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Musical Meaning as Embodied Meaning: The Case of Horror Film Music

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Abstract

The film sound theorist K. J. Donnelly's essay 'Demonic possession: horror film music' (2005) famously remarks that some horror film music attempts at a "direct engagement with the physical" in that they trigger bodily effects "bypassed culture's learned structures". Donnelly notes that his 'direct-access thesis' of (horror) film music is subject to challenge from the "culturalist" view of film music, which contends that musical meaning is a mere matter of convention, and thus it is via learning the conventional meaning that film viewers come to be emotionally affected by the music and sound. This culturalist view of film music is supported by a position on musical meaning favoured by many philosophers —the cognitivist theory of music and emotion defended by Peter Kivy. It argues that musical meaning is grasped primarily via intellectually or cognitively processing the music's formal properties and/or the properties' conventional meaning.

In this paper, I defend Donnelly's "direct access thesis". I first examine the extent to which knowledge of music and musical conventions are required for music appreciation, in the course of which Kivy's cognitivist theory will be confronted. Then I put forward the view that musical meaning is primarily embodied, and show its merits over the culturalist and the cognitivist one. I wish to show how reflecting on horror film music provides interesting objections to a long-standing philosophical position of music and emotion, and enhance understanding of musical meaning.

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1. The distinctiveness of horror film music

The film sound theorist K. J. Donnelly (2005) begins his inquiry into horror film scores by asserting that horror film scores are distinctive from scores of other genres in that “they tend to have a very specific sound” (p. 90). They are identifiable as horror scores even when removed from the horror film context. Donnelly explains that this distinctiveness may have to do with the persistence of some generic elements and common practices, including dissonance, musical stingers (i.e. a sudden loud blast of music that is usually accompanied by low drones), and tremolo, which refers to the rapid alternation between two pitches.

The distinctiveness may also have to do with the scores’ peculiar “texture”: they are said to be distinctively “visceral”. For example, critics characterize the music composed by the Italian progressive rock group Goblin for the Italian horror filmmaker Dario Argento’s films (e.g. *Deep Red* [1975] and *Suspiria* [1977]) as “pulsating”; it “bathes these films in sheets of throbbingly visceral sonic affect” (Mitchell, 2009, p. 93).

The “visceral effect” in question can be elucidated in terms of its directness and immediacy to the audience’s body. In Donnelly’s (2005) terms, horror film scores aim at “a direct engagement with the physical” in that “they produce physiological effects that bypass culture’s learned structures” (pp. 93–94). Donnelly conjectures that such direct engagement with the spectator’s body has to do with the music’s “materiality”. The “materiality” can include manipulation of acoustic properties like timbre, frequency, pitch, rhythm, loudness, and so on. For example, the sounds in the shower scene of *Psycho* are said to have the effect of “literally penetrating one’s body if the volume is strong enough” (Kelleghan, 1996). Horror film scores have the power to serve as “direct accesses” to the bodies of an audience, inciting bodily sensations, exciting (mainly negative) emotions and even inserting in the audience “frames of mind and attitudes . . . much like a direct injection” (Donnelly, 2005, p. 88).

Donnelly’s characterization of horror film music challenges what he calls “the culturalist view of film music”, which maintains that the emotive/affective meaning of film music is culturally constructed and that listeners grasp the affective meaning via culture’s learned structures. The learned structures could be the theme the music is used to represent (e.g. the Gregorian Chant *Dies Irae* is used to represent death or doom), or how the formal elements are understood or used according to music conventions—for example, the affective meaning of a tritone (e.g. C and F#) is to be grasped via its status as *Diabolus in musica* (“devil in music”) in western music and so it is conventionally used to signify a sinister situation, or the presence of the devil (Halfyard, 2010).

Donnelly’s characterization also interestingly contends with a philosophical position, namely, the cognitive theory of music and emotion propounded by philosophers like Peter Kivy (1989; 1990; 2001; 2002). On Kivy’s view, pure music—that which is not accompanied by narrative, lyrics, or images—does not possess representational content. As a result, pure music does not carry any cognitive states; it does not

provide any intentional object at which emotions are directed.¹ However, on the cognitive theory of emotion embraced by Kivy, cognitive states are causally necessary for emotions, and emotions require an intentional object. It follows that pure music is not a cause of emotion.

On Kivy's theory, although pure music is not a cause of emotion, it can move us emotionally when we recognize the formal elements that are expressive of emotion. We can be moved by a piece of sad music when we recognize the music's formal elements that are *expressive of sadness*.² There are at least two ways for a piece of pure music to be expressive of emotion. First, some pure music is expressive of emotion because the formal elements (melody, contour, modality, tempo, etc.) resemble expressive human utterances, behaviours, gestures and bodily movements. For example, "melancholy people tend to express themselves in soft, subdued tones of voice; and melancholy music tends to be soft and subdued. Melancholy people tend to speak slowly and haltingly; and melancholy music tends to be in slow tempo and halting rhythm" (Kivy, 2002, p. 39). Second, musical expressiveness can be explained by the convention thesis. A piece of music featuring a major mode and diatonic harmony is expressive of happiness, because they are customarily used to accompany happy emotions at the outset of the modern musical tradition in the west. Kivy (1989) calls this "the convention theory of musical expressiveness" (pp. 71–83).

In sum, "a piece of sad music might move us (in part) because it is expressive of sadness, but it does not move us by making us sad" (Kivy, 1990, p. 153). In the light of the cognitivist theory, pure music is like a set of codes or symbols that signify emotive meaning. Its emotional effect hinges on one's musical knowledge and/or knowledge of the musical conventions. In any event, its emotional effects on listeners are not as direct as what Donnelly's "direct access thesis" would allow.

2. To what extent does musical knowledge matter to musical experience?

There is much to be said in favour of Kivy's view about how musical knowledge and/or knowledge of musical convention enhance music appreciation, which I think few would deny. However, I think that they do not give an adequate account of musical experience.

As seen above, what motivates Kivy to turn to musical knowledge and musical convention for an account of how pure music evokes emotion is the view that pure music is not a cause of emotion. It is interesting to note that Kivy's rejection of music as a cause of emotion is also motivated by his eagerness to secure a place for musical knowledge and musical convention in music appreciation. Let me explain. In his vehement rejection of Descartes's view on music that music is a kind of pleasure stimulation and it has an impact on our "animal spirit" (i.e. it is a direct physical cause of emotion [Kivy, 1990, p. 34]), Kivy (1990) comments that this "stimulation model"

¹ This is known as the formalist thesis propounded by the Viennese music critic Eduard Hanslick in 1854.

² Kivy distinguishes "expressing emotions" and "being expressive of emotion" with an analogy of looking at a photograph of a sad-faced dog. A Saint Bernard's face is expressive of sadness but the face does not express sadness in that the dog itself does not feel sad. But the sad qualities in the dog's face like its heavy, tight eyelids and drooping jowls make it expressive of sadness (Kivy, 1989, pp. 12–13).

of music “remains hopeless” (p. 38). The reason is that to see music as an affective stimulus like a sonic drug does not explain why a person could be, for example, “profoundly versed in counterpoint” (p. 40). The pleasure that one gains when appreciating the counterpoint of, for example, J. S. Bach’s *The Well-Tempered Clavier* is different from that of getting high by using chemical drugs. The dissimilarity lies in that in the case of getting high, more knowledge about how the drug works does not make the user feel more pleasure, but in the case of gaining pleasure from music, better music knowledge indeed makes the listener feel more pleasure. Therefore, for one to be versed in the counterpoint, “the music is not a stimulus for him; it is an object of perception and cognition, which understanding opens up for his appreciation” (p. 41).

However, Kivy has yet to show why pure music as “an object of perception and cognition” precludes its potency as an affective stimulus. Besides, the dissimilarity between pleasure gained from music and taking drugs may not be as striking as Kivy thinks it to be. In fact, musicologists used to draw analogies between different music genres and different kinds of substances.³ These analogies may be motivated by the observation that there are indeed similarities between listening to music and using a drug. For example, Descartes noted that the louder the sound, the greater the impact it has on our animal spirit: “when the sound is emitted more strongly and clearly at the beginning of each measure, we must conclude that it has greater impact on our spirits, and that we are thus roused to motion” (cited in Kivy, 1990, p. 33). Similarly, the higher the dose of the drug, the more excitement one experiences. Of course, in both cases, “over-dose” might cause pain.

Also, emotional experience in music appreciation is frequently characterized with music-induced affective responses. Consider the case of music-induced goose-bumps (or the “thrill and chills”), which is said to be “a well-established marker of peak emotional responses to music” (“Musical Chills”, 2011). It is widely known that a surprising change or derivation from a pattern in a musical piece can induce goose-bumps in the listeners as well as players. The renowned cellist Yo-Yo Ma gives the example of Schubert’s E-Flat Trio for piano, violin and cello, saying that when this march theme that’s in minor breaks out into major, “it’s one of those goose-bump moments” (as quoted in Belluck, 2011).

To this phenomenon a cognitivist could offer the following explanation. If he is a hybrid cognitivist who admits that emotion has an affective component, he might agree that those affective responses are part of the experience of being moved by music. Still, listeners are moved because they recognize certain formal elements or musical conventions that are expressive of the emotion; the goose bumps and “thrills and chills” are therefore the mere effect of the cognitive processing of musical information. When a listener/player recognizes a formal element, like a march theme in minor breaking out into major in the aforementioned work by Schubert, he/she is moved and goose-bumps result.

³ “We ‘take’ a certain kind of music to steer our nervous systems towards a particular condition: hard rock as the frenzied rush of cocaine; easy listening genres as a martini; cheery supermarket Muzak as a pick-me-up cup of coffee; cool jazz as a laid-back marijuana high; the far-flung landscapes of classical music as the fantasy of realm of psychedelics” (cited in Sonnenschein, 2001, p. 110).

I find this explanation feeble. One can recognize the aforementioned formal elements by merely reading the score or a verbal description of it. Does it follow that merely reading the score or the description without actually listening to or auralizing⁴ the piece is sufficient for, or reliably causes the relevant emotions? If yes, then is one moved by the music or by the description of the music? Also, it is not hard to imagine that listeners undergo more intense goose-bump moments when they attend a live performance of Schubert's work than when they listen to the same piece via headphones. Assuming other factors remain constant (e.g. the listeners are equally attentive, the piece is played by the same group of musicians, etc.), how can a cognitivist account for the diverse intensity of the emotions felt in different contexts, in which listeners are appreciating the same march theme that is in minor breaking out into major?

Some critics likewise accuse Kivy's theory of over-intellectualizing musical experience. For example, Krueger (2005) writes that even if musical knowledge indeed increases enjoyment, "it doesn't follow from this, as Kivy seems to think it does, that the acquisition of music-theoretical knowledge is a process both necessary and sufficient for deepened musical understanding" (p. 108). Kivy later (2002) concedes that "this is not to say that a rich appreciation of music cannot be achieved by those lacking knowledge of music theory" (p. 83). He anticipates that "the reader may be beginning to wonder about how far this [his theory] really goes in explaining what we enjoy in music", and he confesses, "I cannot answer this question" (p. 83).

In any event, both Kivy and his critic acknowledge that there is an aspect of musical experience that musical knowledge and/or knowledge of the musical conventions cannot explain away. As noted earlier, I admit that one's musical experience can be deepened by recognizing the formal elements or craftsmanship of a piece of music. However, I also think that sometimes we are *just* moved. The neurologist Oliver Sacks (2006) once said that "all of us have had the experience of being transported by the sheer beauty of music—suddenly finding ourselves in tears, not knowing whether they are of joy or sadness, suddenly feeling a sense of the sublime, or a great stillness within. I do not know how to characterize these transcendent emotions" (p. 2529). A major limitation of the cognitivist theory of music and emotion is that there is little room in it to account for such kinds of musical experience, in which listeners "lacking knowledge of music theory" experience ineffable but intense emotions.

3. The affective meaning of music is primarily embodied

I have shown that the cognitivist theory leaves some phenomena related to musical experience unexplained. Shedding light on these phenomena, I think, requires an alternative theory of music and emotion that acknowledges that pure music can incite emotions by serving as an affective stimulus.

To start with, there are ample empirical studies showing that music can serve as an affective stimulus. To summarize those studies, it has been found that music and sound can alter heart or pulse rate, body temperature, blood circulation, sweating, skin conductance, hormonal activity, cardio-respiratory activity, and induce subliminal

⁴ "To auralize" is to "hear music in our heads—especially when the music is not actually sounding" (Larson, 2012, p. 29).

facial expressions and physical actions. The toreador song from *Carmen* was found to raise heart or pulse rate, while Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* decreases it (Robinson, 2005, p. 395). Research conducted by the psychologist Carol Krumhansl shows that the presence of intended sad, intended fear and intended happy music extracts are found to produce different physiological responses according to various measures, including pulse transmission times, respiration rates, blood pressure, skin conductance and finger temperature (Robinson, 2005, pp. 369–376).

Individual properties in music are also found to exert physical effects on our body in different ways. One such property is frequency. The film sound designer Sonnenschein (2001) explains that although we can usually pick up sound ranging from about 20–20,000Hz, sound that is beyond this range can still affect us bodily. For example, “very low pitches (known as infrasonic) are felt bodily as rumblings more than acoustic phenomena . . . Frequencies above hearing range (known as ultrasonic) may not be audible but can cause uneasiness if emitted loudly” (p. 67). As for frequencies within the hearing range, they can also have an effect on different parts of our body:

As a general rule, the lower frequencies up to around 65Hz will resonate in the lower back region, pelvis, thighs, and legs. The timpani, or orchestral kettledrums, are a prime example of a sound that activates this region not through the ear, but directly – affecting sexual, digestive, and deep-seated emotional centers. As the frequencies increase, effects are felt more in the upper chest, neck, and head, influencing the higher biological functions of the nervous system and mind. (p. 70)

This may shed light on the power of live music: an appreciator's physical presence in the live performance allows the music, by virtue of the diverse frequencies, to act on different parts of their body. Thus viewed, music appreciation is more than just an auditory experience; it can also be an embodied experience.

Another property is rhythm. Study shows that while listening to a lullaby, adult subjects “had marked decreased heart rates and their breathing rhythm became synchronized with the rhythm of the music” (Robinson, 2005, p. 397). This tendency to synchronize our bodily motions and physiological rhythms with heard rhythms is indeed a variety of a larger phenomenon called entrainment. The phenomenon of entrainment was first discovered by a Dutch scientist, Christian Huygens, when he found that “two pendulum clocks swinging side by side would enter into a remarkably synchronous rhythm, way beyond their mechanical accuracy . . . everything that vibrates in the universe seems to lock in and swing together” (Sonnenschein, 2001, p. 97).

Kivy might not be able to refute the empirical claim that musical rhythm can alter adults' physiology, but he could deny that altered physiology can result in emotions. As seen in Section 1, his theory of music and emotion is informed by the cognitive theory of emotion, which gives cognitive states, instead of affective states, a central place in emotion. The cognitive theory has received numerous challenges and criticisms that I cannot afford to rehearse here. Like many critics of the cognitive theory (Prinz, 2004; Robinson, 2005; Damasio, 1999; 2003), I find that the more plausible understanding of emotion is that emotion is essentially affective/embodied appraisal but not cognitive judgment. Cognitive states are not causally necessary for

emotions; non- or pre-cognitive states can also trigger affective appraisal and cause emotion. If music can alter one's affective states, it can also reliably trigger emotions; it effectuates with or without one taking the music as an object at which the emotion is directed. As Robinson (2005) puts it,

How can happy music make people happy, and calm music calm people down? The answer in a nutshell is that music with a happy, sad, calm or restless character causes physiological changes, motor activity, and action tendencies that are experienced as happiness, sadness, serenity, or restlessness. (p. 394)

I think this view of music and emotion can be interestingly positioned in a larger view on musical “meanings”, among which emotive “meaning” is just one. Mark Johnson (2007) deems that the “meaning” in and of music does not lie in representing (as is the case for language), but in presenting and enacting felt experience, that is, in causing us to feel and think “in concrete, embodied forms” (p. 236). Music moves us “bodily and emotionally and qualitatively” because it orders our experience and processes that are felt in our bodies. Take motion as an illustration. According to Johnson, we can feel musical motions as soaring, floating or falling “in our vital, tactile-kinesthetic bodies” (p. 239). Likewise, Larson (2012) stresses that our immediate experience of musical motion is shaped not by our intellectual understanding of physics but primarily by our embodied intuitive understanding of physical motion (p. 22). The latter includes our experience of seeing objects move, of moving our own bodies and of our own being moved by other substances or objects (see Larson’s Chapter 2).

In reference to emotive “meaning”, contra Kivy but in a similar vein to Robinson, sad music saddens us by making us sad: it enacts a sad emotional experience to be felt by us bodily. As Larson’s (2012) analysis of Henry Purcell’s *Dido’s Lament* suggests, the slow tempo and downward melodic contour of the bass line that descends by small steps enact the experience of being inevitably dragged down by the weight of sadness (p. 84; p. 97). The emotive “meaning” primarily draws on our embodied, lived experience of sadness, a route that is more direct and immediate than the route drawing on the listener’s knowledge of music’s formal elements or conventions.

Moving on, I think that the bodily route and the cognitive route do not necessarily preclude each other; they may even collaborate. As noted earlier, I think Kivy is right to say that musical knowledge and musical convention plays a role in deepening music appreciation. I now venture to explain their role in the light of the theory of music and emotion that I have just put forward. I gauge that listeners who are conscious of the music’s emotional effect may be promoted to cognitively explain and reflect on their emotional experiences. In Robinson’s terms, they make an “after-the-fact-assessment” of their emotional experiences. It is possible then for listeners who are equipped with musical knowledge to turn to the formal elements of the music, and/or to take musical conventions as point of reference when they engage in after-the-fact-reflection of their music-induced emotional experiences, or when they have to verbally communicate the experience to others. Yo-Yo Ma’s example of the goose-bump moment in Schubert’s E-Flat Trio for piano, violin and cello can also be seen as a kind of after-the-fact-communication. One’s appreciation may be deepened when one crosschecks their current emotional episode with what they already have in their musical emotion “catalogue”. In short, listeners armed with musical knowledge and

musical conventions may then be better at cognitively reflecting on their emotions. That may explain how knowledge of music and/or musical conventions can deepen music appreciation.

4. Searching for the affective meaning of horror film scores beneath cognition and convention

This alternative theory of music and emotion shall give Donnelly's characterization a theoretical basis. And I think that Donnelly's characterization of horror film scores interestingly shows that horror film scores exploit the potency of music to engage viewers affectively, whereby unpleasant emotion is configured. Now I show how seeing music's affective meaning as embodied facilitates a deeper understanding of the distinctiveness of horror film scores.

As mentioned in Section 1, the culturalists tend to see the affective meanings of some generic elements in film scores as culturally constructed. Undeniably, some generic elements in horror scores owe their affective meanings at least partly to culture and convention. For example, the organ has a "clear religious association" (Brown, 2010, p. 5). At the same time, however, some of the generic elements in Donnelly's list are obviously premised upon our innate emotional responses that bypass "culture's learned structures". Consider the "great noise on the film title that gives audiences an impression that it is an important and terrifying film" (noted by Hammer musical director Philip Martell, as cited in Donnelly, 2005, p. 89) and musical stingers that evoke startle responses. They draw on our innate, hardwired responses to (sudden) loud blasts of noise, which I think even the cognitivists and the culturalists would not deny. And some stem from the horror genre itself (e.g. the use of a heartbeat) so that their affective meanings cannot be grasped with reference to existing or pre-existing musical conventions (though it may be argued that the meanings are forged by association with the horror genre itself).

I venture, then, that the affective meaning of other generic elements in horror scores, which are commonly considered to be culturally constructed, are primarily embodied like musical stingers. One such element is dissonance.

Dissonance has always been perceived as unpleasant and unstable, while consonance is pleasant and stable. A diminished fifth like the tritone (e.g. C and G-flat), as noted in Section 1, has earned its name "the devil in music" as a result of its unpleasantness. While culturalists tend to attribute our preference for consonance over dissonance to learning through exposure to western music culture, Kivy has little to say about the emotive meaning of dissonance.

However, there are also views supported by growing evidence suggesting that this preference is not solely culturally determined but also has biological roots. Lots and Stone (2008) highlight one such study in which it was confirmed that compared to complex frequency ratios formed by dissonance (e.g. the ratio of a diminished fifth is 5:7), simple frequency ratios formed by consonance (e.g. an octave: 1:2; a perfect fifth: 2:3; a major third: 5:6) are more likely to be identifiable and to result in a stable perceptual representation even in human infants (p. 1429). In another experiment, Zentner and Kagan found that infants fret and turn away more frequently from dissonant music than consonant music (as cited in Scherer & Zentner, 2001, p. 367).

There have been debates over the exact biological mechanism that is responsible for giving rise to the perceived qualities of consonance and dissonance—be it interactions in the auditory periphery (e.g. Helmholtz, 1954) or neural synchronization (e.g. Lots & Stone, 2008). The neurobiologist Isabelle Peretz's (2011) recent article explains that the unpleasantness of dissonance is perceived before it acts on the neurons in our auditory cortex that respond to dissonance. Dissonant sound creates vibration patterns on the basilar membrane in the cochlea of our inner ear, which results in the perception of roughness and hence the unpleasantness (p. 109). These studies suggest that the affective “meaning” that we attribute to musical dissonance is a matter deeper than cognition and convention. Thus viewed, the act of attributing the affective meaning of, for example, the tritone to its status as “the devil in music” in the western music convention could be a result of an after-the-fact-reflection only.

Viewed in this light, the visceral feature of horror film scores may lie in some of their inherently unnerving generic elements that can agitate our bodies at different levels like unlearned emotional stimuli do. They draw on our innate, non-cognitive affective responses towards fear stimuli that do not require the mediation of cognition or “learned structures” at all, though our reactions to them could be reinforced by association and repeated exposure. They can trigger and sustain alarming affective responses automatically, with or without viewers’ conscious awareness of them as the cause. They are “the unseen sources of horror” that often work insidiously behind the scenes.

