceptual and explanatory resources, whether or not those resources were actually used by the thinker herself. It is clear that a purely historical approach does not fit here: To elaborate and understand the thinker does not amount to figuring out exactly how the thinker actually thought; instead, such interpretation and understanding might include the interpreter's elaboration of the implications of the thinker's point, which might not have been considered by the thinker herself, or the interpreter's representation of the thinker's point in clearer and more coherent terms or in a more philosophically interesting way, which the thinker herself might have not actually adopted. In both cases, given a thinker's ideas (in one tradition or account) under interpretation, some effective conceptual and explanatory resources well developed in another tradition or account are consciously used to enhance our understanding of, and elaborate, the thinker's ideas; those resources used are thus tacitly and implicitly, but constructively, in comparison and contrast to those original resources by means of which the insight or vision was somehow delivered, insofar as such comparison of the two distinct sorts of resources is not expressly and directly conducted. The term 'constructively' here means such tacit comparative approach intrinsically involves how the interpreter of the thinker's ideas could learn from another tradition or account regarding resources to enhance the interpreter's understanding of the thinker's ideas; therefore, some constructive philosophical engagement between distinct resources in different traditions is tacitly involved in this orientation and its corresponding methodological approach.⁵

In this way, the so-called over-use of external resources is not necessarily a sin but might really enhance our understanding of a thinker's ideas or clarify some original unclear or confusing expression of her ideas. Consequently, the endeavor *per se* of using external resources in this orientation is not automatically inappropriate and thus is not doomed to be a sin, as it would be in the historical orientation. As indicated in discussing the historical orientation, 'blurring' assimilation might result from 'over'-use of external resources when interpreting one or both parties under comparative examination, especially when the external resources used to characterize one party come from the other party. But, for the purpose of interpretation, the resulting assimilation is not necessarily a sin but might illuminate the essential connection and common points between the assimilated ideas at the fundamental level so as to enhance our understanding of those ideas.

It is clear that a comparative project with the interpretation-concerned orientation, instead of the historical orientation, is free or tends to be focusing on, and elaborating,

a certain aspect, layer or dimension of a thinker's ideas based on the purpose of the project, the reflective interest of the person who carries out the project, etc. Indeed, instead of a comprehensive coverage of all aspects or dimensions of the object of study, focusing on one aspect or dimension is a kind of simplification. Now the question is this: Is any simplification *per se* doomed to be indiscriminately a sin of *over-simplification*? It should be clear that, if the purpose of a comparative project is to focus on interpreting or elaborating one aspect or dimension instead of pretending to give a comprehensive historical description, charging the practitioner of this project with *over-simplification* or doing something excessive in simplifying the coverage into one aspect or dimension would be both unfair and miss the point.

Let us agree that a comparative project should be guided by some comprehensive understanding. But a comparative project taking a certain methodological perspective through focusing on one aspect of the object of study is not incompatible with a comprehensive understanding. At this point, what needs to be recognized is an important distinction between a methodological perspective as working approach and the methodological guiding principle that an agent presupposes when taking the methodological perspective and that would be used by the agent to guide or regulate how the perspective would be applied and evaluated. One's reflective practice *per se* of taking a certain methodological perspective amounts to neither reflectively rejecting some other relevant methodological perspective(s) nor presupposing an inadequate methodological guiding principle which would render irrelevant other relevant methodological perspectives (if any).⁶

We have discussed three 'sins' (i.e., 'over-simplification,' 'over-use of external resources,' and 'blurring assimilation') that might be charged against a comparative project with the interpretation-concerned orientation. How about the other one, the sin of 'exaggerated distinction'? This case is more complicated than it may appear. This sin, as discussed before, is connected with the sin of over-simplification when the comparative project assumes the historical orientation. But when a comparative project takes the interpretation-concerned orientation and does 'simplify' the object of study by focusing on one aspect of the object of study, is it automatically guilty of the sin of 'exaggerated distinction'? The preceding distinction between the methodological perspective and the methodological guiding principle is helpful here again. What is at issue is whether the interpreter has assumed an adequate methodological guiding principle to guide and regulate how to look at the relation between the current methodological perspective used as a working perspective and other relevant methodological perspective(s) that would point to other aspects of the object of study. Consequently, when one evaluates a comparative project, what really matters is for one to look at what kind of methodological guiding principle is presupposed behind the working perspective; only when this is examined can the charge of 'exaggerated distinction' be adequately evaluated.