5. The Case of Shark Motif

Having said this, I do not intend to deny that horror film music also relies on representation of certain themes or associations for their emotive power, as the culturalists and some film music theorists claim. As Biancorosso (2011) notes in his analysis of the shark motif in *Jaws*, “to be sure, the successful triggering of visceral emotional responses on the one hand, and the full-blown representation of action, locale and character on the other, are not mutually exclusive” (p. 321). I venture further that not only are they not mutually exclusive, but that the former facilitates the latter. And I think the shark motif can serve as an apt illustration. Undeniably, the shark motif gains its power as a full-blown representation of the shark’s presence partly as a result of the filmmaker’s skillful welding of the music to the visual in the manner detailed by Biancorosso. Also, there seems to be no way for me to deny that some viewers who are familiar with western music are moved to fear when they trace the film music composer John Williams' use of “angular melodic lines, tonal dissonance, sudden dynamic contrast and unusual (typically low) instrumentation” to *ombra* scenes that dramatize the presence of supernatural beings, witches or demons in Italian and French opera in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Biancorosso, 2011, p. 319). But seemingly there is also something about the shark music itself that makes the representation or association so spontaneous and effective, whereby even listeners who have minimal musical knowledge are emotionally disturbed.

The effectiveness of the shark motif, I think, may be addressed through a joint venture of embodied affective meaning and the notion of musical motion briefly discussed in Section 3. The shark motif consists of a two-noted rhythm of dissonance (E and F) whose unpleasantness, as mentioned earlier, has biological roots. Also, E and F are of

narrow interval, leading to a sense of tightness. The two-noted rhythm is accelerating and getting louder, which is immediately perceived as increasing spatial proximity.⁵ In Johnson's terms, the music itself "enacts" the sudden, fast, driving motion of some sort of physical being "in concrete, embodied forms". The music draws on our lived experience of seeing physical beings move (physical beings usually move rhythmically). Added to that, the low string is played in such a way that its warmer tone is eradicated so that it sounds rough, harsh and fricative, which endows a sense of aggressiveness in this moving physical being. While the camera can convey a sudden, fast, approaching movement, the music enacts qualities that cannot be achieved by camera movement and the visuals alone. That is also probably why Donnelly (2010) in his later work says that music and sound can "generate a clear and physical embodiment of the threat" in a more effective manner than mere visuals (p. 165).

I began this paper by showing how the distinctiveness of horror film scores proves to be a troubling case for the cognitivist philosophical position. It invites critical consideration of the extent to which musical knowledge and knowledge of musical convention matter for our being moved by music. I have also presented evidence in favour of the view that pure music can, by serving as an affective stimulus, incite emotions while bypassing musical knowledge or any of "culture's learned structures". I hope I have convincingly showed that how acknowledging music's power to directly access listener's body and seeing music's emotive meaning as embodied can facilitate a better understanding of horror film music.

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⁵ See Lippman (1999) on how pitch and loudness are suggestive of distance and space with regards to the source of the sound (Chapter 2).

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Communicating Knowledge about the World: Reflective, Collaborating Artists

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Abstract

Art and filmmaking practices are shared across linguistic and diverse social contexts, reflecting a variety of epistemological views, of diverse ways of knowing about the world. There are points of connection and dissonance when one works with a cultural group that shares little of the language and cultural practice that an individual identifies as their own. This paper explores the experiences of four artists working in the Northern Territory of Australia. It highlights individual responses to adjust and adapt to artistic contexts outside their established perceptual norms as they work with Indigenous people. From these reflections come strategies to build effective collaborative art projects that develop a deeper, sustainable form of trans-cultural communication, where one way of doing and being does not seek to overwhelm or dominate the other. Visual expressions are shown as one way to break through difficult histories and current problems, extending empathetic discussion about what it means to know about art and the places it is created in. This notion will be illustrated by art-works created in this context. The underpinning idea is that a shift in epistemology works two ways when art practice is open to respect and change. The voices here are from people who have learned from interactions with Australian Indigenous people.

Keywords: visual art, collaboration, indigenous, filmmaking, epistemology,

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Always remember that what makes you all Australian is the fact that you live on this land, on our ancestral lands and with our creation stories. Lastly what makes you Australian, is in fact your interactions with us, the First Nations peoples of this land- in the past now and in the future. It is what makes you different from your ancestors whose spirits lie in other land. It is what gives you belonging on and to this land.

(Pamela Crofts cited in Mellor and Haebich, 2002)

Introduction

Ways of knowing about the world are not restricted to being an intellectual exercise or confined to books and philosophies read by the highly educated few. Epistemological perspectives are grounded in places and people. Various ways of seeing the world extend ideas about what it means to be a human being in a particular place through their interactions with one another. Dialectical biologists such as Levins and Lewontin (1985); social theorists such as Gibson (1979) and Latour (2005); and linguists such as Sapir and Whorf (Whorf, 1956; Chandler, 2009); have explored variations in how people describe and attune world views according to their location. In seeking ways to embed ideas into a lived environment, these theorists commonly define a philosophy that considers an individual's knowledge as not separate and isolated from an environment, but part of it; living within it and interacting. This is an important issue in a world where distances and ideologies are aided by technologies that make physical place seem less of an impact while at the same time, the importance of identifying with and protecting places is commonly shared and essential for a sustainable future. Increasingly these perspectives can easily be shared through images, rather than words.

The ideas expounded in this paper highlight that ways of knowing are closely grounded in a particular place, accessing and using what is made available in that zone. Auto-ethnography (Ellis et al., 2011) provided a vehicle to reflect on epistemological transformation by a small group of artists who had post-graduate qualifications in Visual Arts. These reflections provided insights into an individual artist's view or developing relationship to place and people when working within and for Indigenous Australian communities. The process of writing this paper was one where four artists provided a reflective narrative. These narratives were shared and considered to form the discussion of this paper. This extends the discourse about how artists and individuals can engage across cultural views, especially in post-colonial spaces.

The work highlights that within any one place, a person is surrounded by cultural beliefs and practices that can be absorbed, appropriated, rejected and/or ignored, whether this is in the urban high rise, the Australian 'bush' or other environments where humans live and learn. This interaction with the world is particularly true for the sojourning and resident artist who is prepared to explore different ways of seeing and doing artwork by working with others. The attempt to mediate between diverse world views is linked to perspectives of justice (Watson and Chambers, 1989: 8). While the acceptance or absorption into new ways of seeing can create dissonance with established norms, this process of learning helps to extend an innovative space of knowing through acting in the world.

Greater understanding can develop of how art and art-making may shift epistemology, or ways of knowing, in another direction (Banks and Morphy, 1998). Individual responses of adjusting and adapting to artistic contexts outside established perceptual norms in painting, printmaking, film and sculptural weaving reflects how collaborative or co-operative art projects can develop a deeper form of trans-cultural communication, where one way of doing and being does not seek to overwhelm or dominate the other. Through the discussion of the reflective practitioner, visual expressions are shown as one way to break through difficult histories and current problems, extending empathetic discussion about what it means to know about art and the places it is created in. This notion will be illustrated by art-works created in context. The underpinning idea is that a shift in epistemology works two ways (Ober and Bat, 2007) when art practice is open to respect of one another and openness to change.

Epistemology in art practice

Australia was a nation formed for the utilitarian purpose of removing undesirable people from the industrialised domain within Britain. The Indigenous people within it were given little or no status or recognition as being the first people on the land (Reynolds, 1996). Many Australian non-Indigenous artists working in the 21st century recognise the effects of this colonial history and seek to address the impact when working with Indigenous people on what they recognise as usurped lands. Some of the situations are within an urban setting while others are as a visitor to predominantly Indigenous communities. This way of working adopts what underpins educational philosophy known as ‘both ways’ wherein Indigenous ontology and epistemology is respected and given credence as a way to know and be alongside western ways of thinking and operating in the world (Ober and Bat, 2007).

The relationships that develop when making room for an exchange across cultural perspectives is not without controversy and problems in the art world (McLean, 2014). Communication lines between the artists, working relationships with Indigenous people and the constructs within which these relationships develop exist within the shadow of history of appropriation of land and decimation of culture. Even so, these temporary residents (in relative time) in the landscape brush against Indigenous people and artists whose knowledge is imbued with that place’s form and very existence. This has influenced the sojourners thinking and ways of behaving towards the people and the places they inhabit. The experiences of the authors cannot be separated from a historical context but the process of engagement and reflection suggests that such interactive practices through ‘doing together’ help to shift the hegemony.

To decolonise ways of thinking, it is essential to acknowledge the colonial viewpoint of place. Perspectives of the land and how one relates to it have shifted for many people in the late 20th and early 21st century. Environmental philosophy is a relevant form of discourse in this context. Particularly pertinent is Val Plumwood’s (2002) analysis about Australian relationship to land and the affiliation with Indigenous perspectives as this raises many philosophical issues for people working with Indigenous people. How communication about the land Indigenous Australian academics Marcia Langton (2003) and Linda Ford (2005) have challenged the

metaphors of wilderness used to attract tourists and encourage environmental actions to protect places undisturbed by Western economic demands.

Art-making as an immersive practice; Four artists sharing knowledge

Non-Indigenous artists' contact with Indigenous artists develops from an interest in that art practice. This interaction may be a part of a social or economic venture, often supported by government programs in Australia. Many artists venture into teaching and skill sharing projects leading to sojourn into the Indigenous world. This journey has been analysed in various ways, questioning motivations that may drive non-Indigenous artists and curators (Tomaselli, 2014) but this is not the purpose of this article. Rather, this work builds on what Lea (2012: 188) describes as 'immersed fieldwork, where issues of application, moral judgment, or authoritative policy advice are subordinated to the humbling task of rendering lives as they are and how they get to be so lived, fighting assumed epistemological and material superiorities in the process'. The popularity of art-forms such as weaving and basketry are earth-centric and this could be testimony of this shift in gaze from upwards to inwards. Beyond the debate of belonging, there is the increasing urgency for the redevelopment of community and village based ethics, valuing small communities and the hand-made rather than large scale and unsustainable.

Conversations developed amongst our group about how our art projects, which entailed close contact with Indigenous people, had shifted and changed our perceptions of self and our individual relationship to places in Australia. Birut (as an academic) suggested we each write reflecting on a set of questions. The writing is reflective and personal, looking for depth in analysing this changing epistemology in place and the influence of cultural contact with Indigenous people. Our experiences cannot be generalised but we hope these four narratives provide some insights into this domain. Each begins with a short bio about the artist.

The Printmaker/ painter- Stephen Anderson (PhD) Stephen spent his first ten years in Sydney and later the Gold Coast. As a child he did not have direct encounters with Indigenous Australians. When he moved to a remote township west of the Atherton Tablelands in Far North Queensland, he met and shared time with Indigenous Australian people. As Indigenous children attending the local school, his young family started to engage more socially and developed friendships with the local Jiddabul rainforest people. He has worked with Indigenous art centres for much of his adult life.

Given the history of Australia after colonisation, it became clear to me that Indigenous Australians have some real reasons to feel persecuted, marginalized and vilified. This country has a dark past that certainly needs to be told to put things into perspective for future generations. I see now is the time to move from a denial of terra nullius and embrace the diversity that is this country, inclusive of original inhabitants and newcomers. The questions arose while working in this area: Where is it that I fit in, if I am considered apart from? My PhD research was about working collaboratively with Indigenous artists from the Tiwi Islands, where I have worked and lived operating an art centre for over close to ten years. Working collaboratively has been an attempt to transcend the continued polarisation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations (Green, 2001). I sought to challenge dominant power structures, acknowledging the practicalities of transitional social justice to include traditional

Indigenous knowing systems as valid and equally contributing forces. A 'third space' is envisioned where collaborative performance based actions address the understanding that personal development is foundational in the healing process that begins with self and is developed with another. For me, this became a way of exposing my shortcomings and weaknesses in being able to work with others in a wholly ethical manner. This was no simple task when the research became ultimately focused on my actions working collaboratively and the difficulty arose in how to maintain an equal contribution from collaborating artists.



Figure 1: Maria Josette Orsto, Stephen Anderson and Vivien Warlapinni, *Kingplates*, 2014, etching and aquatint, 27 x 43cm.



Figure 2: Vivian, Maria Josette and Stephen at the Nan Giese Gallery April 2015 exhibition opening '*Walking and Working Together*'.

Deeper thinking about one's ancestral origins and our relationship to all time; past, present and future, indicated where I was culturally orientated. When compared to the oldest living cultural tradition, my personal genealogical history certainly required some thought. This contemplation usually became unsavoury when viewed through the lens of colonisation. Assimilation and, its artistic counterpart, appropriation become a morality tale that no longer exists under the surface but screams, 'I am here. This is now. And WE are deadly'. As a consequence from working with others, I gained the insight that the ultimate outcome of collaborative practice is an extended awareness of relation to self. This is what I bring to the collaborative process. A self that is defined through relationship, that is curious to know how we can do this together, how we could relate to each other. The

prescriptive or the 'self-centred' is supplemented here with a 'centring of self', within the construct implied in the research question of our relatedness. It became obvious that an egocentrically located standpoint constantly shifted from insider to outsider when attempting to locate myself as research student.

The sculptor and weaver- Aly de Groot Aly spent her early years in Perth where she remembers feeling rather lonely and sad. She did have an Aboriginal friend who did not meet with approval from her family. As a teenager, she moved to North Queensland and then the Northern Territory, where she developed relationships with Indigenous artists and started to read about earth worship and feminist eco-philosophy (Starhawk, 1979). Aly has achieved high accolades in the Northern Territory and nationally in Australia for her artwork which she recognises has grown through her involvement with Indigenous people.

As an Australian fibre artist with Dutch ancestry I believe that I continue a cross-cultural exchange that began 400 years ago when my predecessors first visited these shores. The land on which I live, learn and create upon in Darwin, was originally, and still is the, land of the Larrakia people. The first time in my life I had a feeling of 'belonging' was when I went to the Merrepen Arts Festival at the remote Indigenous community called Naiyu. I didn't know it at the time, but this was the first of what would become many occasions, I would sit down with weavers and watch and learn. It is still my favourite thing to do, and it is when I am doing this that I am happiest, especially if I am sitting near a creek. The master weavers at Naiyu influenced my early artistic life. They taught me how to strip pandanas and weave with the string fibres.



Figure 3: *Weaving together* 2008 Photographer Zephyr Green

*Under the inspiration and guidance of many artists and mentors, I explored the use of plant and man-made materials along with various basket-making techniques to create woven sculptures and related works, which reflect upon the personal, political and environmental. It became apparent to me from the start that the traditional basket style wasn't mine. It belonged to the traditional weavers, so I started to experiment with different materials and forms, to make my own language and style. The first woven sculpture I made for an exhibition in 1995 was a doll-like, female figure titled *Sun Dancer*. I made it to help raise funds for the *Jabiluka* campaign, to support traditional owners in their quest to prevent a new uranium mine on their homelands near Kakadu National Park. I have since made similar weavings as in Figure 4.*



Figure 4: Aly de Groot
People in Nowhere 2008
 pandanas, plant dyes, 8x8x120cm, 3x figures,

At times I found working with Indigenous artists challenging, as I had to discard the familiar learning paradigms. I was accustomed to learning with a lot of talking, metaphors and explaining. Instead I had to watch and learn, which was frustrating, and overwhelming, as I had so many questions and insecurities running through my head. This was the first time I was exposed to what I now understand as the 'both ways' methodology, which recognizes and embraces western and traditional Indigenous learning methods (Ober and Bat, 2007). The emphasis is on the importance of relationships as the foundation for strengthening Indigenous identity 'Both Ways' acknowledges Indigenous teachers as role models in their community. The need to learn western ways runs in parallel to maintaining 'culture'. Teachers are also learners, as we never stop learning and teaching each other. This creates a common ground, a third space where Indigenous and non-Indigenous teach and learn from each other in a space that strengthens respect for each other and allows our different ways to come together.

The filmmaker and academic- Birut Zemits (PhD)- grew up in the urban setting of Sydney. Birut's early artwork drew on her Latvian heritage and sought to define relationships with icons from a distant unseen place. Her domestic surroundings had Latvian designs, images and symbols in many corners and she emulated these through drawings, prints and batiks. When her hand turned to filmmaking, it was with a human, socio-cultural and educational focus. She had travelled to Darwin to live and work. Initially, the savannah landscape, while pleasing to the eye, was strange and not 'homely'. Her interest in visual representation of ideas led to a role as a documentary filmmaker with a particular interest in documenting and exploring environmental issues.

I wanted to highlight Indigenous perceptions of place in a short film research project about the cultural uses of a local reserve that runs along eight kilometres of coastline¹. I approached Larrakia Nation, the group that represents the custodians of a place that includes what is now known as the capital city of Darwin. The area includes coastal areas of mangrove, monsoon vine forest, tropical woodland in a larger surrounding ecosystem generally labelled as savannah. Following relevant organisational protocols, I established connections with Larrakia representatives. This initial contact required some negotiation and resulted in a number of interviews and a development of relationships with individuals. This led to future projects in film and education with Larrakia groups.

More importantly, this interaction and the sharing of time and perspectives with the traditional owners shifted my own views of the land I walked on. As women with

traditional knowledge, they showed me plants and explained the relationship their families had with the rocks, trees and other natural features of the land. For example, through the interview, I learned about the importance of a milkwood tree as a tree of knowledge. I saw it was no longer as a tree with corky bark but as a being of its own importance. I also learned about a significant rock that could be seen at low tide that should not be climbed. When I see it now, I think of the story of Dariba Nungalinya and the long history linked to this site. I could not fully identify with the traditional significance as my own cultural heritage is so different but I could come to terms with having a mediated relationship to the land through the Larrakia people.

Reflecting on these experiences, I see my role as part of a larger change in relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the north of Australia. I am trapped in this time in history where political forces resist true recognition of the cultural groups who were here before colonisation. I do not closely identify with the colonial Anglo-Saxon perspective in Australia and am also aware that as a filmmaker I can shift perceptions only to some degree. This becomes a responsibility.

The Plein Air painter- Jennifer Taylor (PhD) was born and grew up in New Zealand and has worked from Alice Springs on Arrernte country for over ten years. She paints outside and seeks a closer understanding of the lands she represents in oils. Her understanding that this landscape cannot be separated from the people who inhabit it in the past and the present has extended. The colonial past includes ugly conflicts between Aboriginal people and pastoralists over land and water access, in places such as Undoolya station. This led to many deaths after 1872 (Central Land Council, 2011) in the places that Jennifer depicts.

Having lived and worked in Arrernte country for many years before commencing my academic study, I presumed that a relationship between Arrernte country and myself already existed. The research process aimed to explore the nature and dynamics of this relationship as the foundation for ethical relations and a sustaining painting practice. The effect of relatedness to country on painting was investigated through critical reflection, community conversations and 'symposia', which included Indigenous people who live in or near Alice Springs. Cross-cultural histories were revealed during fieldwork, through photographs, conversations, and historical records. Through these interactions, layered histories 'haunted' the painting process, prompting a deeper integration of painting practice with its social and political context in Arrernte country.

At the beginning I focused on what I was drawn to in country. Confrontation with environmental damage led to questioning how painting could address the coexistence of damage and beauty. I explored cultural constructions of beauty in Arrernte and Western traditions, leading to a search for a painting practice that actively engaged with both perspectives. The decision to paint in just one location so I would know it more thoroughly exposed my limited understanding of the human history of the place, and precipitated inquiry into early contact histories and the legacy of frontier violence. The influence of sadness and haunting on relationships with place was investigated. The faces and stories of people who had been at Inteye Arrkwe (Ross River) in the 1930s were explored through portraits (Day, 2012; Nardoo, 2006). This helped me imagine the lives of these people and make connections with surviving

family members. The portraits were an unexpected addition to the project, acknowledging Arrernte peoples' continuity of occupation, and labour practices on the pastoral lease. I asked whether landscapes could be 'portraits' of place, infused by human relationships to country. The urgency of the commitment to landscape was framed by discussion of how landscapes are lost, for example through dispossession, environmental damage, and migration.

My encounters with Arrernte country have been deeply affected by Arrernte landscape painters' expressions of relatedness to country. Their work and words demonstrate their power to claim, reclaim and remember country. Reconsidering paintings by Albert Namatjira and others in light of events unfolding since colonisation has been humbling and inspiring. These painters' passion for country, and pragmatic, skillful deployment of landscape painting to claim and protect what they love, gives them moral strength and clarity of purpose. My own practice, though fed by the joys and sorrows of relatedness to country, will always be coming from a different place, that of a migrant whose heart is in two places and whose vision goes both ways. Painting practice has proven to be a way of testing out the ethics of relations with place, neither evading nor becoming reconciled to past and present damage, or to cultural and personal experiences of loss, but holding them up for discussion and re-imagining.



Figure 5: *Undoolya sky line 2*, Jennifer Taylor 2012. Oil on board, 30 x 40cm

Conclusion

Narratives such as those presented above help to build an idea of how an individual may change the way they perceive their sense of place and adjust their epistemology through interacting with a particular group of people. The places and the forms of interaction are different and the outcomes vary, but the process of changing world-views and identity is apparent through each of the narratives. Some experiences appear more didactic, others more activist or personally transforming. This reflects the individual nature of such interactions.

We provide a brief summary. The printer/painter, Stephen Anderson, reflects on a very active role, interacting and collaborating with Indigenous artists as a manager of the Tiwi Design shop. He discussed how ethics of painting collaboratively influenced every step of his work. His sense of injustice and the need for better understanding comes through. The weaver and sculptor, Aly de Groot, shows how immersion in the Indigenous context of communicating through 'being and doing' together has influenced her life, her thinking and her art practice. Academic and filmmaker, Birut Zemits, reflects on her wish to share knowledge of how to use filmmaking for action. She discussed how this communication shifted her view of where she lives. For plein air painter, Jennifer Taylor, the journey of communication began with immersion in painting on the land. Being in the places with a colonial history led her to engage more deeply with the people on whose land she was painting. Deep consideration of the meanings behind this interaction influenced her spatial representations with oil paints.

In writing these reflections, the authors have acknowledged their personal transformation and shown how this extends a potential for a reconciliatory approach, shifting personal philosophies through interactions. Each of these narratives can be considered a personal representation of experience. The crossovers into Both Ways philosophy are apparent. All have been respectfully influenced by Indigenous 'others' and feel a responsibility to treat this interaction with care. Different perceptions and experiences are shown with each of these artists, but the principle thread is one of being open to learning and being keen to extend an empathetic response where one shifts an element of their world-view. The respect for the people that each artist has worked with has left them open to connect to the beliefs and approaches to the land that the Indigenous people have. Of course, one cannot suggest that there is a similarity or a clear understanding of how to look through another's eyes. While each artist has a personal analysis what these experiences mean, their lived interaction provides a valuable narrative of non-Indigenous artists working in Indigenous contexts.

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Levelling the Score – The Role of Individual Perceptions of Justice in the Creation of Unethical Outcomes in Business

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Abstract

Rationalist models of ethical decision making assume that higher order conscious reasoning dominates the ethical decision making process however research shows that psychopaths have a similar capacity for ethical decision making to the rest of the population. In contrast research from the fields of social psychology, criminology and neurocognitive science shows that personal and contextual factors play a much larger role in the creation of unethical outcomes and that subconscious pattern matching processes are more prevalent than higher order conscious reasoning.

This paper presents a Causal Factor Model synthesized from inter-disciplinary research that illustrates the dynamic interplay between personal and contextual factors, perceptual blindness and moral neutralisations. The model has been tested using a multiple case study method involving interviews with people who have either been convicted of corporate crimes at a senior executive or board level, or who have been involved as a whistle-blower. Initial findings indicate that individual perceptions of justice regarding the subjective assessment of unfolding reality have a cumulative effect on the behaviour of individuals involved in creating unethical outcomes in business. When subjects perceived reality to be unfair or unjust they were more inclined to use moral neutralisations to justify acts that would objectively be considered to be in violation of their aspirational moral values. This perception and the invoked justifications then blinded them to the moral aspect of the issue at hand and allowed them to create unethical outcomes that they perceived to be just.

Keywords: ethics, moral intention, perceptual bias, rationalisations, existentialism.

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1. Introduction

One of the paradoxes of our times is why well educated people in high paying responsible positions with reputations as good family and community members come to create bad outcomes such as fraud, bribery, insider trading and market manipulation that effect the wider community in extremely negative ways.

Since the late 1980s business schools have made a concerted efforts to improve education in business ethics and corporate social responsibility however there is little evidence to show these efforts have yielded the expected results (Desplaces, Melchar, Beauvais, & Bosco, 2007; Jazani & Ayoobzadeh, 2012; Jewe, 2008).

Numerous researchers have criticized the narrow band of existing theory and have called for the development of new theory to address this (Casali, 2010; Craft, 2013; Ghoshal, 2005; O'Fallon & Butterfield, 2005). This paper presents a causal factor model developed from synthesizing the existing research in the fields of business ethics, social psychology, criminology and neuro-cognitive science. This paper then presents the results of testing the model using a multiple case study methodology and then presents the evolved model and the implications for ethics education and training.

2. Perceptions, Bias and Rationalization

Rationalist models of moral reasoning have dominated the business ethics literature (Ferrell, 1989; T. M. Jones, 1991; Rest, 1979; Trevino, 1986). These models propose that moral judgement and knowledge is gained through a process of rational reflection and reasoning (Kohlberg, 1969; Piaget, 1965 (1932)). The rational and logical answer to why good people do bad things is that they are lacking in moral development – this may be a lack of character, bad values or greed (Heath, 2008). The solution to ‘fix’ good people that have done bad things is to re-educate them to think better (Burton, Johnston, & Wilson, 1991; Mintz, 1996; Rozuel, 2012).

Underpinning this approach to ethics is the assumption that the ethical decision making process is one dominated by higher order conscious reasoning. However, new research in the field of neuro-cognitive science (Reynolds, 2006) questions this assumption and suggests instead that the ethical decision making process is more often a process of sub-conscious pattern matching. Further research in the field of social psychology indicates that ethical decision making is influenced by perceptual bias (Tenbrunsel, Diekman, Wade-Benzoni, & Bazeman, 2007) leading people to reframe past experiences and believe they are more ethical than the majority of their peers. These self-serving biases then limit our ability to actually ‘see’ ethical dilemmas leaving people blind to the problem at hand (Banaji, Bazerman, & Chugh, 2003; Chugh & Bazerman, 2007).

Reynolds et al (2010) suggest that in this ‘blind’ state we predominantly make reflexive decisions based on implicit assumptions, our higher order reasoning functions not then engaged until after the event. In this way Haidt (2001) proposes that our higher order reasoning function acts more like a lawyer defending a client rather than like as scientist open to exploring the facts. The desire here of a ‘good’ honest person is to protect their ‘self concept’ (Mazar, Amir, & Ariely, 2008) – that

is, they wish to reframe past events to enable them to continue to see themselves as 'good' and to not have to reassess themselves as 'bad'.

Sykes and Matza (1957) worked with delinquent youth and proposed that rather than having anti-social values, the delinquents instead held the same values as mainstream society but used a range of justifications for deviance that were valued by the delinquent but not by wider society. Sykes and Matza (1957) propose that there are five "techniques of neutralisation":

1. The denial of responsibility
The key here is that the individual sees his or her action as 'unintentional' and that they are therefore not responsible due to forces beyond their control. For example, poor upbringing, unloving parents or 'just following orders'. 'It's not my fault' is the catchcry.
2. The denial of injury
The distinction here is that the act is seen as wrong but not immoral. 'It's not hurting anyone' is the common justification. An example could be the act of creating graffiti.
3. The denial of the victim
Denial neutralises the rights of the victim so that in some way the circumstances justified the act and hence the perpetrator may even be cast as the 'avenger'. The story of Robin Hood robbing the rich to give to the poor is the classic example where the justification is "they deserved it".
4. The condemnation of the condemners
Claims of unfairness and hypocrisy are key here with motives being questioned. Police are corrupt, teachers unfair, parents take out their issues on their kids. The wrongfulness of the act is repressed. 'You think I'm bad but you should see them' would be the cry.
5. The appeal to higher loyalties
Societal norms are rejected owing to higher loyalties, for example to family, gang members, etc. The extreme example of this would be bkie gangs or street gangs and their 'codes'. 'Live by the code of brotherhood' would be an example.

To these five neutralisations, Heath (2008) adds two more:

6. Everyone else is doing it
The key here is that the perpetrator claims they have no choice. This is particularly prevalent in competitive situations, such as doping in elite sport, where the justification would be 'everyone else was doing it so I had no choice other than to follow suit'.
7. Claim to entitlement
Entitlement is a justification based on rights or karma: 'I did this so therefore I deserve that'. An example might be 'I have worked back for the last five days straight so I deserve to use the company credit card to buy myself and my family dinner'.

Neutralisation Theory (Sykes & Matza, 1957) supports the notion that 'good people' use rationalisations to absolve themselves of internal moral conflict. The critical aspect of neutralisation theory, according to Sykes and Matza, is the element of self-deception it introduces and the opportunity to do 'bad' things without damaging one's self-image. Heath (2008, p.604) in discussing neutralisation theory states:

“... this theory puts considerable emphasis upon the way individuals think about their actions...

Rather than sustaining an independent system of values and moral principles, different from those of the mainstream, the function of the subculture is to create a social context in which certain types of excuses are given a sympathetic hearing, or perhaps even encouraged.”

Heath’s view supports the notion that the key elements in unethical behaviour are social context, self-deception and one’s interpretation of reality. When the context becomes competitive and outcome orientated, it follows that neutralisations would become more prevalent due to this overwhelming focus on outcomes. Heath (2007, 2008) proposes that business might constitute a peculiarly criminogenic environment on account of: the large impersonal nature of big business; the detachment from consequences; hostility to government and regulation; and the isolating nature of the business sub-culture.

3. Synthesizing a Causal Factor Model

The inter-disciplinary research from the fields of social psychology, neurocognitive science and criminology can be synthesized into a causal factor model shown below in Figure 1. Research from social psychology informs the model by showing how personal, situational and contextual factors can influence behavioral intentions (Ajzen, 1985; Tenbrunsel, 1998; Zimbardo, 2007). Perceptual bias and blindness then determines whether or not the person actually ‘sees’ the ethical dilemma (Chugh & Bazerman, 2007). Neurocognitive research then shows how we make decisions in this ‘blind’ state using either higher order reasoning or sub-conscious pattern matching (Reynolds, 2006). A post decision trigger event then causes the engagement of justifications which can either be based on moral values or may be moral neutralisations (Heath, 2008; Sykes & Matza, 1957). The decision made then feeds back into contextual factors.

DEDUCED CAUSAL FACTOR MODEL OF UNETHICAL OUTCOMES

A.C.Ping 2014

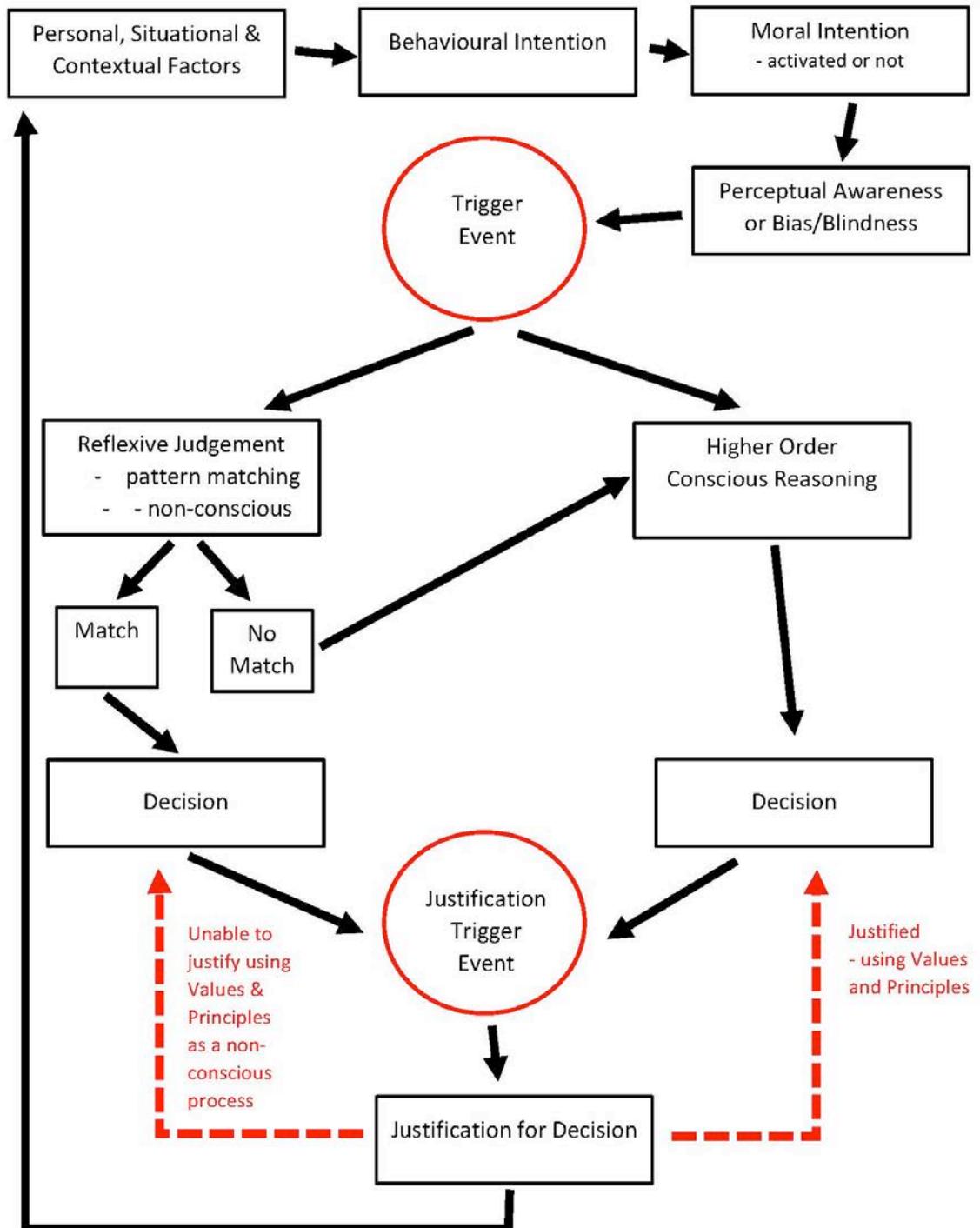


Figure 1 – Deduced Causal Factor Model of Unethical Outcomes

4. Testing the Model

The epistemology of this research is subjective and falls within the social constructivism paradigm. The philosophical base for this paradigm is hermeneutics and phenomenology, which proposes that reality is socially constructed and the world does not present itself objectively to the observer but is rather known through human experience, which is mediated by language (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Given this research paradigm, the research methodology is a mix of deduction to develop a theoretical construct, and induction to test validity using reflexive phenomenology.

There is significant industry and academic research which suggests that the leverage point for reducing unethical outcomes in business is at the Board and senior executive levels. The epistemology of this research also indicates that the most useful and valid way of actually testing the theoretical construct is by interviewing people who have actually been convicted of corporate crimes or who have had first-hand experience with such an event.

Potential participants were identified using media reports and the annual reports of the Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC). The ASIC reports detail key convictions of corporate criminals and this information was distilled to identify people who had been acting at the Board and senior executive levels when convicted. The aim in selecting potential cases was to try and find cases that dealt with the key issues identified in Industry reports (Ernst & Young, 2013; KPMG, 2005, 2013). For example; bribery and facilitation payments, insider trading, fraud and managing conflicts of interest. Cases were chosen using replication logic – in this case where the participants fit the subjective criteria of ‘good people doing bad things’. Sampling was then done for sameness and for difference – the sameness being the nature of the crime, for example fraud. The difference being the circumstances – for example mortgage fraud versus corporate insider fraud. To gain a different perspective on events, one of the participants selected was a whistle blower and another an internal investigator who became a whistle blower.

The six cases chosen to test the model were:

1. A non-executive director of an Australian company jailed for 2 ½ years after pleading guilty to four criminal charges including; Disseminating information knowing it was false in the material particular and which was likely to induce the purchase by other persons of shares; one count of being intentionally dishonest and failing to discharge his duties as a director in good faith and in the best interests of that company; one count of obtaining money by false or misleading statements.
2. The Managing Director of a US mortgage broking company jailed for 2 years after pleading guilty to bank fraud, in excess of US\$100 million and tax evasion – falsifying tax records.
3. The whistle blower in an Australian case involving a semi-government company found guilty of foreign bribery (Malaysia, Vietnam, and Indonesia) and the falsifying of documents.
4. The co-founder and director of an Australian margin lending company which collapsed resulting in ASIC alleging that the directors were intentionally dishonest and failed to exercise their powers and discharge their duties in good faith in the best interests of the company. It was further alleged that the

directors dishonestly used their position as directors with the intention of directly or indirectly gaining an advantage for themselves or for someone else. Charges were also made with regard to false recording of securities. Two of the directors pleaded guilty and were sentenced to 2 years and 1 year in jail respectively. The director who was interviewed pleaded not guilty and was found not guilty by the courts.

5. The Chairman of an Australian timber company who pleaded guilty to insider trading on the basis that he 'ought' to have known the information in his possession was price sensitive. He was fined \$50,000 and given no jail term.
6. The internal investigator and whistle blower of a 12 year internal fraud at an Australian construction company totalling over \$20m. The protagonist pleaded guilty to all charges and was sentenced to 15 years jail with a non-parole period of 6 years.

Semi structured interviews were then conducted (sample questions detailed in Appendix 1). As a starting point these interviews explored the variables identified in the theoretical construct that is – personal, situational and contextual factors, moral intention, perceptual bias and moral neutralisations. The aim, as per Eisenhardt's (1989) advice, was to not be fixed as to how these variables were related but to allow the participants to reflect on the phenomena they had experienced. Triangulation was then applied using data collected from media reports, corporate communications and court reports.

The interviews were transcribed and coded using the initial categories of meaning as determined by the causal factor model deduced from existing inter-disciplinary theory.

5. Levelling the Score – the Ultimate Justification

After the initial coding of data and development of units of meaning, these unit categories were then refined and the patterns and relationships between the categories explored (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Once the categories of meaning had been refined the data was then analysed for patterns of sameness and difference. Using the constant comparison method a further category of meaning revealed itself as 'A sense of moral obligation'.

In each of the six cases this was present as follows:

- Case #1
"I had a number of promises from DL [the Managing Director] in an ongoing sense."
"I had my people in the company..."
- Case #2
"I think that there was no doubt a fear that I was going to let my dad down."
- Case #3
"You are the company secretary; you are the conduit between management and the Board; you tell us what is going on".
- Case #4
"FG [one of the other directors] felt obliged in some way, and for what reason, I don't know, but obliged in some way to ensure this particular client did not suffer...."

- Case #5
“I felt obligated to go on and look after the people... I didn’t have money in my mind. I never even considered, never even thought about it.”
- Case #6
“DC [the perpetrator of the fraud] was driven by a feeling of being "exploited" by his employer.” (Psych. Report)

“The thing with DC is that it all came down to the fact that he started at [the company] at the same time as the MD 30 years ago and now the MD is making millions and he is still getting paid about \$200,000 for being a finance manager so he just thought he deserved it.” (view of the whistle blower)

Investigation into the relationships between categories of meaning revealed several key points:

1. In each case study the key protagonist had a sense of moral obligation to a significant other or group of people.
2. The sense of moral obligation created a moral intent to uphold that obligation.
3. A trigger event then occurred which either violated or threatened to violate the moral obligation.
4. This event then triggered a justification to take action in order to balance the scales of justice.
5. Emboldened with a sense of ‘self-righteousness’ the protagonist then persisted down a path which often became a ‘slippery slope’.

What becomes evident in examining the raw data is that the sense of moral obligation is personal and the trigger event is also seen from a personal perspective and this in turn clouds the objective judgement of the protagonist such that they seem justified to take action to balance the scales of justice.

For example:

“...he had lost me because he broke his word to me... I found the conversations at Board level insulting...He lost all respect. I lost all respect for him.” (C#1)

“I was well-known for this [looking after people] because people, they wanted to come and work for our company...then, when this pops up, we’re basically like, hell no. No way. We’re not going down by something like this after everything that we’ve done, which was a little ... That’s bad thinking. That’s a little arrogant. You’re thinking like, oh, we’re so honourable that we can’t make an error. You’re going to end up getting your ass kicked if you think that way.”(C#2)

“...there was friction between the CEO and some of my peers and myself because he was saying one thing and doing another.” (C#3)

“FG [one of the other directors] had said to the client ... words to the effect that “he’d look after him”. How you want to read that ... Obviously, inherently it’s subjective...But my speculation from seeing those is that, in essence, FG (I think) felt that, for whatever reason, that he owed him something. I don’t know why he felt that. He felt that client, whether he was, I don’t know, whether he was in awe of him, whether he was afraid of him or. What the emotion was, but it was an emotion that made FG think that he was in some ways ... FG felt obliged in some way, and for

what reason, I don't know, but obliged in some way to ensure this particular client did not suffer.”(C#4)

“I had come up in a very hard school of poor people as a youngster. I was sent away to a boarding school very young. It was my father sent me there. That was living with the upper end. Then when I went out to work, I had seen the poverty that was on the poor side of the life. It hurt me. I really put my effort into making sure that anytime I can improve someone’s life or do something, give someone a job, I did it.”(C#5)

“Then you go into panic mode ... Because I think whistle-blower behaves like people that have been through rape, and they always think that, you know, they're the one to blame... And you always think that you're wrong, because, again, you're the only one that picked it up.”(C#6)

Triggered then to take action the intention is very outcome orientated:-

“You solve problems, you don't walk away from problems. I thought I could solve it with Ray and I thought he would work with me but it didn't happen. He actually fought me. That annoyed me... Then I was annoyed so then I punished him.”(C#1)

“What was I going to do? That didn’t even occur to me. All it was, was I need to fix what’s the problem is today.” (C#2)

“My initial concerns were purely financial. We were just paying an awful lot of money and as I said before we were incurring losses. That didn’t gel.” (C#3)

“If FG had taken the appropriate action, [the client] would have lost a lot of money.” (C#4)

“We decided that we’d sell some shares in case something happened to me. My wife would have a house.” (C#5)

The justifications used relate to the initial sense of moral obligation and are firmly aimed at achieving the intended outcome as ‘the price you have to pay’.

“But I wouldn’t have done it if he had kept his word to me. Once he broke his word to me it was over...I had my people in the company...” (C#1)

“Pay that loan off and just go on with life like that never happened. That was a lot more attractive, not to lose everything over having this fraud in our company. I thought I’ll pay that off. I’m talking to myself ... The right to do because what’s going to happen if I don’t? The buck stops with me. I need to pay that off and take responsibility and then we’ll just go on.” (C#2)

“...it has to be done. That’s the way business is. That’s the structure, that’s the model. We have to have these agents. In my view there wasn’t a solid answer given. The response to me was” just stop asking difficult questions”. We are not interested in changing the model. We are not going to rock the boat.” (C#3)

“I do believe that his motivation was, as I say, some sense of obligation to [the client]...Plenty of emotion, plenty of apologies but I've never been given an explanation why.” (C#4)

The common theme that emerges at this point is the sense of belief that the protagonists have that they can ‘fix it’.

“I had a similar problem at GTB [the family company that had been taken over] and I saved it...I have all this knowledge... I’m uniquely placed...” (C#1)

“I saw that as if I don’t fix all that, if I don’t fix it for other people, I’m certainly not going to be okay so I have to make sure ... I need to take the most direct route... I’m now going down the path. Now it’s going to be very difficult to turn around.” (C#2)

“I was a believer... The model was fantastically good.... I felt obligated to go on and look after the people... I never had it [the money] because I never cashed it in. I left it in CT [the timber company] shares... I didn’t have money in my mind. I never even considered, never even thought about it. I might think a bit harder today.... I didn’t even sell. I only sold enough shares to pay the bank so my wife was free of the house and the debt that I had over the CT shares attached to the house... I believed that the pulp mill would have been built... I didn’t think that [it wouldn’t work] until after CT went into the receivership... What a fool I was. What a fool I was.” C#5

What becomes evident from the case study data is that there is a significant ongoing dynamic relationship between the decisions that are made initially and the subsequent decisions made. Justifications may be made for the initial decision that empowers the protagonist to act in order to balance the scales of justice however the violation of other values, principles or laws causes a decay in the protagonist’s personal circumstances which in turn effects their ability to make higher order decisions. There is also a significant decay in the personal relationship(s) that triggered the initial threat to the perceived sense of moral obligation.

Once the categories of meaning had been refined the data was then analysed for patterns of sameness and difference. This then allowed for the creation of an ‘Induced casual factor model’ – see Figure 2. This model was then compared to the model deduced from exiting research and a synthesised model was then created – see Figure 3. The final synthesized model was then overlayed across the case studies to determine if it did actually explain how the unethical outcomes were created.