3. Philosophical-issue-concerned orientation aiming at joint contribution

The primary purpose of this orientation in comparative studies is to see how both sides under comparative examination could jointly and constructively contribute to some commonly concerned issues of philosophy,⁷ rather than to focus on providing a historical account of each or on interpreting some ideas historically developed in a certain tradition or account. Typically, in comparatively addressing a certain commonly

concerned issue of philosophy, some substantial ideas historically developed in distinct philosophical traditions or accounts are explicitly and directly compared with the aim of showing how they could jointly contribute to the common concern in complementary ways.⁸ Insofar as constructive engagement in dealing with various common concerns and issues of philosophy is most philosophically interesting, this comparative orientation and its methodological strategy directly, explicitly and constructively conducts philosophical engagement and is thus considered to be most philosophically interesting. To highlight the characteristic features of a comparative project with this primary orientation, let us examine the appropriateness of three charges, among the aforementioned four, that have been sometimes or even often brought against comparative projects with this orientation, that is, the 'sin' of oversimplification, the 'sin' of over-use of external resources, and the 'sin' of blurring assimilation.

A typical procedure of conducting a philosophical engagement in such comparative projects could be both conceptually and practically divided into three phases: (i) the pre-engagement phase in which certain ideas in different traditions or accounts that are *relevant* to the common concern under examination and thus to the purpose of the project are focused on and identified; (ii) the engagement phase in which those ideas *internally* engage with each other in view of that common concern and the purpose to be served; and (iii) the post-engagement phase in which those distinct ideas from different sources are now absorbed or assimilated into a new approach to the common concern under examination. The three 'sins' aforementioned may be considered to be typically associated with different phases. The 'sin' of oversimplification regarding a certain idea identified from a certain tradition may be typically associated with reflective efforts in the pre-engagement phase; the 'sin' of over-use of external resources regarding elaborating a certain idea from a certain tradition may be typically associated with reflective efforts in the engagement phase; and the 'sin' of blurring assimilation may be typically associated with reflective efforts in the post-engagement phase. Now let me briefly evaluate the appropriateness of the three 'sins' respectively in the corresponding three phases; looking at the 'sins' in this way will help to highlight features of comparative projects primarily with the philosophical-issue-concerned orientation.

(1) In the pre-engagement phase, it might be not only legitimate but also adequate or even necessary to have simplification and abstraction of some ideas in one tradition or account into such a perspective: this perspective *per se* is presented in most relevant terms to the common concern addressed, and the purpose served in an issue-concerned comparative project, while without involving those irrelevant elements in the tradition or account from which such a perspective comes, though those irrelevant elements in that tradition might be relevant to figuring out the point of those ideas. The reasons are these. First, the primary concern of the project is not with how such an idea is related to the other elements in the source tradition or account but with how it is relevant to approaching the commonly concerned philosophical issue. Second, while one needs to understand the point of an idea in the context in which it was raised, once one understands the point (either through employing data provided by projects with the first two orientations or through one's own background project with one of the first two orientations), there would be no present purpose served by discussing background. Third, it is clear that such an approach *per se* does not imply denying the social and historical integrity of the idea in the source tradition; the point is that the existence

of such integrity cannot automatically guarantee an indiscriminate priority or even relevance of expressly addressing it in any comparative projects without regard to their orientations and purposes.

(2) In the engagement phase, relevant perspectives from different source traditions would constructively engage each other. From each party's point of view, the other party is something external without; but, from a more broadly philosophical vantage point and in view of the commonly concerned issue, the distinct views may be complementary within. In this context, the term 'external' would miss the point in regard to the purpose here: the pivotal point is not this or that distinct perspective but the issue (and its comprehensive approach) to whose various aspects those perspectives point; in view of the issue, all those perspectives are internal in the sense that they would be complementary and indispensable to a comprehensive understanding.