INDUCED CAUSAL FACTOR MODEL OF UNETHICAL OUTCOMES

A.C.Ping 2015

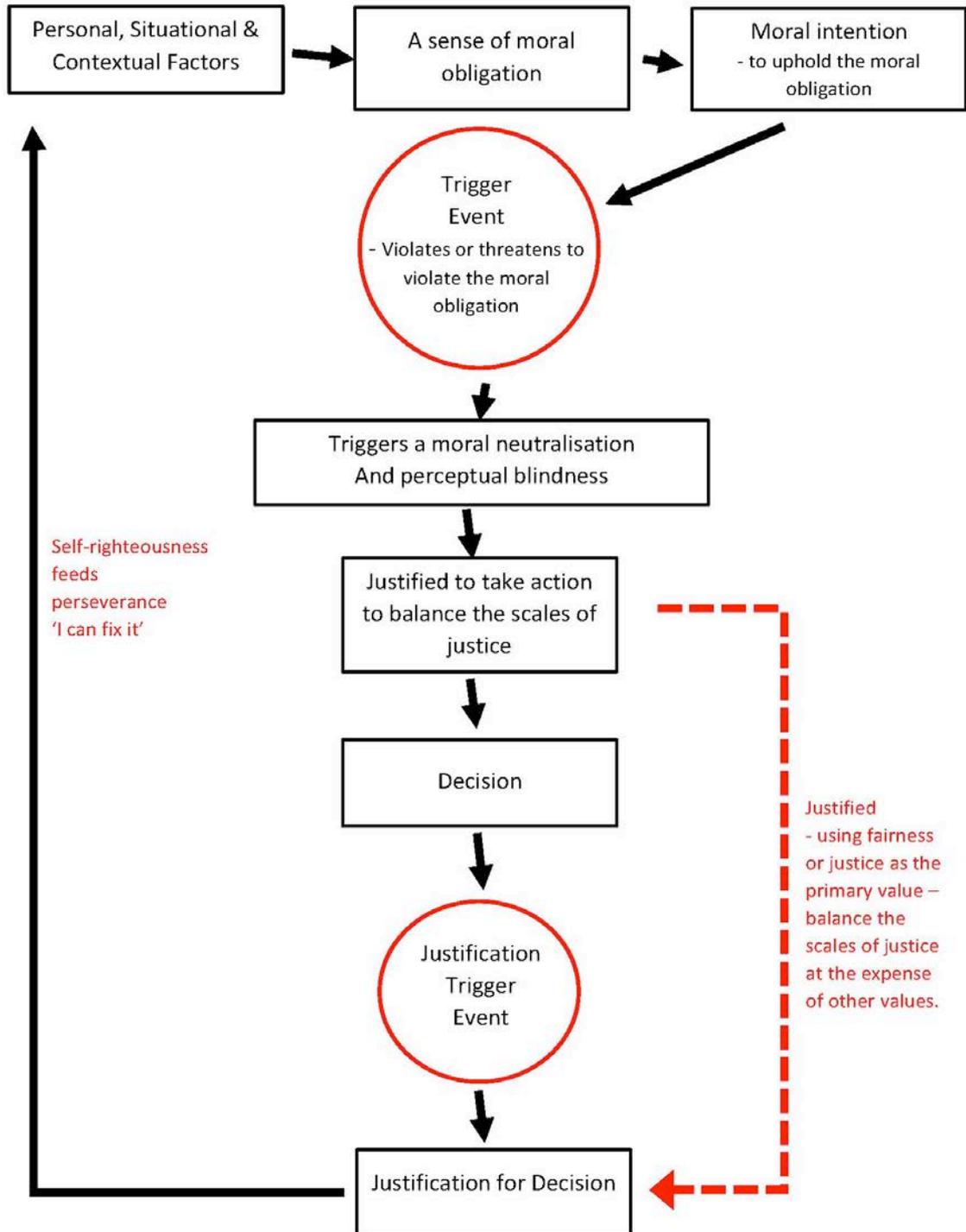


Figure 2 – Induced Causal Factor Model of Unethical Outcomes

SYNTHESIZED CAUSAL FACTOR MODEL OF UNETHICAL OUTCOMES

A.C.Ping 2015

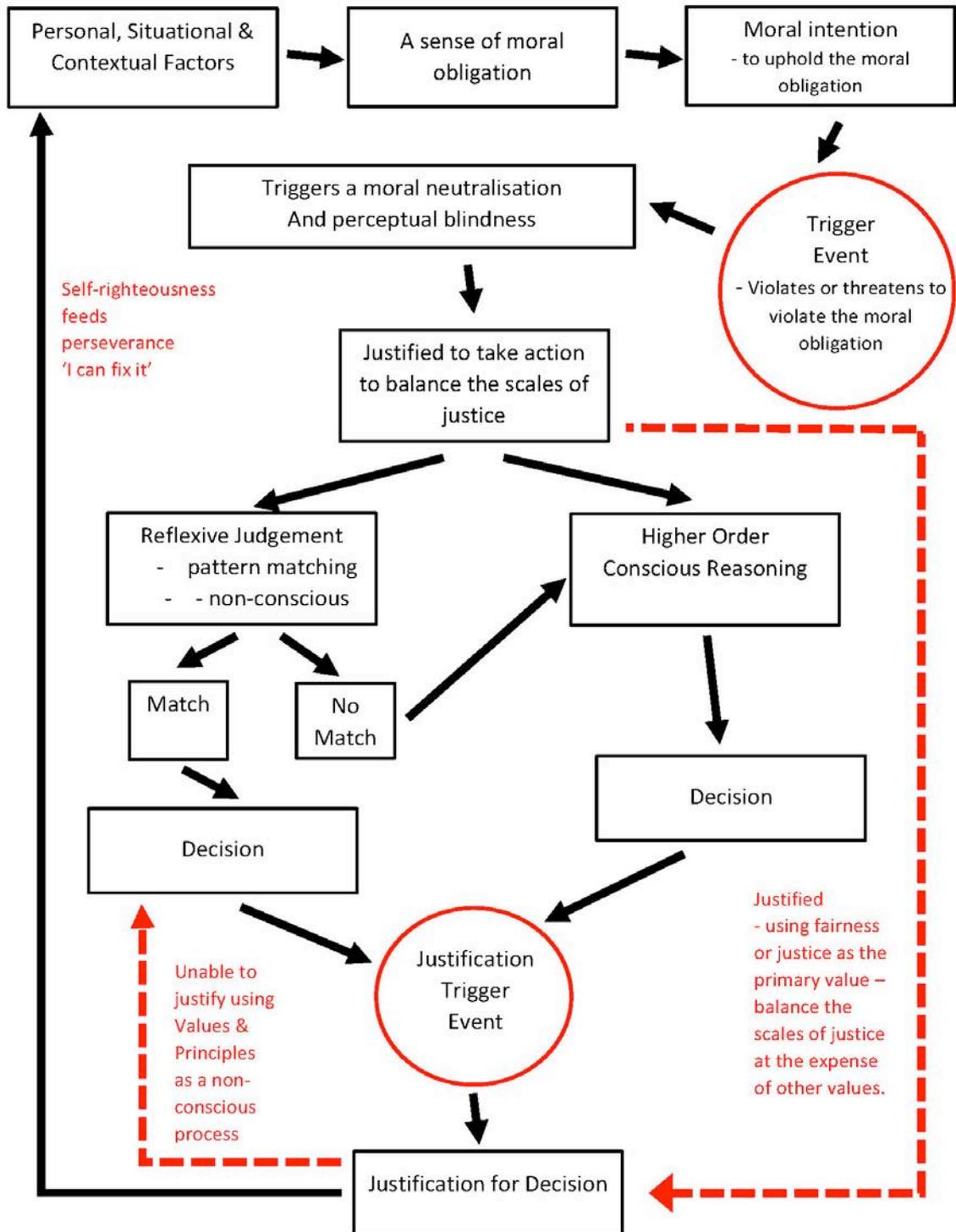


Figure 3 – Synthesized Causal Factor Model of Unethical Outcomes

6. Conclusion and Implications

Although this case study analysis is limited in scope the initial testing of this synthesized causal factor model shows that it significantly explains the process of creating unethical outcomes. As Reynolds (2006) proposed, once an initial decision has been made using higher order reasoning the subsequent decisions follow a sub conscious reflexive pattern matching process. Furthermore this model supports the idea that a justification for a certain type of action is in the mind of the protagonist before the action is taken which was first proposed by Sykes and Matza (1957) in their theory of delinquency.

Of interest is the common concept of 'A sense of moral obligation'. In the case studies this related to a moral obligation made to 'my people', 'my father', 'the board' or 'my community'. However, it is possible to propose that a distinction between good people doing bad things without ill intent and bad people doing bad things with ill intent, could be captured by the difference between 'a sense of moral obligation' and 'a sense of entitlement'. Both of these subjective perceptions precede intention and action. A sense of moral obligation can trigger a flawed justification for action that neutralizes an intrinsic value such as honesty. For example, the sense that one should not let down one's father could trigger the justification of 'I'm doing it for him' hence providing the basis for violating the principle of honesty.

Recent research into the socially aversive personality traits of Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy (D. N. Jones & Paulhus, 2014) attempted to identify subscales for each trait. With regard to narcissism, Jones and Paulhus identified narcissism as a clash between grandiose identify and underlying insecurity. Narcissistic grandiosity promotes a sense of entitlement (Bushman, Bonacci, van Dijk, & Baumeister, 2003) if that grandiosity is threatened. Jones and Paulhus (2011) concluded that ego identity goals drive narcissistic behaviour. Further research is needed to consider the relationship between a sense of entitlement and unethical outcomes in a corporate setting where large egos are commonplace.

In conclusion, this is significant research with wide ranging implications both for training and education in ethics and also for the prevention of unethical outcomes in business. This research indicates that the creation of unethical outcomes is not isolated to the decision making process but rather is the results of a dynamic interplay between personal, situational and contextual factors. Further, the creation of unethical contexts does not occur quickly but rather results from an ongoing decay in the moral environment.

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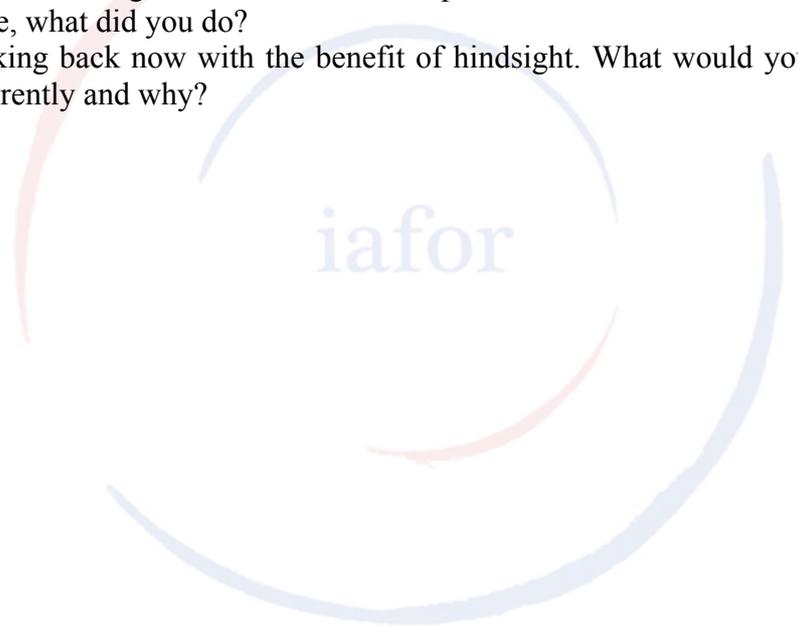
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Appendix 1 – Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Sample questions included:

1. What was your personal situation prior to the event? E.g. were you under extreme stress or duress?
2. What was the business context? E.g. good, bad, highly competitive?
3. In taking the action that you did what was your intention?
4. What were the factors you considered when you made the decision?
5. Which of these factors did you give priority to?
6. Who did you believe your decision would impact?
7. Which of these impacts were most important to you?
8. What process did you follow in making your decision?
9. What was your justification for making the decision you did?
10. At what point did you become aware of the moral aspects of the event as identified by ASIC and the prosecutor?
11. What caused you to become aware of the moral aspects of the event?
12. After becoming aware of the moral aspects of the event and the decision you made, what did you do?
13. Looking back now with the benefit of hindsight. What would you have done differently and why?

The logo for the International Association of Business Schools (iafor) is centered on the page. It consists of the lowercase letters "iafor" in a light blue, sans-serif font. The text is surrounded by several overlapping, curved lines in shades of blue and red, creating a circular, abstract design.

*A Qualitative Study of Genital Sex Reassignment in Transgendered Teens:
Age of Consent and Assessment Process*

Wallace Wong, Diversity Emotional Wellness Center, Canada

The Asian Conference on Ethnic, Religion and Philosophy 2016
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

Currently, the WPATH guidelines recommend that a person be at the majority age in order to be considered a candidate for bottom surgery. In British Columbia, the majority is 19 years. However, in our clinical experience, there are youth between the ages of 16 to 19 that may benefit from having the surgery earlier. Some may say that waiting until 19 to have bottom surgery done is a "safe" practice, but we often ask ourselves if it is the best interest for our clients.

First of all, different provinces and countries have different standards on the "age of majority". Therefore, to consider a youth's readiness based only on the age of majority can be misleading. Perhaps it may be more accurate to reflect their readiness based on the youth's maturity, support systems, and consistency of their gender identity development. This paper used a focus group with nine different youths to generate themes regarding their experiences of having to wait for surgery. This paper will also examine how they perceive the risks and benefits for early surgery.

Keywords: Transgender, Youth, Surgery, SRS, Gender Reassignment Surgery, Age, Consent

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Introduction

Treatment options for gender dysphoria

Presently, the guidelines outlined by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) in its Standards of Care for Health of Transsexual, Transgender, and Gender Nonconforming People (SOC; Coleman et al., 2011) are the most widely consulted for treatment of gender dysphoria. SOC describes sex reassignment surgery (SRS) as one important option to assist transgender individuals to achieve comfort with their identities and bodies (Coleman et al., 2011). WPATH notes that SRS also allows transgender individuals feel more comfortable in various settings where the body is more exposed, such as physician's office, swimming pools, health clubs, and in the presence of sex partners (Coleman et al., 2011). Consistent with this, past research have consistently demonstrated the benefits of SRS (De Cuypere et al., 2005; Gijs & Brewaeys, 2007; Garaffa, Christopher, & Ralph, 2010; Green & Fleming, 1990; Johansson, Sundbom, Höjerback, & Bodlund, 2010; Klein & Gorzalka, 2009; Krege et al. 2001; Pauly, 1981; Pfäfflin & Junge, 1998; Rehman et al., 1999; Smith, Van Goozen, Kuiper, & Cohen-Kettenis, 2005). These studies collectively found improvement after SRS in patients' overall well-being, global functioning, psychosocial outcomes, cosmesis, sexual function, and gender dysphoria symptoms. While contrary evidence suggesting that SRS may be ineffective or harmful exists, these studies often are plagued by methodological flaws (Coleman et al., 2011).

Alternative physical interventions for gender dysphoria exist in the form of hormone therapy or gonadotropin-releasing hormone analogue, which unlike SRS, are fully or partially reversible. Generally, the age of consent for these hormone therapies is lower than that for SRS (Coleman et al., 2011). Consequently, SRS is typically the last, as well as the most deliberated; step in the treatment process for gender dysphoria. Unlike the significant body of research converging on the effectiveness of SRS, the efficaciousness of hormone treatments is less well established. Most research in this area unfortunately examines transgender individuals who have undergone hormone therapy in addition to SRS, instead of hormone therapy alone. Nonetheless, the available evidence points to favorable outcomes of hormonal treatment (Eldh, Berg, & Gustafsson, 1997; Gijs & Brewaeys, 2007; Murad et al., 2010; Pfäfflin & Junge, 1998). While these alternate therapies involving hormone manipulation are promising, surgical modification of their primary and/or secondary sex characteristics for many transgender individuals is still necessary to relieve gender dysphoria (Hage & Karim, 2000).

Challenges in assessing for SRS readiness

Although many researchers would agree that SRS is an efficacious solution for gender dysphoria, they often disagree on *when* transgender individuals should receive SRS. Presently, there are no clear answers as to what age does gender identity become stable and what age is one considered mature enough to provide consent for SRS. Debate concerning transitioning in children and adolescents remains heated. Different theories give conflicting accounts of how gender is acquired and consolidates throughout development (Shechner, 2010).

In addition to theories of gender development, another important factor to consider in determining the appropriate age for SRS is that delays in SRS may mean delays in psychosocial development for children and adolescents with gender dysphoria. According to Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development, stage five, which pertains to the development of a stable and coherent sense of self that often includes gender identity, is expected to occur between the ages of thirteen to nineteen (Erikson, 1959). Transgender adolescents of this age range may have more difficulty with this stage of psychosocial development due to the incongruity between their gender identity and physical characteristics. Successful completion of this developmental stage may be too difficult for some until their gender dysphoria is alleviated through SRS. From this perspective, SRS should be performed sooner rather than later to avoid stunting of psychosocial development. Transgender youths have also been expressing interest in SRS at increasingly younger ages over the past decade, which should be no surprise when one takes into account that social transitioning and administration of hormones are occurring at earlier ages (Mildrod, 2014). On the other hand, lack of research exists on reliable ways to distinguish between youths with gender dysphoria that will persist into adulthood and those that will not (Wallien & Cohen-Kettenis, 2008). This knowledge deficit calls for making decisions about SRS readiness in a conservative manner given SRS's irreversible nature.

Current guidelines for SRS readiness assessment

Comprehensive and concrete guidelines for assessing SRS readiness still remain lacking. Although WPATH stipulates some specific criteria to be met before SRS is performed, in the same breath it emphasizes the significant variability inherent between patients and suggests a case-by-case decision-making process. However, WPATH is not clear on *how* to assess SRS readiness on a case-by-case basis. As a result, clinicians when assessing SRS readiness often default to one of WPATH's recommendations that SRS be performed after an individual has reached "age of majority in a given country" (Coleman et al., 2011). While this recommendation makes sense, the variability in age of majority across the globe makes age of majority seem like an arbitrary, rather than an empirically informed, threshold for SRS readiness. Age of majority is likely driven by a particular region's cultural attitudes, rather than empirical evidence on psychological development, and thus it alone is likely an imperfect and inefficient measure of eligibility for SRS. Figure 1 highlights the range of age of majority that exists between and within countries. In Canada, assessing for SRS readiness is further complicated by the Infants Act, which leaves adherence to age of majority to the clinician's discretion. Specifically, the Infants Act states that if a medical service provider has fully explained the nature and consequences of the medical service and has evaluated the service as being in the patient's best interests, an under-aged individual can receive the medical service after providing consent (Infant Act, R.S.B.C. 1996).

Should clinicians consider underage transgender youths for SRS or adhere strictly to the age of majority of their region? To our knowledge, no research has looked at the outcomes of performing SRS on underage individuals deemed psychologically ready. Even though SRS is not illegal to perform on underage individuals, health professionals often decline to share their experiences if they have been involved in such cases due to social disapproval (Mildrod, 2014).

Current study

Our goal for the present study was to gain better insight into the thorny issues of SRS readiness assessment and reliance on age of majority by examining the lived experiences and attitudes of underage transgender youths who were waiting to receive SRS. The present study used a qualitative design, which is ideal for studying rich and complex constructs instead of a quantitative approach, which tends to simplify human experiences. (Schwandt, 1994).

Methods and Participants

Participants were recruited through youth who have already attended a transgender youth group for six months or longer. The focus group consisted of nine transgendered teenagers under the age of nineteen, who were from British Columbia, Canada. The youngest participant was sixteen years old and the oldest was eighteen years old. Seven of them were Female-to-Male and two of them Male-to-Female. Participants in our focus group were at different stages of their transition. All participants were undergoing hormone therapy, ranging from eighteen to 30 months, but none had received the genital reassignment surgery. Four participants had been approved by physicians for chest reconstruction surgery. One participant had been approved for sex reassignment surgery. Participants had been under the care of the first author for three to eleven years. While all participants had familial support, two were under Continued Care Orders (CCO).

Procedure

In order to participate, participants had to be between the age 16 to 19 and have been on hormone therapy for at least six months or longer. Prior to participation, participants were informed of the study procedures and their right to decline or withdrawal from participation at any time. After parental and individual consent were obtained, Dr. Wallace Wong conducted a focus group with the participants, with the aid of three graduate students. The focus group lasted approximately two hours. Two recording pens were used to audiotape the discussion. Examples of questions that were posed to focus groups are as follows:

Q1: At what age should a person be allowed to have bottom surgery. Please explain why.

Q2: Does having to wait until you're 19 years old to have surgery affect your planning for the future? If so, how?

Q3: If one wants to have bottom surgery before age of majority, how could we know if the youth is ready?

Q4: Do you think you are ready to have bottom surgery even though you are not 19 yet today?

After each question was posed, participants were given the option to respond. Appropriate follow-up questions were introduced based on the group discussion, which usually elicited participants to elaborate on their answers, provide additional details, and clarify subject matter. We used a qualitative approach to analyze the data gathered from the focus group as qualitative research allows a holistic and in-depth understanding of human experiences and behaviors.

Data Analysis

Interview transcripts

The focus group was audiotaped and transcribed. Constant comparison method was used to analyze the interview transcript. Prior to reading the transcripts, researchers familiarized themselves with the primary objective of the study: to better understand attitudes of transgendered adolescents towards the use of age of majority as a criterion for SRS readiness and the assessment process overall. Then, the researchers independently read over the focus group interview transcripts for the first time, without attempting to write down any themes. In the second round, each researcher independently recorded the unique and important impressions in the margins of the text. During the third reading, researchers re-read the transcripts and extracted all the re-occurring possible themes that appeared in the focus group discussion. Then, researchers reviewed and discussed all the possible themes together until they agreed on the major themes. There were a total of nine themes extracted from the transcripts. Finally, researchers identified the passages that supported each theme and highlighted them using different colors on a separate word document.

Results

Our focus group consisted of nine transgendered adolescents under the age of 19. None had undergone SRS. Two major categories of themes emerged, with one pertaining to the SRS readiness assessment process and the other pertaining to the effects of waiting for SRS due to age. Related to the first category, the following themes emerged from the focus group discussions: (1) instead of using age of majority as a threshold, SRS readiness should be determined on a case-by-case basis, (2) sixteen is an acceptable minimum age for undergoing SRS, and (3) the comprehensiveness of the assessment process is both beneficial and detrimental. Related to the second thematic category of effects of being denied surgery due to age, the following themes were extracted: (1) effects on emotional well-being, (2) effects on planning for the future, and (3) effects on interpersonal relationships.

Themes Associated with the Assessment Process

Case-by-case basis

One major theme that arose from the focus group discussion was a preference for a case-by-case assessment process, which was agreed on unanimously. Participants believed this to be a superior method to strict reliance on age of majority as a gatekeeper. Age instead should be considered as one of many variables in determining readiness for SRS. One participant stated:

Not everyone matures at the exact same age and grows at the exact same age so, like if you, like study a person, know that they, they're done their growing, you know that they're ready for this, then age isn't really that much of a factor. (M, FtM)

The focus group also believed that psychologists performing the assessment should use their knowledge and clinical experience to establish the psychological maturity and readiness of a youth for SRS. Related to this, another participant stated, "Case-

by-case would be best because then not only are....your psychologists know exactly where you are, and how mature or ready you are for surgery.”(N, MtF)

Sixteen as an acceptable minimum age

When asked if a minimum age for SRS should be set at all or abolished completely, eight of nine youths advocated for retaining a minimum age that is lowered from nineteen, as currently stipulated by the province of British Columbia in Canada, to sixteen. These youths conveyed that they arrived at the age of sixteen as they believe most youths would be psychologically and physically mature enough to undergo SRS at that age. One participant stated,

“I’m thinking like sixteen, cause....you’ve gone through puberty, most likely, and then, like... you would know if that’s really how you felt.”(J, FtM).

The remaining youth suggested a minimum age of seventeen based on his personal experience of puberty and physical maturation:

If someone gets it at a really young age, what happens when their body starts to grow? Right, you also have to think about that, I mean, you would get so many, so much scarring and everything, that at the point when you... I would say seventeen is a good age, only because, not just because its in the middle but because a lot of people have stopped having their growth spurts by then, right, at thirteen, like, I didn’t get my growth, my first growth spurt until I was fifteen, right. So, imagine if I had bottom surgery then, you know, I would’ve, something would’ve torn or like, something would’ve malfunctioned and that’s not good...” (E, FtM)

Comprehensiveness of the assessment process

A third theme that arose from the focus group was that the comprehensiveness of the assessment process is often a double-edged sword. All of the youths agreed that a comprehensive SRS assessment process is helpful for screening out false positives but may also be an obstacle for those who are truly ready for SRS. One participant stated:

“There’s steps that you have to go through. Like if, you’re getting hormone therapy first, and you have to do that first, which takes a while and you have to be on it for a set number of time. So while the person’s, you know, getting their real life experience and then like, being on hormones actually passing as the gender that they want to be perceived as. Like, they’ll know....that takes a really long time.... there’s like lots of like, safety nets to prevent like, accidental surgery.” (T, FtM).

Themes Associated with the Impact of Waiting for Surgery

Effects on emotional well-being

All participants expressed experiencing poorer self-image, fear for safety, and depressed mood associated with not having body parts consistent with their affirmed gender while waiting for SRS. Participants often described feeling inadequate, inferior, and awkward. Almost all participants listed physical activities, such as playing sports, swimming, and going to the gym, as one type of situations where not

having the ‘right’ body parts leads to significant fear. For example, one participant noted:

I do not feel comfortable going to the gym and working out, even though I would love like, in my brain, I’m like yeah, you know if I go to the gym and I work out, I’ll like, loose some weight and get some abs and I’ll feel like, more comfortable in my body. But because....I don’t have... the right... like, cuz I don’t have a flat chest, you know I don’t have a bulge in my pants. Like, I feel scared out of my mind to go the gym (D, FtM)

Tyler, another female-to-male participant, described her feelings and concerns related to swimming:

Whenever I’m at a pool, or whenever I’m like, in my sweater and a t-shirt, because I don’t feel comfortable just wearing a t-shirt, and I see some lucky guy just walking around with his shirt off, when its thirty two degree in the summer, it makes you feel really envious, and really jealous. And it’s a huge safety thing for the washrooms too. Like, Whenever I can I’ll use like, a family bathroom or like, a handicap bathroom because, I am afraid of a guy finding out that, wait a second you don’t have a dick, and then getting raped. It’s a really big safety issue for me. And it terrifies me, like, all the time, that just randomly even like, walking home, waiting for the bus at Surrey central like, its a huge safety issue. (T, FtM)

Many participants echoed Tyler’s description of going swimming as a transgendered youth that has not undergone SRS. They described avoidance of the swimming pool and beach due to their inability to “pass” while wearing bathing suits that are consistent with their affirmed gender.

According to all of the participants, waiting for SRS also has a significant negative impact on their mood. One participant noted,

“They shouldn’t make us wait longer because it’s depressing, and to see somebody have the parts that you don’t have....and they shouldn’t also make you wait because it’s like, wasting your life” (Justin, FtM).

Several participants believed that waiting for SRS leads to depressed mood because not having body parts consistent of one’s affirmed gender creates psychological distress and puts limits on one’s functioning. As one youth summarized:

Not feeling comfortable in your own body, it prevents you from doing everything. I mean like, it prevents you from going outdoors. It prevents you from experiencing real life. It prevents you from feeling comfortable with yourself. I mean, if you can’t feel comfortable with yourself, how can you love yourself, how can you love other people, how can you actually fulfill life to the fullest. (T, FtM)

Effects on future planning

Throughout the focus group discussion, participants emphasized that having to wait for surgery has led them to postpone making plans for the future, ranging from more

minor plans like travelling to significant ones like academic and career pursuits. One participant described her travel plans being delayed until after surgery:

I haven't been able to plan any of my travelling for like, after I'm 19....I wanted to go on a vacation over to Germany with my mom, and hopefully travel around Europe, but I cannot even do that without my passport. And because I look male and I don't look like the female that's on um... my passport. I can't legally travel.. (E, FtM)

With regards to their academic aspirations, almost all participants reported that they plan to defer post-secondary studies until after SRS. Participants cited two main reasons for this: their anticipation that SRS would be a substantial disruption to their studies and their preference to finish transitioning prior to meeting new peers. For example, one participant described:

As of right now I graduate when I am 17 so, earlier than most people. Umm... and after I graduate, I pretty much sit at home and work because I won't be going to university until I have surgery. Um... because it's a lot of money for university and I don't want to pay for like, a semester or a year and then all of a sudden be like, k, you can get surgery early....When it was completely pointless since I have to like, drop out now, and um you don't get the money back... And then just like, having to recover and everything, and then going back, then the people that were in like, your grade or class have moved up and then you're back at the bottom (N, MtF).

Furthermore, several participants emphasized that their inability to undergo SRS until they are nineteen years old is a major obstacle in their occupational aspirations. For example, one participant stated:

I do want to be an RCMP officer, I do have to wait till nineteen to register anyway, but the thing is, I mean I would like to register when I, when I do have my surgery and I...and when I do, when I do recover from my surgery which means, it probably takes me off, maybe a couple years off. So that means I've got to wait longer now. (T, FtM)

Difficulty with relationships

All participants agreed that waiting for SRS has hindered the growth of various interpersonal relationships. Related to this, one participant expressed

"It's really hard to do all that when you don't have the right body. And... it is hard to find someone who will accept you fully" (B, FtM).

Majority of participants described that waiting for SRS has interfered with romantic and sexual relationships. As participant stated,

"I think people will be more accepting to be, ah... to be romantic with a transgendered person if they had that body part down there. And you'd feel more comfortable to have sex and be more intimate, and love yourself more if you have that body part" (T, MtF).

Another participant noted:

It makes me question who I could actually have an intimate relationship with. Um... like if you're a straight guy, you look for straight woman. If you're a lesbian, you look for other lesbians. If you are gay man you look for other gay men. But when you're trans it's like, who can I even, you know like... either they're not going to be interested in me or... or they're going to lose interest when I start transitioning. Or... like I just, I don't even know... what I'm supposed to be looking for. I don't know that maybe makes no sense at all. But it just, it feels like I can't start a relationship with anybody because there's always going to be, some problem caused by either, transition, or surgery, or not having surgery. (K, MtF)

In addition to romantic and sexual relationships, majority of participants also spoke about the detrimental impact of waiting for SRS on their peer relationships and friendships. All youths expressed their need to keep some distance between themselves and their peers, due to their lacking the physical characteristics consistent with their affirmed gender. Moreover, many participants expressed worries about fitting in with peers and difficulties with making friends. One female-to-male participant pointed out:

Whenever I'm around other guys, I feel intimidated by them and less than them, and it is hard for me to make guy friends, because I feel like...I don't fully fit in with them, because they have everything that I want. And like if they like, you know, wanna go hangout, I mean, I have to worry if you know, if they're just gonna like, if they wanna go skinny dipping or something you know... you have to worry about that, and just that...you don't feel fully comfortable around your friends and stuff. (T, MtF)

Discussion

Limited research has focused on the assessment process of SRS readiness for transgendered adolescents. The aim of our study was to better understand attitudes of transgendered adolescents towards the use of age of majority as a criterion for SRS readiness and the assessment process overall. Thematic content analyses of our focus group transcript revealed two categories of themes in the discussion: attitudes toward the current assessment process and the effects of waiting for SRS.

Attitudes toward current assessment process

With respect to attitudes toward the current assessment process, three themes emerged from our analyses: (1) readiness should be determined on a case-by-case basis, (2) sixteen is an acceptable minimum age for undergoing SRS, and (3) the comprehensiveness of the assessment process is both beneficial and detrimental.

Participant's suggestion for case-by-case determination of SRS readiness is consistent with the guidelines stipulated by the World Professional Association for Transgendered Health (WPATH) (Coleman, 2014). Most youths in the focus group

agreed that individuals psychologically and physically mature at different rates and therefore may be ready for SRS at different ages.

It is interesting to contrast SRS with elective plastic surgery in youths. The rate for elective plastic surgery, such as rhinoplasty and chin augmentation, in youths has steadily risen over the past ten years (McGrath & Murkeji, 2000). Many of these youths undergo such surgeries under the age of nineteen. Prior to undergoing plastic surgery, surgeons would determine on a case-by-case basis, with age being one factor to consider, whether a particular patient is psychologically mature enough to give informed consent. It may be useful for clinicians assessing for SRS readiness to open a dialogue with those involved in performing elective plastic surgery for youths to gain a better understanding of their assessment procedures. Perhaps with a more detailed assessment protocol in place, clinicians may be more comfortable with assessing whether underage individuals are eligible for SRS, instead of refusing SRS based solely on age. The eligible adolescents will likely benefit from undergoing SRS at an earlier time given what we found in this study with respect to the negative effects of waiting for SRS.

Another theme apparent from the focus group discussion is to lower the age of majority to sixteen. The main justification that participants gave for this is that they believe at the age of sixteen, youths are physically developed enough to undergo surgery and are psychologically mature enough to consent to surgery. It appears that the participants would like to establish a new age of majority that reflects physical and psychological development, rather than cultural guidelines.

The last theme extracted from the focus group discussion was related to the comprehensiveness of the assessment process for SRS readiness. Participants viewed it as a double-edged sword that yields clear benefits and disadvantages for patients. Given that our assessments typically require multiple sessions over the span of months and involve a variety of tasks, such as paper-pencil questionnaires, clinical interview and gathering parent report, we anticipated the youths to express dissatisfaction with how painstaking the current assessment process is. However, we were surprised that participants recognized the utility of a detailed and prolonged assessment. Contradictory to stereotypes of adolescents being impulsive and short-sighted, transgender youths seem to appreciate why SRS readiness assessment are comprehensive and time-consuming.

Effects of Waiting for Surgery

The focus group discussion was as much about the SRS readiness assessment process as the effects of waiting for SRS, which can be grouped into those on emotional well-being, future planning and interpersonal relationships. These three themes regarding the effects of waiting for SRS are consistent with the current literature on the effects of gender dysphoria. For example, Cohen-Kettenis, Steensma, and De Vries (2011) concluded that transgender youths are more likely to develop depression, suicidality, anxiety, oppositional defiant disorders, school truancy and social withdrawal.

From the discussion, there appears to be a tendency to postpone life until SRS is completed. Participants spoke out about delaying travel plans, post-secondary education and romantic relationships until they undergo SRS. Through the lens of

Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development, it appears that these youths are purposefully stunting themselves as the various developmental stages until they have the physical characteristics consistent with their affirmed gender. This is worrisome given that successful resolution of these stages in a timely manner are associated with better psychological outcomes.

Limitations of the Study

In this study, participants consisted of transgender youths who were under our care, had basic level of familial support, and under the age of nineteen. Thus, the generalizability of our results to transgender youths who are not accessing health care services, supported by family or younger than nineteen years old is unknown. It is also possible that if the focus groups were conducted at countries where the age of majority is not nineteen, the results may have been different. Lastly, the groups were led by Dr. Wallace Wong, who was involved in the care of all of the participants. Having their psychologist as the group facilitator may have biased the responses of the participants.

Implications of this Study

Although this study has limitations, we believe that it can inform how the assessment process for SRS readiness may be improved. First, assessments should be conducted on a case-by-case basis rather than heavily relying on age of majority. Perhaps, a better indicator of SRS readiness is number of years living in congruence with the affirmed gender. It may be worthwhile to designate, based on empirical evidence, a specific number of years one has to live as his or her affirmed gender to bypass the age of majority and undergo SRS at a younger age. In addition, it may be worthwhile to agree on an age of majority for SRS across the globe that reflects what is known about developmental psychology. Lastly, given that waiting for SRS may lead a host of negative consequences, clinicians should carefully weigh the risks of delaying SRS when they assess for readiness.

Future Directions

More research efforts should be directed towards investigating and delineating the best practice for assessing SRS readiness. Furthermore, qualitative and quantitative studies examining the outcomes of those receiving SRS before and after reaching age of majority would illuminate the utility of strict adherence to age. Finally, conducting focus groups with populations other than underage transgender youths, such as health professionals involved in the care of transgender individuals, parents of transgender children, transgender adults that have completed SRS, will shed more light on how to improve the SRS readiness assessment process to best serve the transgender population.

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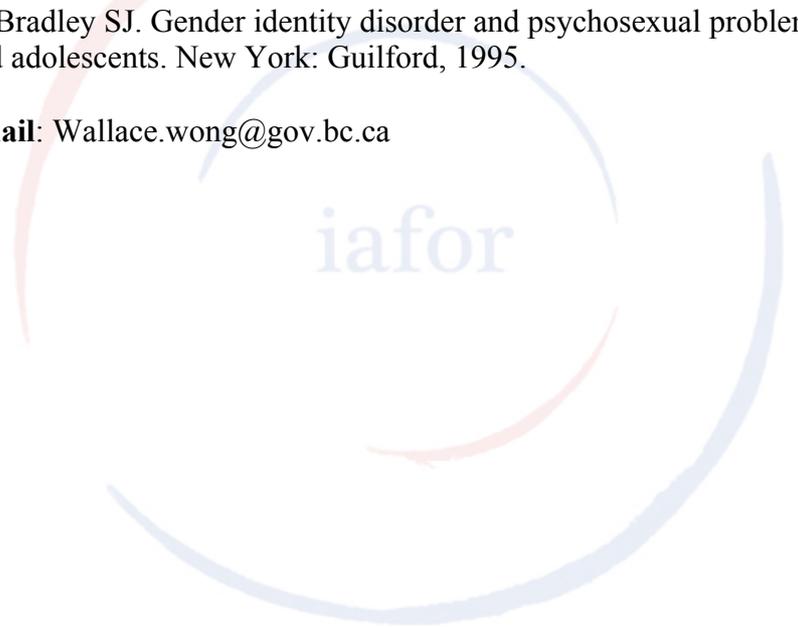
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Figure 1. The age of majority, which is one of the eligibility criteria for genital sex reassignment surgery according to WPATH's Standards of Care Version 7, varies regionally

Region	Age
Germany	No Clear Minimum Age Stated
Netherlands	No Clear Minimum Age Stated
UK	18
Canada- British Columbia	19
Canada- Quebec	18
Canada- Ontario	18
Spain	18
Belgium	18
Norway	18
Sweden	18
Denmark	21
Finland	20
Turkey	No Clear Minimum Age Stated
Ukraine	25
US	18
Argentina	18

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Appendix A- The criteria for genital sex reassignment surgery eligibility according to WPATH's Standards of Care Version 7

Criteria for hysterectomy and salpingo-oophorectomy in FtM patients and for orchiectomy in MtF patients:

1. Persistent, well-documented gender dysphoria;¹⁶
2. Capacity to make a fully informed decision and to consent for treatment;
3. Age of majority in a given country;
4. If significant medical or mental health concerns are present, they must be well controlled.
5. 12 continuous months of hormone therapy as appropriate to the patient's gender goals (unless hormones are not clinically indicated for the individual).

Criteria for metoidioplasty or phalloplasty in FtM patients and for vaginoplasty in MtF patients:

1. Persistent, well-documented gender dysphoria;
2. Capacity to make a fully informed decision and to consent for treatment;
3. Age of majority in a given country;
4. If significant medical or mental health concerns are present, they must be well controlled;
5. 12 continuous months of hormone therapy as appropriate to the patient's gender goals (unless hormones are not clinically indicated for the individual).
6. 12 continuous months of living in a gender role that is congruent with their gender identity.

Appendix B- Canada's Infant Act: Consent of infant to medical treatment

(1) In this section:

"health care" means anything that is done for a therapeutic, preventive, palliative, diagnostic, cosmetic or other health related purpose, and includes a course of health care;

"health care provider" includes a person licensed, certified or registered in British Columbia to provide health care.

(2) Subject to subsection (3), an infant may consent to health care whether or not that health care would, in the absence of consent, constitute a trespass to the infant's person, and if an infant provides that consent, the consent is effective and it is not necessary to obtain a consent to the health care from the infant's parent or guardian.

(3) A request for or consent, agreement or acquiescence to health care by an infant does not constitute consent to the health care for the purposes of subsection (2) unless the health care provider providing the health care

(a) has explained to the infant and has been satisfied that the infant understands the nature and consequences and the reasonably foreseeable benefits and risks of the health care, and

(b) has made reasonable efforts to determine and has concluded that the health care is in the infant's best interests.

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Asoke Buddhist Education In Thailand

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Abstract

This paper looks into the Buddhist community-based education in the Asoke Buddhist villages in Thailand. The Asoke Buddhist movement has been running its own schools for the last thirty years. Thousands of young people have been trained in these *samma sikkha* schools. Many of the young people subsequently stay in the Asoke groups and may send their own children to the Asoke schools as well.

Santi Asoke and the Asoke movement has been controversial since its emergence because of its harsh criticism of capitalism, consumerism and corruption in the mainstream Buddhist practices. Asoke movement administers several autonomous self-reliant villages in rural Thailand where it practices sustainable organic agriculture, sells vegetables, herbal shampoos and medicine in its own shops and has opened primary and secondary schools.

The Asoke movement promotes E.F. Schumacher's ideas about "Buddhist Economics", which often are translated into "sufficiency economy" but are better known as *bunniyom* in the Asoke group. *Bunniyom* refers to the spiritual merit (*bun*) that can be earned by producing and selling commodities on a fair price rather than on profit. Hence Asoke *bunniyom* goes against the traditional capitalism *thunniyom*. These values are inculcated to the Asoke students in the *samma sikkha* schools.

Keywords: Asoke, samma sikkha, bunniyom

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Introduction

Santi Asoke is a controversial Buddhist group based in Bangkok. It has several rural branches all over Thailand –the most important ones are Pathom Asoke in Nakhon Pathom, Sima Asoke in Nakhon Ratchasima, Sali Asoke in Nakhon Sawan, Sisa Asoke in Sisaket and Ratchathani Asoke in Nakhon Ratchasima. There are additional smaller villages like Lanna Asoke in Chiang Mai; Phu Pa Fa Nam in Chiang Rai and Hin Pa Fa Nam in Chaiyaphum. Alltogether there are 27 Asoke centres in Thailand. The villages concentrate in organic farming and production of herbal shampoos, detergents and medicine. The products are sold in their supermarkets in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Ubon Ratchathani and Sisaket. The Asoke group also runs primary, secondary and vocational schools in Bangkok and in the villages.

Asoke group is controversial due to its strict adherence to veganism and austere lifestyle. It emerged in the early 1970s as followers of a monk called Bodhiraksa, who openly criticised capitalism, consumerism, commodification of Buddhism and the lax practices of the mainstream sangha.¹ Bodhiraksa was forced to resign from the state sangha organisation (*mahatherasamakhom*) and the entire Asoke group is subsequently regarded as ‘outlawed’. The Asoke monks and nuns battled a court case in the early 1990s when they were accused for being ‘heretics’. Recent years they have been actively involved in political demonstrations on the side of the People’s Alliance for Democracy (PAD) or ‘yellow shirts’ and were in 2014 involved in the anti-government demonstrations that ultimately led to the military coup in May 2014. The Asoke students and teachers have actively participated in all these sit-ins camping for moths in downtown Bangkok. According to their own interpretation, the teachers have used these opportunities to teach politics and social issues to the students.

Asoke Buddhist Teachings

Asoke education is the Samma Sikkha (right studying) primary and secondary schools is entirely based on the Asoke group’s interpretation on basic Buddhist teachings. An overview on Asoke interpretation of basic tenets of Buddhism is needed before this paper can proceed towards describing the Asoke schools and values inculcated to the young students.

Asoke Buddhism emphasises the Four Noble Truths² as the absolute cornerstone of Buddhist teachings. An Asoke Buddhist is encouraged to interpret his personal suffering (*dukkha*) through the principles of the Four Noble Truths. On a practical level, this means that, in Asoke, people must search internally for the origins of their personal suffering (*samudya*) by reflecting on their own behaviour rather than placing blame on external forces. Because of these teachings all spiritual, cult-related activities are regarded as useless and even foolish as personal suffering is not caused by outside forces such as malevolent spirits (*phi*) or ghosts but rather by the action of persons themselves.

¹ Sanitsuda Ekachai “The man behind Santi Asoke” *Bangkok Post* 22.7.1988; reprinted in

² The truth about suffering; the origin of suffering; the cessation of suffering; and the path leading to the cessation of suffering. Goonewardene 196:143.