(3) In the post-engagement phase, some sort of assimilation typically results from the preceding constructive engagement; that is, such assimilation would adjust, blur and absorb different perspectives into one new approach as a whole; this would be what is really expected in this sort of constructive engagement in comparative studies, instead of a sin.

It should be noted that, if a comparative project that explicitly has one of the preceding orientations is considered as a project-simplex in comparative studies, a comparative project in philosophical practice might be a complex that goes with a combination of two or more orientations.⁹ For example, a comparative project concerned with an historical figure often consists of such a combination. Recognition of the characteristic features of the above three distinct comparative orientations and their respective methodological approaches would help us discriminatively treat different stages or parts of a comparative project-complex.

4. Due emphasis on philosophical engagement in comparative studies

Traditionally, to my knowledge, comparative projects with the above third and second orientations (especially when resorting to contemporary development and resources of philosophy) have yet to receive due emphasis for some reasons. First, as far as comparative projects regarding Chinese and Western philosophies are concerned, a comparative project tends to be taken as a mere by-product or extension of studies of the classical Chinese philosophy which itself sometimes tends to be taken largely as merely historical studies of the history of (the classical) Chinese philosophy. Second, on the other hand, comparative approach as a methodological approach has not yet been considered primarily as an effective approach to doing philosophy *per se*. Third, the aforementioned four 'sins' (especially, those of 'oversimplification,' 'over-use of external resources' and 'blurring-assimilation') have been more or less considered as some taken-for-granted 'sins' and have thus discouraged reflective efforts in the direction of the third orientation (or even the second orientation) which would often unavoidably but appropriately commit those 'sins' in many cases. Fourth, most importantly, Chinese philosophy and Western philosophy (especially its mainstream traditions) are sometimes taken as being essentially alien to one another; this kind of mentality would undermine or preempt any serious reflective efforts in comparative projects with the third orientation and, in my opinion, negatively contribute to prejudice. Western philosophers as well as some scholars in studies of Chinese and comparative philosophy may assume that Chinese philosophy is not philosophy in the sense of the

term ‘philosophy’ that is intrinsically related to a series of fundamental concerns and issues as addressed in Western philosophy (especially its mainstream traditions).

Now, as more and more philosophers in the fields of Chinese and comparative philosophy have a holistic understanding of Western philosophy (both its past and its contemporary development, both its appearance and its deep concerns, and both its distinct working perspectives and its guiding principles at a deep level) and become constructively engaged with Western philosophy on a series of fundamental common concerns and issues, it is more widely agreed among philosophers who are familiar with both Chinese and Western philosophies that they are not essentially alien to one another: they have common concerns with a series of fundamental issues in philosophy and have taken their characteristic approaches to them. They thus could learn from each other and jointly contribute to the common philosophical enterprise through constructive dialogue and engagement. Consequently, there is serious need to emphasize comparative projects of the third and second orientations, though this emphasis certainly would not deny the legitimacy or value of the first orientation as one effective approach but stress its constructive compatibility with the other orientations.^{10, 11}