The second noble truth traces human suffering back to individual craving and greed which is responded to in the Asoke group with absolute anti-consumerism and anti-materialism. The purpose of this response lies in the long term perspective where a person reduces craving for little luxuries, new commodities and sensual pleasures. When living in poverty is presented as an ideal, the suffering caused by craving is easily reduced to the minimum. The third noble truth teaches that there is a way out of this suffering (*nirodha*) and anyone who wishes to find this path out of suffering should obviously carefully study the fourth noble truth that introduces the path out of suffering (*magga*). The fourth noble truth further elaborates the ideas of reducing suffering by introducing the Noble Eightfold Path.

The Noble Eightfold Path and the importance of the ‘right occupation’

The Noble Eightfold Path³ is regarded as the concrete method and the roadmap to follow in order to reduce individual suffering. The first step on this path is ‘right understanding’ (*samma ditthi*). With right understanding the Buddhist literature usually indicates that the root causes of suffering need to be understood. The real causes of human suffering, according to Buddhism, originate from the individual craving for more. As understanding is the first step on the Noble Eightfold Path, it is dictated that a person must actually already understand the importance of the three earlier Noble Truths. If the person still imagines that all his troubles and ‘bad luck’ are caused by outside forces, he cannot properly and correctly follow the Noble Eightfold Path but instead is doomed to go astray on the first step. The Asoke group emphasises the right understanding, and many supporters of the group emphasise that one should see the world as it is, with no delusion (*moha*). The ‘right understanding’ also refers to the understanding of *karma*, *dana*, rituals and the way to becoming an *arahan*.

The second step on the Noble Eightfold Path is ‘right thought’ or also translated as ‘right intention’ (*samma sankappa*). This in the Asoke and in wider Buddhist interpretation is often concretely translated as having a ‘right intention’. To have a ‘right intention’ as such is positive, even if the outcome is negative. Hence the idea of ‘good intentions’ is often repeated also in the Asoke circles. A person with good intentions is a ‘good person’ even if the outcome of his action might result in something negative and damaging. The other translation for the second step is ‘right thoughts’ meaning that one should not entertain any misunderstandings and misinterpretations in one’s mind but develop the ‘right thought’ about a particular situation. In this context, the famous Buddhist slogan on the ‘middle path’ is often mentioned. The concept of the ‘middle path’ tends to offer a noncommitted alternative to practise as anything one does can be seen as the ‘middle way.’ There is always a more extreme way to anything. In the Asoke interpretation, one extreme is life in luxurious consumerism; the other extreme would be torturing one’s mind, for instance, by living isolated in a cave. The ‘middle path’ means being a member of a group where a person can test his Buddhist practice on a daily basis when encountering other people and the materialistic world.

³ Right understanding; right thoughts; right speech; right actions; right livelihood; right effort; right mindfulness; right concentration. Goonewardene 1996:146.

The third step on the Noble Eightfold Path is ‘right speech’ (*samma vaca*). In the Asoke tradition this is usually interpreted as not lying and boasting. In the Asoke Buddhist version, polite speech is also very much appreciated. The way Bodhiraksa preaches is usually regarded as ‘speaking the truth.’ Hence it has become one step on the Noble Eightfold Path to speak the truth, criticising openly when there is something to be criticised and not avoiding the truth just for the sake of social harmony.

The fourth point of the Noble Eightfold Path is right action (*samma kammanta*), sometimes translated as ‘right conduct’ or ‘right behavior.’ This right action is entirely based on the right understanding and right speech. Hence one cannot jump from step to step as one cannot simply have ‘right action’ based on entirely wrong understanding and wrong intentions. Every step on the Noble Eightfold Path is equally important, and misunderstanding the first one or the second one will automatically lead to misunderstanding the rest of the teachings. A misunderstanding of the basic truths can only lead to a wrong action. The syncretistic elements within Buddhist practice are entirely rejected by the Asoke people. Wearing amulets, sprinkling holy water upon the Buddhists or participating in some other vernacular localised rituals appear simply a total waste of time and money for the Asoke people.

One of the most important and controversial points of the Noble Eightfold Path is the ‘right livelihood’ or ‘right occupation’ (*samma ajiva*). Basic Buddhist texts list occupations that are not recommended for practising Buddhists. Activities that cannot be practised are, for instance, any occupation that causes bloodshed. That would include both soldiers and butchers and also some other occupations where the risk of using violent means is imminent. Raising cattle might be problematic as the cattle is after all raised to be slaughtered at a later time. Selling alcohol is not acceptable for a Buddhist; meaning all the bars and restaurants should not be run by practising Buddhists. Trafficking slaves and women is not accepted in Buddhism, but ironically Thailand is rather notorious for the prostitution industry and as a centre of human trafficking of labour force from the rural areas and from the neighbouring countries. According to Thai research, the illegal economy has played a prominent role in the Thai national economy for decades.⁴

For the Asoke group, the recommendation of a ‘right occupation’ is very clear and simple to follow. Alcohol consumption is strictly banned, and as vegetarians they do not come in touch with dead meat and slaughtered animals. The mainstream Buddhism has more problems in interpreting these points as they seem impractical from the point of view of modern Thai economy, which relies on the tourism industry and on exports of chicken, fish and shrimp products to the world market. The fifth point in the Noble Eightfold Path is probably the clearest point for the Asoke followers and Asoke communities and villages. Asoke communities offer practitioners a very concrete way to follow these teachings.

The sixth point is ‘right effort’ or ‘right endeavour’ (*samma vayama*), which is somewhat more abstract. It encourages the practitioners to avoid evil and reject lies. It also encourages the practitioners to ‘know thyself’ and practise according to the persons’ individual abilities and capabilities and progress at their own pace. This is

⁴ Pasuk Phongpaichit, Sungsidh Piriyarangsarn and Nualnoi Treerat (1998) Guns, Girls, Gambling, Ganja. Thailand’s illegal economy and public policy.

done in the Asoke group in the sense that each individual follows a somewhat different path of practice. Some eat one meal a day, some eat two meals a day and some eat three meals a day. Some Asoke practitioners leave their worldly possessions and move into the temples either to be ordained or stay as temple residents. Others live outside the temple with their families, go to work and devote only their free time to the Asoke activities. The Asoke community is in this sense unequal as the Asoke followers are on different levels due to the austerity of their practice. This in the Asoke group is interpreted by some laypersons as a spiritual stratification into castes (*varna*) depending on one's level of practice.

The two last steps of the Noble Eightfold Path are connected with a peace of mind and an ability to concentrate. The seventh step (*samma sati*) is translated into English as 'right contemplation' or 'right mindfulness.' The eighth step (*samma samadhi*) is sometimes confusingly also translated as 'right contemplation' or 'right concentration.' The eighth step is often interpreted as right meditation, and hence this interpretation encourages the practice of meditation. The question, however, remains whether one can meditate if one has not followed the previous seven steps on the Noble Eightfold Path. Moreover, what is the benefit of meditating if the earlier steps have been neglected? Can a person who goes entirely against the right occupation still sit down and calm his mind to 'right concentration'?

The Asoke group emphasises mindfulness (*sati*) and many Asoke supporters state that their aim is to be more 'awake, alert, and aware' of their environment and surroundings. This partly explains the 'this-worldliness' of the Asoke group. An Asoke practitioner is expected to follow the news, the world events, the environmental disasters at home and abroad and discuss the impact of these developments on their own life in the Asoke community. The Asoke people, however, do not like to be regarded as *lokiya* (this-worldly) but rather as *lokuttara* (otherworldly). The practitioners are interested in worldly affairs, but they are not 'addicted' to the world; hence they regard themselves not to be *lokiya*. Nevertheless, an Asoke person should not remain ignorant of worldly reality. Asoke Buddhism is Buddhism with open eyes.⁵

Activist Buddhism

The Asoke group does not meditate in the traditional sense of the word. They reject the idea that sitting still in one place and closing one's eyes for twenty minutes a day would somehow be connected to the basic Buddhist teachings such as understanding the causes of suffering. Asoke people emphasise more the aspect of 'concentration' and thus their meditation is concentration in whatever they do whether it be eating, working or sleeping. Every action is carried out with careful concentration which is their meditation. This approach can be recognized as Zen Buddhism, even though the leader of the group, Bodhiraksa, has never had any personal links to the Japanese Zen Buddhist monks. Bodhiraksa's choice of method seems to be based on his own experience and practice.

⁵ Based on my observations and discussions in the Asoke community during the last twenty years.

Another Pali term that the Asoke practitioners cultivate is '*bhavana*.' *Bhavana* could also be translated as some type of 'meditation' but the more literal translation would be spiritual and mental development or cultivation. It is also translated as continuous action to be free from 'defilement' (*kilesa*). This does not mean meditation or contemplation in the same sense as '*samadhi*.' The term *bhavana* fits perfectly in the Asoke context as agriculture and cultivation are emphasised in the group as a concrete form of Buddhist practice. *Bhavana* thus 'gives fruit' as a result. By practising *bhavana* the Asoke people are in fact cultivating their spirits. The whole symbolism around the word *bhavana* refers to practical agriculture, growing crops and nourishing a harvest.

Aside from the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path as cornerstones of all Buddhist practice, the precepts (*sila*) are also emphasised. Usually all Asoke practitioners are expected to follow the Five Precepts. Considering that the precepts are not commands by higher spiritual authorities, the precepts should be understood more as recommendations. A person who wishes to be a Buddhist and live his life as a Buddhist should try and follow the five basic recommendations. Thus the best translation for the precepts would be that the person declares a commitment to avoid acting against these recommendations. The five precepts are not and should not be considered as a set of prohibitions.

The first precept emphasises the value of all life and hence recommends that a practising Buddhist avoid destruction of any forms of life. The recommendation includes both human and animal worlds. It even includes the plants, but as the plants are regarded to have fairly low levels of energy (*kandha*) they are not treated with quite the same level of reverence as humans and animals.

The first precept is closely linked to the Buddhist understanding of 'self.' The individual self (*atta*) is rejected in Buddhist teachings in favour of a more complex set of elements or aggregates of the self. These five aggregates or energies of self are the physical body (*rupanama*), feelings (*vedana*), awareness (*samjñā*), thoughts (*samskara*) and consciousness (*vijñāna*). When considering plants, they do possess 'matter' and a shape but are assumed to be quite low in terms of 'feelings' not to mention 'thoughts' or 'consciousness'. These five energies are the basis of all life, and they follow each other in successive order. All life is based on interaction between these five elements. These five energies are continuously taking shape and being born and reborn in another form in another physical body. These are the principles of impermanence (*anicca*); a self is impermanent, and clinging to this illusory self is a major cause of all suffering.⁶

In the Asoke group the first precept is taken very seriously. No life should be destroyed, no animals be eaten, no animals be killed. Insects and pest such as snakes and spiders are chased away; mosquitos are gently blown away if they decide to sit on one's arm. Spiderwebs are carefully moved away to avoid causing injuries to the spider itself. Cats and dogs are not catered to in the Asoke temples as this would be an

⁶ The terms and translations of the basic teachings here are based on basic general textbooks on world religions such as Colledge, Ray (1999) *Mastering World Religions*. Macmillan; and Nyanatiloka's *Buddhist Dictionary* (2004).

interference in their lives. To feed a dog or cat is to make the animal dependent on human beings and lead possibly to its no longer being able to survive on its own.

When the importance of the first precept is correctly understood, and the person has become fully capable of strictly following the first precept, the following precepts will have become very much easier to follow. Using intoxicants is unthinkable in the Asoke circles. Standard practice dictates that meals are eaten before noon, and no Asoke person goes loitering in and about night entertainment establishments. The temptation to cheat and be unfaithful towards one's partner is also lessened when one does not visit bars and nightclubs. Some jealousies do arise among couples in the Asoke villages, but these have been handled within the community and with little public drama. Typical advice nuns give in cases like these is to face the truth and talk openly about the issues.

To take something that is not yours still happens in the Asoke centres - particularly among the students. I have seldom heard these problems occurring among the adults. Much of the property in the Asoke centres belongs to the temple and the foundations which maintain the temples; It has become public property, which everyone can use but not own individually as private property. The emphasis on anti-materialism and anti-consumerism also makes it less appealing for the Asoke people to engage in thievery among each other or otherwise by illegal means increase their private properties. The Asoke version of Buddhist economics or *bunniyom* (meritism) also runs contrary to capitalism, consumerism and greed.⁷ The Asoke group's recent emphasis on the corruption of Thai politicians should be contextualised in their passionately anti-capitalistic worldview. To be 'corrupted' is equal to being a thief.

The fourth precept is to avoid speaking in a harmful way towards or about others. It coincides with the third step on the Noble Eightfold Path (*samma vaca*) and encourages people to always tell the truth and speak with respect about the other people.

The prior five precepts are the basic recommendations for a practising Buddhist. The next five precepts give a more demanding set of recommendations further limiting consumerism and obsession with materialism. Many of the Asoke laypeople follow the eight precepts, meaning they do not eat anything after noon, they avoid dancing and joining in other types of entertainment, and they do not wear perfume or jewellery. The first sign of a new Asoke convert is that the person strips himself of all jewellery - Buddhist amulets, fancy golden watches and rings. With all these concrete methods of stripping down to basics, the individual craving is reduced, and in the long run suffering will be reduced.

The remaining two precepts are compulsory only for monks and nuns in the Asoke group. The ordained are not supposed to use luxurious, elevated seats and beds, and they are not permitted to deal with money. It is quite common in Thailand and elsewhere in Asia to sit on the floor, eat on the floor and sleep on the floor, hence the ninth precept is not very difficult to follow in any Asian culture.

⁷ See the Heikkila-Horn 2002 on *bunniyom*.

The tenth precept about not dealing with gold and silver – meaning money – has turned out to be rather difficult to observe in the modern Thai society. In the Asoke group it is an absolute rule, but in the outside Buddhist circles it is less strictly enforced. It is not unusual to see Thai Buddhist monks paying for a taxi ride or paying cash for a new computer programme in a shopping mall. Monks in Thailand do not usually have to pay for a bus ride or a train trip, but the generosity of the Thai state or private companies does not usually reach beyond that. In practice, a monk should have a layperson with him to pay the required money. This system is practised in Asoke where the monks and the nuns always travel with laypeople. Laypeople accompany them to hospitals or to opticians so the Asoke monks and nuns receive all the care they need without using money.

The five basic precepts or even the additional more demanding precepts are fairly easy to follow for a person living in the Asoke temples. They might be more demanding for those Asoke followers who live outside the temples and go out with their colleagues in the evenings or live in modern apartment houses with all the trappings of modern comfort and luxury.

The five precepts are paired with five positive actions that the person should do for further practice. The first precept does not only recommend that the person avoid destroying life, but the opposite is also emphasised, meaning the person should nurture and sustain life. This can most easily be done, for instance, with a small garden where the person can grow plants and practise living in harmony with nature. In accordance to the second precept, the person should give away things, be generous and with this practice learn not to be attached to material things. For the third precept, Asoke recommends brotherly and sisterly relations between genders. Asoke as such could be treated as one big family with the shared family name as discussed earlier.

To counteract speaking harmfully about the others means to speak positively about others and always remain polite. This is, of course, a general rule for good behaviour in any society and particularly emphasised in Thai society. In this context, the Asoke people practise among themselves by greeting each other with a polite ‘*wai*’ on all occasions and to thank each other with a *wai* when, for instance, sharing the food and receiving the food cart from another person in line.

A set of other Buddhist teachings are also discussed and well known in Asoke. The practical aspects offered to Asoke people as an introduction to the Asoke Buddhist practice give them the basic guidelines within which they operate and progress.

On Education in Thailand

Much has been written about educational standards in Thailand. Anne Booth (2003) points out that in the 1990s Thailand’s economic performance was singled out as weak among the other Southeast Asian and East Asian nations by a World Bank survey. Thailand stood out as having a rather low secondary school enrollment ratio for its level of income in the boom years of the 1990s.⁸ The poor level of education, especially among new entrants to the labour force, was creating serious economic problems. Due to the skills-shortage, Thailand found it difficult to move into medium

⁸ Booth 2003:173-175.

technology sectors, especially for export, and instead remained in labour-intensive manufacturing, such as garments and footwear, whereas less-developed neighbouring countries were competing with even lower salaries than Thailand.⁹

The education system has been up-graded since then, and officially, the Thai children are supposed to be granted a 12-year education. The discussion has moved from quantity to quality, and the Thai education system is trying to move away from the rote-learning tradition to encourage analytical and critical thinking.

Education in Theravada Buddhist countries has traditionally been the responsibility of the sangha. This changed particularly in the colonised countries, where often Christian missionaries took over the education supported by colonial authorities. Thailand escaped direct colonisation but was heavily influenced by Western advisers who pressured Thailand to modernise along the lines of neighbouring colonies. A Western-style education system was introduced to Thailand during the era of King Chulalongkorn at the turn of the last century.

Many Thai children still study in schools located in temple compounds, but they follow the Western-inspired curriculum. In the Asoke schools, the children study English, natural sciences and computer skills, but there is a strong emphasis on Buddhism and the traditional skills of the rural Thais.

Asoke Buddhist *samma sikkha* – the right study

The Asoke schools are called *samma sikkha* schools, with reference to the Noble Eightfold Path and its steps of Right Understanding (*samma ditthi*), Right Intention (*samma sankappa*) etc. The secondary schools were established more than 20 years ago, and at the moment, there are more than 500 students in the *samma sikkha* secondary schools. Ten years ago, primary schools and vocational schools were also opened.

All teachers are volunteers. Some of the teachers originate from outside schools and sometimes try to push the Asoke schools more into line with state schools. Many monks and nuns work as teachers in the Asoke schools, teaching everything from Buddhism to English and Mathematics.

The *samma sikkha* schools are in a constant process of change as new teachers join the schools wanting to reform them according to their personal visions. The children learn to become quite tough and are well-prepared to defend their rights and interests. The Asoke school children have regular meetings where they learn to discuss their problems, negotiate solutions to conflicts and take responsibility for their own behaviour and for that of their fellow students. This process is supported by the teachers.

Many students leave Asoke schools for various reasons. The ones who stay often stay on in the Asoke communities, even after graduating. Some join the vocational schools at the Asoke centres, some study at the Asoke ‘university’ (*mahalai wang ciwit*) or at the open universities like Ramkhamhaeng University. Very few students entirely

⁹ Booth 2003:181.

leave the community; it is more common to stay in the geographic and spiritual vicinity.

An Asoke school is a place for lay practitioners to show devotion (*siasala*), which is regarded as an important part of Asoke Buddhism. To donate money to the Asoke temples or foundations is not encouraged. Visitors who come for the first time are not allowed to donate any money until they have visited the temple seven times and understand the teachings of the temple. Working for the temple is valued more than any material contribution because work is regarded as spiritual practice.

The basic idea of Asoke education is a holistic approach in which theoretical knowledge goes together with practical skills such as gardening, cooking, cleaning, producing and selling goods, repairing cars and engines, sewing and nursing. The Asoke centres also train their own 'barefoot doctors' in cooperation with a hospital in the Northeast. The students are expected to immediately apply their learnt skills and put theories into practice. A slogan in the Asoke schools for many years has been 'learning by doing.' The students are taught some basic skills to support themselves as adults, often this means production of vegetarian food or herbal medicine, shampoos and detergents.

The education is mainly oriented towards rural children, and consequently, teaching the children to grow crops is of major importance. With these skills, each student can become an economically self-reliant, independent adult, who has at least some basic skills to support her- or himself and her or his family. Moral conduct is hence emphasised more than academic excellence.

The *samma sikkha* Santi Asoke was officially established in 1995, while the court case against Asoke monks and nuns was still pending. Before that the centre had been running a school in the informal education framework. With the 1995 decision, the Asoke school became an ordinary Thai state school, which had to fulfill the requirements of the Thai Ministry of Education. This meant in practical terms, for instance, that a picture of the royal family, a Thai flag, and a formal Buddhist shrine with a few Buddha images all needed to be exhibited on the premises. This was still the time when Asoke centres did not have a Buddha image present; hence the only Buddha images exhibited on the school premises were usually in the teachers' room. The permission to establish the secondary school in 1995 was given to a layperson representing the Thamma Santi Foundation. The curriculum was received from the Ministry of Education and needed to be carefully followed as the Ministry frequently sent inspectors to survey the school.

An important point in the founding was to emphasise that the school was to be free of charge. The ambitious purpose of the school was to produce 'students who will serve the community, society, country and all human beings.' The teachers need to 'have high morality,' work as volunteers and have at least a Bachelor's degree. Students are to originate from 'less privileged families, or have problems due (*sic*) the language and culture,' which would seem to indicate that the school is willing to accept children from minority communities. On the other hand, the rules state that the students must have Thai nationality, so migrant children would not be able to study

there.¹⁰

All teachers work as volunteers, but they are provided with basic necessities, such as clothes and medicine by the Thamma Santi Foundation.

The school is a boarding school and children stay there over the school terms. They need to strictly follow the Asoke rules: only vegetarian food, no snacks between meals and wake up at 4:40 am, go to sleep by 9 pm with no naps between 4:40 am and 6 pm. Also, the students must attend a student meeting once a week and they must take part in daily activities. The students are allowed to possess three school uniforms and two other sets of clothes, eating utensils, a torchlight, a sleeping bag, a mat and a mosquito net. No valuables like jewelry, watches, cameras or radios are allowed.

The Santi Asoke school has been run according to these principles ever since. It offers six secondary school classes with the compulsory state curriculum of Thai, English, Maths, Science and other subjects. Of all the Asoke schools the Santi Asoke branch is likely the most academic one as there is a wider choice of teachers. The school is open to nearly anyone to come to teach. Basic academic requirements are needed, but otherwise no other background checks are made. Many people come to offer their teaching skills for free but tire quite quickly if they are not dedicated followers of the Asoke Buddhist teachings. Some of the Santi Asoke school graduates have been able to continue their studies at universities such as Chiang Mai, Ramkhamhaeng, Srinakharinwirot or Ubon Ratchathani universities. Some students have also continued their studies in the teachers' colleges, now renamed as Rajabhat Universities.

The philosophy of the *samma sikkha* Sisa Asoke school also makes references to 'right living,' and the main concentration is on morality and spirituality. Sisa Asoke school was a pioneer among the Asoke schools in trying to provide the students with clear vocational skills. Academic knowledge and sciences are not emphasised in the Sisa Asoke school.

There were over 200 students in Sisa Asoke in 2010. The Sisa Asoke school started as a weekend school in 1982 mainly for the children in neighbouring communities. In 1990, the community decided to set up their own education system to serve the community needs and to prevent brain-drain from the community.¹¹

According to Suwida, 40% of the education program is devoted to 'moral conduct and right living,' 35% to learning vocational skills and only 25% is devoted to the standard school curriculum on arts and science subjects. Suwida further points out that in fact 80% of the curriculum consists of 'application of integrated arts and sciences' in various work bases, and only 20% is devoted to academic studies.¹² Altogether there are 59 different work bases in Sisa Asoke, and my observation is that

¹⁰ Samma Sikkha Santi Asoke School; leaflet, nd.

¹¹ Suwida Saengsehanat and Bong L.C. (2010) Right Education – the Srisa Asoke Model (online article).

¹² Suwida and Bong 2010.

many of the work bases are entirely run by the children.¹³

There were attempts to teach English at a work base where students would work and the teacher would try to help them to explain what they were doing in English. This method was tested for a while but was not very efficient. Another problem in Sisa Asoke in terms of learning is that manual labour and labour in the work bases is preferred to theoretical studies. The children find it entertaining to work together on a project and the community desperately needs their input due to the labour shortage.

To an American visitor, who stayed in Sisa Asoke for three months, the village appeared as an ‘empire of children.’¹⁴ For instance, students tend to skip their English classes on a fairly regular basis. In 2006, the Sisa Asoke students were busy with ‘studying politics’ on the streets of Bangkok by participating in the demonstrations as a part of the Dharma Army. As a result of all this, the Sisa Asoke students had considerable problems with passing the national matriculation exams.

There is, however, little concentration on graduating and exams. *Samma sikkha* schools are a life-forming experience, and many students are perfectly happy to continue to live in Sisa Asoke or join another village with some of their schoolmates and start their own projects to support themselves. Students are not evaluated on the basis of their academic skills but more importantly on their moral standards – an evaluation made by the monks and the nuns. Their conduct in everyday activities in the work bases is assessed, and their ability to follow the precepts, refrain from the six vices and ability to cooperate with each other in ‘compassion’ and ‘loving kindness’ are emphasised.¹⁵

The Asoke people have also established a community at the Ubon Ratchathani University campus, where since 2007, some 20 Asoke people – monks and nuns included – teach Buddhism and Asoke lifestyle. Also some 30 Asoke laypeople have enrolled at Ubon Ratchathani University to study for Master’s and PhD degrees.¹⁶

Their theses tend to try to present the Asoke *bunniyom* economy as a form of the royalist ‘sufficiency economy’, which has become a catchword among the radical conservatives in the tumultuous years since Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra’s administration.¹⁷ I would, however, argue, that the Asoke *bunniyom* is more related to the spiritual and philosophical concepts related to the Hindu term *swaraj* – self-rule and self-determination also in economic issues.

¹³ The tight schedule for Sisa Asoke school presented in Heikkilä-Horn (1996:49) no longer applies. Asoke communities are under constant change.

¹⁴ Interview in Sisa Asoke March 2004.

¹⁵ Suwida and Bong 2010.

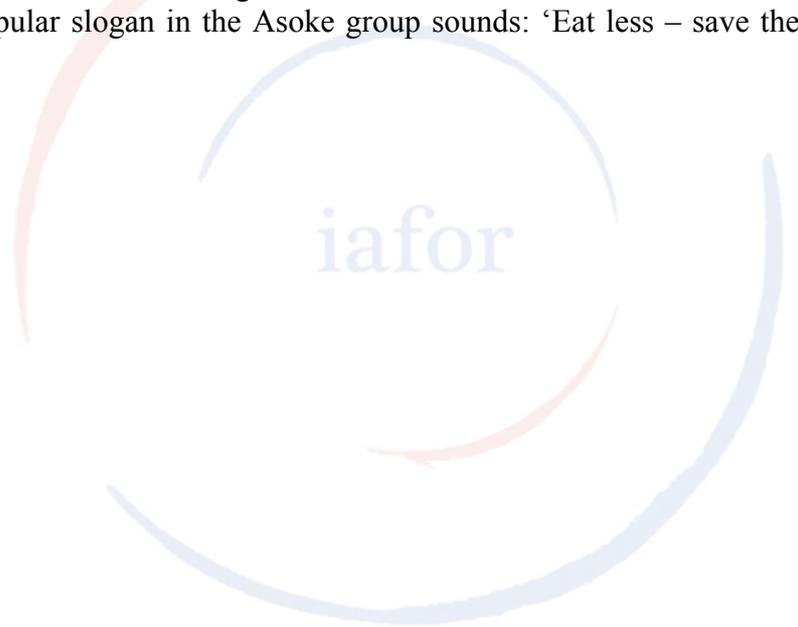
¹⁶ Interview with Dr. Rindharna in Santi Asoke 24.7.2011.

¹⁷ A good example is an unpublished paper titled ‘Sufficiency Economy as the Model of Thailand’s Community Development’ by Thamrong Sangsuriyachan, currently a PhD Candidate in Integral Development Studies at Ubon Ratchathani University.

Conclusion

Asoke education is strongly based on the Asoke Buddhist groups rather scriptural interpretation of basic Buddhist teachings. The Noble Eightfold Path is strongly emphasised, hence leading the followers to seek the ‘right understanding’ of social and economic conditions in Thailand. As a consequence of these considerations, the Asoke group tends to be more ‘politically engaged’ than the state authorities of Thailand generally prefer. Finding the ‘right occupation’ and ‘right livelihood’ to support themselves and their families and communities becomes an essential part of Asoke education.

The aim of Asoke education is to produce ‘graduates’ with strong Buddhist ethics and morals. In practical terms, the Asoke educational model trains underprivileged children from northeastern Thailand to become self-reliant to either practise organic agriculture or engage in small-scale cottage industries producing natural shampoos, medicine and other basic necessities. Much emphasis is also given to repairing and recycling commodities. The guiding principles of Asoke Buddhist ethics are modesty in economic terms and willingness to sacrifice for the benefit of the wider society. Hence a popular slogan in the Asoke group sounds: ‘Eat less – save the rest for the society.’

The logo for iafor (International Association for Faculty of Online Research) is centered on the page. It consists of the lowercase letters 'iafor' in a light blue, sans-serif font. The text is surrounded by two large, overlapping circular arcs. The upper arc is light blue and the lower arc is light red, both appearing as thin, glowing lines.

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An Idea of Justice in the Platonic Tradition of Russian Religious Philosophy

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Abstract

The Platonic tradition is very strong in the ontology and cosmology of Russian religious philosophy. The notion of the celestial and terrestrial hierarchies, of Sophia as the foundation and the final goal of mankind established in classical Greece were remarkably developed in the views of such Russian philosophers as Vladimir Solovyov, Fr. Sergei Bulgakov, and Fr. Paul Florensky.

The Greek theories of matter were developed in Russian Religious thought within the parameters of transfiguration. Anthropocentrism, rather than theocentrism or cosmocentrism, was seen as central in Russian religious tradition, and an idea of Justice manifested in man's choice was perceived as essential to the process of man's transfiguration.

The dialectic between man's reason and contemplation produces the form for the revelations of mystical perception. Just choice is seen as a focal point in the spiritual transition and the destiny of man. Man's spiritual self could be preserved and developed only with the divine foundation of life. The denial of God leads a person to disarray, to the loss of his spiritual center, to the destruction of his inner order, and finally, the death of his sacred self. Both Greek and Russian philosophers emphasize justice being essential in the foundation of an ideal benevolent state; though the last ones assert the necessity of the consistency of temporal law with the divine. The meaning of life cannot be justified otherwise than in connection with the presence of the divine both in man and in state.

Introduction

Geographically Russia lies half within Asia and half within Europe with the Ural Mountains running down her spine. Philosophically we might say that she contains two distinct essences, and taking the Platonic position that essences are immutable, we can more readily understand the contradictory nature of the Russian soul and mentality. The themes discussed here may shed some sunlight on this soul, to bring it to the Heraclitian dryness through philosophy.

The European world, and now today the Asian world, opens itself to new depths in the never-ending riches of Greek philosophical ideas. Greek wisdom permanently astounds us, so that we have the same feeling as our barbarian ancestors, the Goths and Huns when they arrived from their steppes, and the Celts from their forests, must have had to the Greco-Roman world of white carved columns. It was this Grecian world that conquered them forever through its luminosity, its knowledge, and the laws of its language.

In a sense we continue to be those 'barbarians' who learn from the ancient Hellenes, but now we do this along with our own development and new approaches. Like remote islanders we keep deciphering the sense of beautiful things left for us by the ships of an unknown great civilization. The further we go in our progress, the closer and clearer we see in the mirror of our consciousness the reflection of Sophia, She who is the wisdom of mankind.

Greek culture is very appealing to the Russian soul, since the very beginning of Russia is the result of two streams which crossed each other in the land of the ancient Slavs. The masculine stream of the Normans from the Baltic north met that of his magnificent Byzantine bride from the south. From Greek Byzantium, the carrier of Greek culture, Russia received its Christianity, and along with this the passionate love for the Greek world and Greek philosophy.

The common features embodied in Greek and Russian philosophies are reflected in the analogical perception and the expression of the reality. The intuitive feminine receives the divine world and immerses herself therein, and this listening for the Real, brought about by the mystical intuition, blends with the carefulness and high precision of the masculine idealistic representation of it.

The search for synthetic wholeness on all sides of being and in the human spirit itself is the inspiration for Greek and Russian religious philosophy. The intuitive penetration of reality, as well as the prophetic, have great importance for philosophy, though not replacing it. So theology in this context is seen as the feeding field for philosophy. This provides theology with the logical rational forms by which intuition and prophecy are refreshed.

Such world outlook influenced the attitude toward the theory of knowledge in Russian religious philosophy. The importance of gnoseology is not denied, but it is saturated in the Platonic and Neo-Platonic traditions. Epistemology is not exalted to the position, which it had in the West after Kant when it has been stated that there is no philosophy without epistemology. In Russian Religious Philosophy, however, that

which we may call the antinomian bastions of metaphysics stand with their walls intact while the mysteries of creation and physical manifestation remain.

Ontology of Neo-Platonism could be traced in the cosmology of S. Bulgakov who also applies it to the philosophy of consciousness. According to Bulgakov the Absolute is the abyss, the bottomless imperceptible background of the world with no bridge between the Absolute and the world. The presence or absence of the Absolute cannot be stated, nor can it be approached even by negative dialectic (that which is inherent to apophatic theology), since even rejection is a confirmation of nothingness. The Absolute creates the Divine in its transcendent and immanent nature. God steps out of the transcendence becoming God for man. Here is the beginning of the divine knowledge and the revelation of divine being to man. And it is in this descent, and further to the lower levels of the rational, that the apophatic and then the kataphatic appears. Then the need of myth appears as the intuition starts to penetrate the positive or effable poles of the dialectic.

The Greek mythological tradition and its religious ideology exist undivided in Neo-Platonism. Of course myth and dogma are formally separated in Russian religious philosophy, which nonetheless continues to soak itself in mythological steams. In the pre-theological world in which there are no hierarchical religious dogmas set out as absolute, philosophy replaces myth in its religious function. But religious contemplation, leading to intuitive vision, which may be considered to be a sort of exploration of the mythical, continues to play a very significant role in Russian Religious Philosophy.

The most complicated theological and philosophical problems in both philosophical traditions to be solved first in mystical visions, before receiving their logical form in philosophy. The tree of emblematic thought in contemporary myth is rooted in folk religions. Behind the beauty of exquisite forms, expressed in multicolored language is the breathing of the soul of a people with its mysteries and fairy tales. And the manifestation of the archetypal Sophia in her undivided beauty shines through all philosophical creations.

There is much to be admired in the beauties of the structure of Russian logic which does not have the precise nature of Western rationalism in its confirmation of the ultimate truths. Unlike the Western, Russian logic always retains the cloud of the imperceptible, the shine of the inexpressible behind its constructions. There IS the certainty in it, there is the confirmation, but only of the totality of the presence of soul in every part of the universe, and there is no privation of soul even in matter.

This unity of the rational and imperceptible is perhaps better expressed in literature and the arts rather than in philosophical structures. Thus there is a tendency in Russian theology to take on literary forms. Vladimir Solovyov and V. Ivanov are philosophers but they are also poets-symbolist of the Silver Age of Russian literature. But then too, Plato writes using dialogue in what we might call a theatrical style. Plotinus in Porphyry expresses himself with many a literary flourish. Myth appears as one of the forms in Plato, and Dionysian myth is the favorite of Ivanov, who was able to hear the winds of ancient Greece and to feel the terror antique in his veins.

Ancient polytheism and occultism (as part of the natural ability of man to penetrate behind the surface of phenomena) served as one of the sources of the immanent to the ancient Greeks. Their reflection in the epic, in myth, and fairy tale is closer to the spirit of Russian Religious Philosophy in this aspect than are modern mechanical rationalism and materialism. Ancient occultism and folk polytheism formed the real foundation of Plato's idealism, and this element came under beautiful speculative development in Russia.ⁱ

In Russian tradition, rational knowledge does not have the first and decisive role in the functioning of man in the universe. Rational knowledge is seen as only one function of our being, it is merely a thread in the process of life, and its sense, its goals, and its possibilities are defined within the larger picture of the relationship of man in the world as a whole. Russian ontologism would appear at times to be contradictory to Plato since it gives priority to that which is extant rather than to that, which exists as a potential in the realm of ideas. But this contradiction is illusionary since the absolute nature of the golden chain which binds all levels of being is ever apparent. Russian religious philosophy embraces all levels of the celestial and terrestrial hierarchy including knowledge about the world and our active being in the world.ⁱⁱ

Consciousness, especially in its approach to the divine is always antinomical. Antinomy is inherent to the very essence of *aletheia*, the truth revealed in the unconscious. The first antinomy is that what is transcendent (in whatever form of being it may exist) cannot by definition be immanent. But rational impossibility and contradiction does not annihilate holistic being. Plato stated that the nature of reason is such that it cannot make being completely immanent to itself, which is to say that there is an order of immanence which is not accessible to reason.

These limits to reason are reflected in the notion of antinomy. From one side God, the object of religious consciousness is transcendent to man and the world, and from another side, at the same moment, the Supreme Being enters the religious consciousness, becoming on entry the immanent potential of the lesser spheres. Both moments, the transcendent and the immanent, exist as poles and are given at once.

The dialogues of Plato are an example of the antinomical nature of our consciousness as well as the normality of it. It is apparent in the dialogues of Socrates as he struggles to indicate the being of the divine—which is not possible in logical terms. Apophatic theology, which gives place to the ineffable beyond theology itself, in a sense originated in this dilemma latent in Plato's Socrates. The very format of dialogue in itself gives us the notion that two different (sometimes opposite) visions of the same phenomenon reflect reality more truthfully than the one. Antinomy is born when reason understands that it is inadequate to the subject it tries to percept.

Antinomy is not a mistake in thinking, but it imposes a limit to the causes which bring essences into play.ⁱⁱⁱ The area of the religious is the region where antinomy insists on existence. The wave can't achieve sky no matter how hard the wind blows. Thus, words, definitions, and thoughts taken from the world of man are unable to contain the definitions of a divine mystery which we cannot approach. That which in the general terminology of philosophy is called the idea, and which has for the positivist only an abstract dialectical function, in mystical vision and the penetration of an

accompanying pathos, takes on the quality of a concrete being which has not only generic but also individual qualities.

Russian philosophy as expressed by its most capable and erudite representatives is deeply religious. At the same time we cannot say that theocentrism or cosmocentrism are significant features. The neo-Platonic tradition which discusses generation in terms of potential and which was developed by physics in the 20th Century as probability theory, has long held a fascination for the Russian mind.^{iv}

However, all aspects of being in their complexity and unity are investigated from the point of view of the place of man in the universe, and the importance of the intellect as a center of this wholeness. As Proclus mentions in respect to the Timaeus, "For the progression of things is nowhere without a medium, but exists according to a well ordered generation."^v Human destiny, the sense of being, potentiality, and the sense of human history are themes which are of primary interest to the Russians.

Both Russian and Greek philosophy are rooted in the womb of religious consciousness. It is philosophy of the human spirit where the religious quest provides the foundation for intellectual life. This is why the place of man in the universe, the soul of man as the battlefield of demonic and angelic forces, is a central theme.

The closeness of philosophy to life is another distinctive feature of both Russian and Greek philosophy. The unifying theme here is the historical destiny and the tendency of the philosopher to "try" the ideas on himself, to embrace them and to apply them to his own life. The most abstract ideas are not detached from events of life but embodied in collisions and encounters of people at every level. Thus the ideal benevolent state, though it lost its transcendent aspect during the Marxian materialist plunge, remained as an important base for the Russian people.

In this perception the factual, psychological, and ontological levels coexist and are connected vertically. Intuitive and psychological approaches coexist with the rational. There is no arrogant confidence in absolute knowledge of what is right, even though it seems so in some philosophical arguments. In the Russian tradition power and might exist alongside helplessness, tragedy is ever inherent in the noble ideal, romanticism and rationalism are bedfellows, and there is an indifference towards everyday needs along with a readiness to sacrifice life for abstract ideals. The sumptuous feast during plague and siege, and laughter slipping out through the misery of tears, are all features of the mystery of the Russian soul.

Conclusion

We might conclude by mentioning the fact that the Neo-Platonists were not well known outside of Latin translations in the Latin West until the 12th Century, while the Russian church maintained continual contact with the Greek. It was only during the brief and brilliant flare of the renaissance that the Greek spirit came to be known in Northern Europe, and this full color falling off from the Latinate dark ages was very soon eclipsed by the Puritan reformations.

As we move ever closer to a world state and to a universal megapolitic, our nationalistic quirks, religious exclusiveness and philosophical chauvinism begin to

fade away. The great foundations which have made the world what it is today must come under ever rigorous inspection. Some of the foundations must be demolished, but there are others that we cherish as we cherish life itself and which persist through the rise and fall of all empires, even as they rise and fall today.

ⁱ Bulgakov in his work *Unfading Light*, sees as the great achievement of occultism its closeness to a poetic perception of nature. As he puts it, “The world is the great hierarchy of ideal entities, ideal organisms. The perception of universal soul (of the Divine Sophia) in every part of the ‘dead world’ is the great achievement of occultism.”

ⁱⁱ The image of the golden chain is symbolic of the divine presence which binds the entire universe together. It is not a chain which hangs from the heavens to earth like a Jacob’s ladder, it is circular, in the nature of a necklace.

ⁱⁱⁱ The various causes such as the formal or efficient cause and the final cause, as well as the material cause, the connective and the perfective, are seen by Proclus to be competitive. Raymundo Lull goes even further and gives causes an appetitive mode which rather leads to meditations of an evolutionary nature in which the only fittest survive. The fittest, it might be added, are not necessarily the best.

^{iv} We might mention in this respect particularly the exegesis of the *Timaeus* by Proclus in which much thought is given to the nature of the potential vis a vis the consideration of the nature of causes.

^v Ibid, Vol. 1, p. 423.

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Purity and Equanimity – The Mandala of Zen Rock Garden

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Abstract

This paper discusses the ultimate essence of realization in Buddhism as the nature of purity and great equanimity. To illustrate this, the Zen rock garden is revealed like a Zen *Koan*, a case study to discern into the essence. The example used here is the *karesansui* (dry landscape) or rock garden in the Ryoanji Temple in Kyoto.

Made up of sand, rock and moss, the rock garden invites direct contemplation from the observers. Scholars, artists and Buddhists etc. have made numerous investigation on this garden to answer the *koan* and different interpretations have been received. Now the Zen rock garden is looked upon as a mandala that bears the meaning to hold the essence of all phenomena. This essence has a technical term called *dharmata*, a Sanskrit word to mean the nature of phenomena which is also the nature of *dharmadhatu*, another Sanskrit word to mean the ultimate universe of Buddhism that contains all (all universes in n-dimensional time and n-dimensional space, all land in samsara and nirvana). The attributes of the *dharmadhatu* can be divided into the form and form-less aspects. There is an aspect of emptiness, a space-like aspect to allow all different manifestation, and an aspect of manifestation, a powerful aspect of vitality to allow things to appear. This aspect of emptiness has the quality of purity as it is free from discrimination and conceptuality while the aspect of manifestation has the quality of great equanimity as vitality is prevalent everywhere in the *dharmadhatu*, in all universes.

Keywords: Buddha nature (Tathagatagarbha), Zen, five aggregates, emptiness, dhamata, dharmadhatu

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The rock garden in a Japanese Zen temple is actually a Zen *koan* – a case study for learners of Zen Buddhism for their experience of realization or even enlightenment. Zen as a meditative training is to see the clarity of the mind so as to realize Buddha nature.

Introducing Ryoanji

Queen Elizabeth of the United Kingdom visited a garden in her 1975 Japan tour. That was Ryoanji Temple (Figure 1) in Kyoto built in 1450. The garden is a rectangle of 248 square meters. Fifteen stones of different sizes were carefully composed in five groups: one group of three stones, two groups of three and two groups of two stones. These are laid on a ground of white gravel, neatly ploughed by the monks each day. The only green plants in the garden is some moss around the stones. This is considered as one of the finest examples of *Karesansui* – dry landscape with its three basic elements of gravel, stones and moss.