Notes

1. By ‘comparative philosophy’ I mean not merely comparative studies of different philosophical traditions but any comparative investigation concerning distinct modes of thinking, methodological approaches (perspectives, guiding principles or instruments) or substantial points of view in different traditions or within the same tradition, though I sometimes cite philosophical traditions to illustrate relevant points.
2. Because of space limitation, I cannot give detailed examples in the text to illustrate my theoretical points regarding those orientations and methodological approaches under discussion; instead, in the endnotes, I will refer the reader to my relevant writings in comparative studies that either illustrate my points here or provide more explanations.
3. By ‘external resources’ I mean those resources that were not actually used by the ancient thinker under discussion when the resources are identified from the historical point of view or with the historical orientation. Nevertheless, as I explain later, using the very term ‘external’ in some situations would simply miss the point in regard to the purpose of the third orientation to be discussed.
4. In this article, I use the term ‘interpretation’ in a narrow or straightforward sense as specified here (in terms of elaborating and understanding) rather than in a broad or implicit sense in which all the three orientations discussed here could be somehow identified as ‘interpretation-concerned’.
5. For example, one can interpret the point of the *Yin-Yang* way of thinking delivered in the *Yi-Jing* text or the point of the opening passage of the *Dao-De-Jing* by taking such a comparative approach and consciously employing some conceptual and explanatory resources of contemporary philosophy to interpret some central message of the *Yi-Jing* text or Lao Zi’s central message in the opening passage of the *Dao-De-Jing*. For my own interpretations of both taking this kind of comparative approach, which illustrate points in this paper, see Bo Mou, “Werden-Sein Komplementarität: Die *Yin-Yang*-Metaphysische Sicht des *Yijing*,” *Polylog: Zeitschrift für interkulturelles Philosophieren*, 7 (2001), pp. 42-51 and Bo Mou, “Ultimate Concerns and Language Engagement: A Re-Examination of the Opening Message of the *Dao-De-Jing*,” *The Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, Vol. 27, no. 4 (2000), pp. 429-39. [A substantial expansion of the latter article, “Eternal *Dao*, Constant Names, and Language Engagement,” appears in Bo Mou, ed. *Comparative Approaches to Chinese Philosophy* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2002)].
6. For a detailed and systematic discussion of the distinction between the methodological perspective and the methodological guiding principle and its implications, see Bo Mou, “An Analysis of the Structure of Philosophical Methodology—in View of Comparative Philosophy,”

in Bo Mou ed. *Two Roads to Wisdom?—Chinese and Analytic Philosophical Traditions* (Chicago: Open Court, 2001), pp.337-64.

7. It is arguably right that many issues that were traditionally identified as ‘unique’ issues in different traditions have turned out to be concerned primarily with different aspects, layers or dimensions of some commonly concerned, more general issues of philosophy, especially from a more broadly philosophical vantage point. This is one point that I have endeavored to make and illustrate in my several writings mentioned in the endnotes.

8. For example, we can examine how, say, Dewey and Laozi could jointly contribute to the issue of the nature and function of moral rules and the related issue of the nature and function of moral experience in certain complementary ways. For a detailed discussion of this to illustrate points advanced in this paper, see Bo Mou, “Moral Rules and Moral Experience: A comparative analysis of Dewey and Laozi on morality,” *Asian Philosophy*, Vol. 11, no. 3 (2001), pp. 161-78.

9. For an illustration of what I mean by ‘a comparative project-complex,’ interested readers might look at my article “The Structure of Chinese Language and Ontological Insights: A Collective-Noun Hypothesis” (*Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (1999), pp. 45-62) in which the three orientations under examination are combined together and interplay.

10. As a collective effort to meet such need, the International Society for Comparative Studies of Chinese and Western Philosophy (ISCWP) has been recently established. With its general purpose of promoting comparative studies of Chinese and Western philosophy and facilitating academic contact and exchange of ideas and information among interested scholars, the ISCWP (i) emphasizes (but is not limited to) the constructive engagement between Chinese philosophy and Western mainstream philosophy (analytic and continental traditions in their broad senses), (ii) stresses the sensitivity of such comparative studies to contemporary development and resources of philosophy and their mutual advancement, and (iii) through the characteristic path of comparative studies of Chinese and Western philosophy, strives to contribute to philosophy as common human wealth as well as to respective studies of Chinese philosophy and Western philosophy. As one effort in this direction, an ISCWP international conference “Philosophical Engagement: Davidson’s Philosophy and Chinese Philosophy” will be held (for details, see “Call for Papers” for this conference on the APA website, www.apa.udel.edu/apa/opportunities/conferences/2003/jul/iscwp.html).

11. I am grateful to Chad Hansen, Douglas Heenslee, Chen-yang Li, You-zheng Li and Xiang-long Zhang for their helpful comments and criticism of an early version of this article.