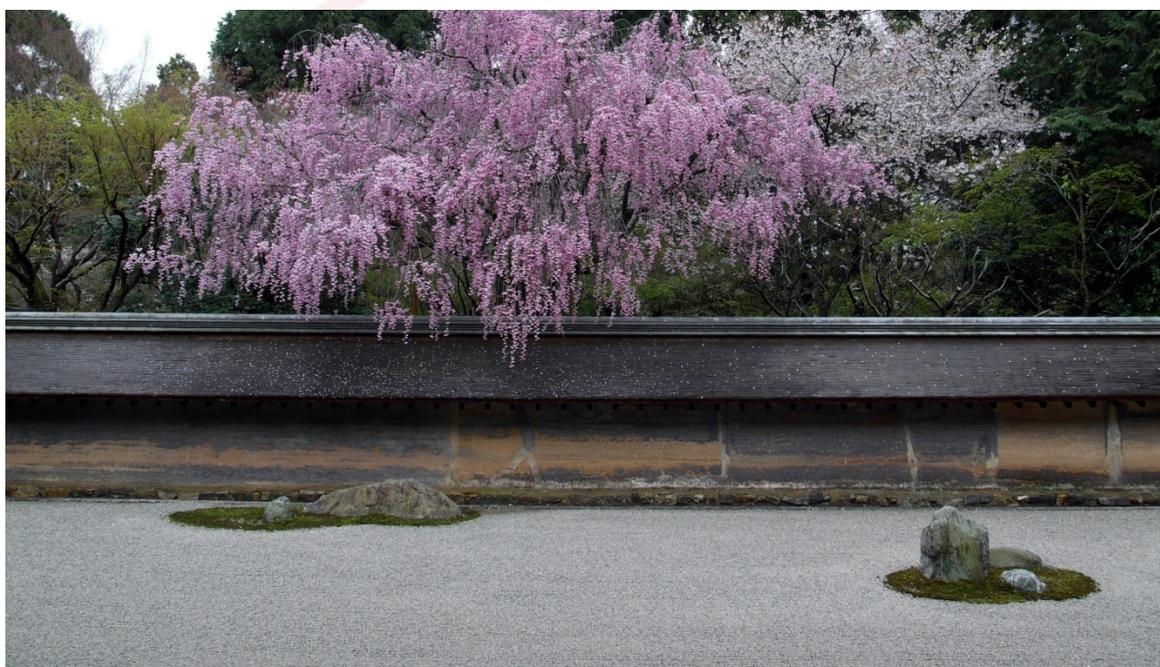


Figure 1: Ryoanji Temple, Kyoto

The garden had been designed and positioned to be viewed on lotus seat posture on the verandah of the *hojo* – the residence of the abbot. On examination of the stones, one will discover that the entire composition of the fifteen stones cannot be seen at the same time from the verandah. Only fourteen stones are visible from any part of the verandah. However, it is said that only when one attains enlightenment would the complete composition of fifteen stones be revealed.

Inspired by Ryoanji

The American artist John Cage who had visited Ryoanji in 1962 created visual and audio works of Ryoanji (figure 2) in various forms to be described as “perfect symmetry of the garden”, maximum insight with the least means and pure yet unpredictable space in meditation. This can be seen as trying to align with the Zen spirit of the place.

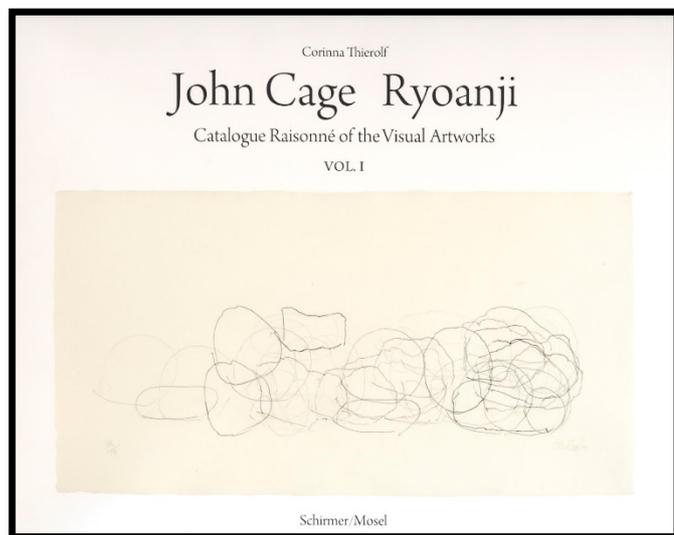


Figure 2 : John Cage on Ryoanji

Another artist, Sarkis, made an exhibition of paintings that appear as soothing waves which is an interpretation of Cage’s music on Ryoanji in long horizontal scrolls of watercolor. Furthermore, two great musicians, Kudsi Erguner (*ney*) and Jean-Francois Lagrost (*shakuhachi*) were inspired to make a musical interpretation of Sarkis’ work using the latter as their music score.

Scientific analysis

Besides artistic interpretations, there are also scientific analysis of the Zen garden. Neuroscience researchers, Tonder and Lyons, from Kyoto University suggested that there are hidden branched trunks in the empty space between the stone groups to join into the main trunk at the seat of the abbot.

Quoted from Wikipedia, Garden historian Gunter Nitschke said: "The garden at Ryōan-ji does not symbolize anything, or more precisely, to avoid any misunderstanding, the garden of Ryōan-ji does not symbolize, nor does it have the value of reproducing a natural beauty that one can find in the real or mythical world. I consider it to be an abstract composition of "natural" objects in space, a composition whose function is to incite meditation."

The Zen perception and the Mandala

What one would react to a phenomenon can be understood in this *Zen koan*. At that time there was wind blowing on the flag. One monk said: the wind moves. Another monk said: the flag moves. The sixth patriarch of Zen (in China), Hui-Neng said: Not the wind moves. Nor does the flag. It is the mind of you passionate ones that moves.

The way to understand how Zen perceives things can be revealed through the mandala. The mandala in Buddhism can appear in various forms. One is the sand mandala made of colorful sand created and destructed in Tibetan Buddhist rituals. Another is a physical form of temple or *stupa* in which a good example is the Borobudur found in Indonesia. This is like a stepped pyramid with the size of a football field and filled up with wall murals and small stupas with Buddha statue inside. Also, the Samye monastery in Tibet is designed and constructed as a symbolic representation of the ultimate universe, the *Dharmadhatu*. Then, tangkas showing images of deities are mandalas, too. The Moji-mandala Gohonzon in the Nichiren sect is actually made up of words ...

In spite of its diversity, we can search for the common meaning in these forms of mandala. Mipham explains the meaning of the Sanskrit mandala is “the ground that holds essential qualities.” So let us look at Ryoanji as another form of mandala to reveal its essence.

Essence of our conventional world

The five groups of stones can correspond to the five aggregates (*skandha*) – form, sensation, perception, mental formation and consciousness. These are actually the sequential process of human cognition on things. Form refers to the object which can be a physical form, sound, odour, taste, touch or intellectual thought. When it comes to contact with the mind, it is called sensation. What is it? The mind starts to enquire and recognize as the process of perception. Then in mental formation a knowledge of the object is formed in the mind. What should I do with it? The decision is made in the mind as one decides the response to the object. This process of consciousness completes the whole sequence of cognition.

The co-existence of the stones and moss corresponds to our convention of non-living and living things as well as their inter-dependence.

Besides the stones and moss there is the white gravel which is carefully ploughed each day. The white gravel does not bear any fixed shape with an indeterminate form. They just take on any form that is ploughed by the monks. As such it corresponds to the Buddhist meaning of emptiness – the indeterminate aspect of things. Yet forms will result through the contact and action with the environmental conditions. The white gravel is part of the composition of the garden and its function is to locate the stones in fixed location. This is precisely the function of emptiness. Like the distance between two walls is determined by the space in between. Or like the duration of silence in between two musical notes controls its tempo.

Further insight reveals the non-separateness of form and emptiness. The Heart Sutra says: “They should correctly view those five aggregates also as empty of inherent

existence. Form is emptiness; emptiness is form. Emptiness is not other than form; form is not other than emptiness.” This means form and emptiness are just two parts of the single phenomenon “form-emptiness” or “manifestation-emptiness” like the palm and back of our hand.

We can further examine the hidden basis of this phenomenon.

The Ultimate Essence

In our conventional world, we can categorize the qualities of things into three aspects: application, appearances (characteristics) and nature. Like water, to float a boat is its application, wetness and colourless is its appearance. When we come to nature, we will always talk of qualities that are in fact either application or appearance. In this way, we come to the conclusion that its nature is emptiness. This can be tried on all other things and will arrive at the same result of empty nature. Or we can call this the nature of things – *dharmata*.

The most basic meaning in application is the appearance of things. When things can appear in this world, we see this as vitality and brings forth life. We call this the aspect of manifestation.

Then for an appearance to exist, that thing must be able to be perceived and one must have the quality to perceive it. This power of things to distinguish and to be distinguished is called the aspect of perception. Then things to change and to bring forth new things, there is the aspect of emptiness. These three aspects – manifestation, perception and emptiness – correspond to the application, appearance and nature in the ultimate universe, the *dharmadhatu*. Or we can say these three aspects are prevalent in the *dharmadhatu* – all the different worlds for humans, non-humans and Buddhas. In the Ryoanji, these three correspond to the moss, the stones and the gravel.

In the conventional world the three aspects, application, appearance and nature, are often combined with conceptuality and notions. Like that we write on a table but not on a chair usually. However in the *dharmadhatu*, these three aspects, manifestation perception and emptiness, just exist naturally and prevalently without any conceptuality nor even intentional thoughts. To stress that everyone can have this quality, we say everyone has Buddha nature. To be able to experience these aspects, we say this is the wisdom of *tathagatagarbha*, the inner self-realization wisdom of the Buddha.

Concluding remarks: Purity and equanimity

In the experience in our conventional world, we call this the state of consciousness when the five aggregates are the physical and mental activities of our mundane world though non-separate from empty nature. In the ultimate free from conceptuality, the three aspects objectively and prevalently exist. We call this the state of wisdom.

To understand this two states, the example used by Master Tam Shek Wing is the image on the TV screen. The images analogizes the state of wisdom and the TV screen analogizes the state of wisdom.

Because of the state of wisdom is naturally free from conceptuality, we realize this as purity. Because the state of wisdom is prevalent and always exist with the state of wisdom no matter anywhere, we realize this as the great equanimity.

The state of wisdom uncontaminated by the state of consciousness is purity. The state of wisdom without discrimination on any state of consciousness is great equanimity.

Purity and equanimity is the ultimate state of experiences and ascertainment attained by the Zen practitioners.



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Justice and the Cyberworld

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Abstract

In its widest sense, justice creates conditions that enable each member of the society to flourish. Justice directs individual to respect and promote rights of the individual in the world we live in.

Today, at one's fingertips, social interaction takes on a new dimension as time and space condense creating a reachable world. Yet, it is unclear whether all members of society communicate fairly in this Cyberworld. People who have learned to use the vast scopes on the Internet create an amazing variety of conversations and also build new online friendships. The question is, does this Cyberworld respect and promote the rights of the individual or it create injustice?

This paper explores the impact of the so-called Cyberworld. Significant questions are delved into this article namely: (1) What are the causes of so much interest on the internet? (2) What is Cyberspace? (3) How do men and women participate and interact within this Cyberworld significantly on Social Network Sites? (4) Why people use Social Networking sites? (5) Are there any security risks in Social Network sites? (6) What are the uses and gratification of Social Network sites? (7) How the Cyberworld can be an effective avenue in promoting justice in our society?

To promote justice this paper recommends uplift the dignity of the persons, media education and ethics in the Internet.

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Introduction

In its widest sense, justice creates conditions that enable each member of the society to flourish. Justice directs individual to respect and promote rights of the individual in the world we live in. Right now in our society, there is new emerging world, a new way of life, transforming our minds, institutions, companies that is the growing role of the Internet. In this new world of the internet, it flourish our society, anyone now could get an instant news from other countries, building new friendship which bridging the gap of distances and creating new accord among men. Furthermore, there is an extent of information of other cultures in the Internet and an increase of online education.

According to John Paul II “The Internet is certainly a new forum understood in the ancient Roman sense of that public space where politics and business were transacted, where religious duties were fulfilled where much of the social life of the city took place, and where the best and the worst of human nature was on display.” (John Paul II, 2002) The Internet is an avenue of communication that may bring to one’s fulfillment and build a just society. “This technology can be a means for solving human problems, promoting the integral development of the human persons, creating a world governed by justice and peace and love.” (John Paul II, 2002)

Cyberspace and Cyberworld

Zaliski reports that we really do not know how many more of those people are out there in cyberspace, the web is too big, too fluid (as cited in Babin, Zukowski, 2002, p.4). Beniger, (2003) indicates in his study, cyberspace continues to emerge, bottom up, its control also largely emergent from the social interactions of millions of independent individuals. (as cited p.60) Barlow explained in the Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace that it has no government, no moral right, no police; it has its own culture and disclosing ethics. (as cited Lipschultz, 2015)

In the cyberspace it creates a new space of ideas, a new world that separate to the real world. In this research, I will be using the term Cyberworld in relation to cyberspace. A cyberspace is a space of experience where people are connected. In this Cyberworld it creates a new world where night and day collides, joined together as it creates its own time in one continuum in cyberspace. Likewise, in the Cyberworld an individual could connect and express his freedom in a virtual world and a possibility of an intense interaction with other people. Moreover, a person can enters to the Cyberworld where anyone can be a part of this world, whatever your gender, race, status and nationality are accepted. It is universal Cyberworld that creates countless communities, build new online friendships, and promotes peace and justice. The Cyberworld creates private and public communication. Likewise, the Cyberworld is a place where people are part and generates a common world. Hence, the Cyberworld breaks boundaries among people and establish good connection among people and it is developing and unfolding world.

Impact of the Internet

The impact of the Internet is so immense in our society today. It has become a part of the lives of men; it enables men to participate in a global of exchange in solidarity and cooperation. The Internet has a massive information continues to overflow in all the ends of the earth. It is an overflowing of information, ideas and mutual exchange which leads to individual and group progress. The Internet is very helpful to eliminate literacy, it provides basic lesson and advance education. At present, there are many online education and Open University that offer distant learning courses.

The development of the Internet is accelerating and Tim O'Reilly of Reilly media coined the term Web 2.0 is a trend of creating websites that are more open, participatory, users interact through feedback. (as cited Goddard, Geesin, 2011, p. 64). Zimmer suggests Web 2.0 that anyone can use the new Internet technologies to create and share information, to interact within the communities and express oneself. (as cited, Eisenlauer, 2013, p.4).

The Internet is an avenue to build new relationships and also new mode of communication, which allows men to commune with others easily. It is also a venue of public forum. Ferdinand stated, it provide alternative explanations or narratives of public decision-making which differ from those found in the more traditional media can have an impact upon the political preferences of individuals, let alone groups to post information to catch public attention that previously would have been impossible. (As cited in Borgman et al., 2005, p. 32) At present, the Internet is a venue of public space to express public opinion and anyone is welcome to express his or her views.

There are many advantages and disadvantages when we use the Internet, it is use as an effective communication whether is for good ends or evil ends. An individual can ascend to heights of human genius and virtue, or plunge the depths of human degradation, while sitting alone at a keyboard and screen. (Ethics in communication par. 27, 2000). According to Ottmar, "the internet opens up new, hitherto nonexistent, ethical questions, insofar as we have to show anew the inevitability of the question of good and evil in a space which is entirely created and shaped by human beings." (As cited in Borgman et al., 2005, p.16).

The Internet plays also major contribution in the global economy it benefits different business companies, it boost employment, and it promotes healthy competition that serves their online customer with customer service satisfaction. John Paul II stated, "we must be grateful for the new technology which enables us to share information in vast man-made artificial memories, thus providing wide and instant access to the knowledge which is our human being heritage." (1990). Ferdinand mentioned, "the ability of the internet to provide more direct horizontal communication channels between individuals and groups, and in something much closer to real time." (As cited in Borgman et al., 2005, p. 32).

In some societies the Internet play a major role, they use the Internet system for the government offices, hospitals, energy supply in which the society improve. In this view, without the Internet system it might contribute the downfall of the societies growth.

All societies that has an access to the internet suffer for the moment form a kind of digital divide. (As cited in Borgman et al., 2005,p. 31) Some people could not enjoy complete access to the Internet due to the unavailability. According to the findings of the study of Lee, “economically rich persons have more chance to access the Internet, socially rich persons with strong ties more frequently use online communication, and as a result, they can build or maintain more cohesive friendships and connectedness to school than persons with lower sociability.” (2009) Another impact of prevalent is the offerings of commercial online services. It poses another problem if an individual needs to buy goods online, one must have credit card in order to transact business, to buy goods and services. This is another kind of injustice, an individual could not buy online without credit card and they are left behind in the Cyberworld.

Another kind of injustice is too much information and it comes without a guarantee. Some of the information is accurate, educational, trivial and worthless due to lack of gatekeepers. (Dominick, 2002). Online user is always at risk in getting information on the Internet. Another impact is on the injustice issue of sexual health among the adolescents, that the Internet provides information to them. The Internet may provide sexual health advices, it may be negative or positive information and there is a possibility it is inaccurate information. (Springate, & Omar, 2013).

As the virtual community grows on the Cyberworld, verbal attacks online through the different Social Networking Sites and even online discussion forum could hurt an individual. This kind of injustice is endemic in Cyberworld.

The Internet also increases of attraction of online user to use frequently of their time engaging in instant messaging, sending e-mail, online shopping, online chatting, online gaming and even cybersex which leads to Internet addiction. (Dominick, 2002).

Another kind of injustice, Berniger mentioned, “A growing problem in the cyberspace battles over the control of cyberspace have centered on the protection of free expression something that cannot be overvalued.” (2003).

Uses, Gratification of Social Networking Sites

Social Network Sites or SNSs is defined according to Boyd and Ellison, (2008) (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. (p. 211). The Social Networking Sites (SNSs) allow people to create a network of friends and creates relational community that linked with common interest. Social networking sites is a media convergence that anybody could connect to all media services in to one single solution. The attractiveness of social network sites has increased tremendously in the past years. Social network sites like Twitter, MySpace, Instagram, Facebook, specifically aim at building and maintaining social network. Everyone is welcome to join and new members have to register. The SNSs typically allow members to create an online profile containing self-descriptions, react to the profiles of other members, and connect with other members. Participants may use the sites to keep in touch with existing friends or to meet new people. Communications in the Cyberworld through

Social Network Sites have become a significant part of the people's lives. Social networking sites are the latest online communication tool and well liked by young people as well as adults. It allows the members to create a public personal profile and interact with people online.

Many questions are still left unanswered regarding what are its uses and gratification do they get on these SNSs. It is also important to study the nature of these social network sites in order to get an understanding of how these sites influence the young people.

According to Bazarova and Choi (2014) the result of their study “confirm that people pursue a different set of strategic goals and motivations in different communication forms on SNSs, with both visibility and target directedness affecting prevalent self-disclosure goals. As such, our findings reveal that self-disclosures in Facebook status updates, wall posts, and private messaging are motivated by different reward values.” (p.64). Boyd (2008) found, Facebook was designed to support distinct college networks.(p. 218). According to Suwannathachote and Tantrarungroj, there are many SNSs such as Delicious, Facebook and Twitter are popular platforms for academic purposes. (2012). According to Maqableh et al, research, “there was a significant impact of SNSs on students academic performance.” (2015). According to Suwannathachote and Tantrarungroj, research on using Facebook students group work collaboration findings showed a high percentage of use of Facebook use for collaborative work in the group project by using real time chat and sending personal instant messages to contact their group members. (2012). According to the latest research of Ch'ng, Twitter is another social network site with a short messaging service, the follower-followee network. (Ch'ng, 2015, p.33) The user has the freedom on whom he chooses to follow and who chooses to follow him and because of this style of communication this is considered as an effective social networking. The results of the research of Ch'ng, reveals the mapping of online social movement within the limited Twitter interface and service shows the instantaneous of events between individuals and communities that result a small world of network. This small world of network will be strengthened by real world interaction. (Ch'ng, 2015). Weller et al, mentioned twitter use “hashtags are unmoderated, user can introduce and use them and this results in possible doubts in meaning, spelling and on the other hand it promotes shared events, cultural expression and ongoing conversation.” (2014, p.6). Twitter promotes social connections and expanding social network ties. Another popular Social Networking sites is Instagram and was acquired by Facebook in late 2012. (Lipschultz, 2015). Instagram highlights the sharing of photos with your social network friends or users could share it publicly. Social Networking Sites are free, collaborative in connecting with online friends. It strengthens online friendships and it is an opportunity for learning, sharing knowledge and expertise in different colleges.

Security Risk of Social Networking Sites

Facebook online users have many risk, Eisenlauer mentioned “among of them the easy access to highly personal data, the dispersion of one's identity across fragmented online spaces, the threat of online surveillance as well as the possible exploitation on online social spaces by media corporations.” (2013, p.4). SNSs online members are also at risk when they socialize new friends online, which are strangers to them.

These strangers' online members may infer real life identity from their personal profile. YouTube allows users to upload their creative videos, connects to the world and builds many followers on a global scale. In recent study, there are some risk-taking in adolescents experience online, with the virtual audience may pressure the online user to imitate a variety of dangerous dares and behaviors for them to post online via YouTube. (Ahern, Sauer, Thacker, 2015).

Another risk that arises, that some online user are expressing inappropriate language when they make a comment on a video posted online. There were reports twenty-three incidents where Nottingham University Hospital staffs were found to have posted confidential medical information on SNSs. (2011, p.13). Additional risk behaviors in SNSs are the display references, like substance use and even sex. (Moreno, p. 566). This information is posted online, can be shared to the public. According to the study of Huang, et al (2014): related to adolescents' use of SNSs friendships were more likely to exist between students who had similar Facebook and MySpace use habits and between students similarly exposed to their friends' online displays of drinking and partying. If exposures indicate higher acceptance of risk behaviour norms, the results may suggest an affinity between students with similar normative perceptions of these risk behaviors. (2014, p.e57). Using Social Networking Sites are growing phenomena and many are addicted on using it. According to the study of Fujimori, et al (2015) reveals that an ambivalent attachment style predicts SNSs addiction. (p.1838). Instagram Privacy and Policy on storage processing "Instagram cannot ensure the security of any information you transmit to Instagram or guarantee that information on the Service may not be accessed, disclosed, altered, or destroyed." (2016). Instagram users are at risk in sharing their personal information data and uploaded photos.

Men and Women Interact in the Cyberworld through Social Networking Sites

Exactly at one click, social interaction takes on a new dimension as time and space condense creating a reachable world. Yet, it is unclear whether all members of society communicate similarly in this Cyberworld. In particular, how do men and women participate and interact within this communication mode? According to Babin and Zukowski, "there is the pleasure of surfing and playing, the internet is a great tracking game. Its ground is not forest but the computer screen, moving, glistening with bright colors and sounds. (Gospel and Cyberspace, 2002, p. 63) The World Wide Web is risking part out of the major adventure of our time. It is a space of knowing oneself at the same participating actively in an online group communication and it is free and universal. The Internet represents alternative future, "You have become a passenger on the space shuttle, my brother and may no police ever interfere with our travels." (Gospel and Cyberspace, 2002, p. 64).

The presence of the Cyberworld is a huge electronic landscape world containing so much information and multiple relationships. Benedict XVI stated: While the speed with which the new technologies have evolved in terms of their efficiency and reliability is rightly a source of wonder, their popularity with users should not surprise us, as they respond to a fundamental desire of people to communicate and to relate to each other. This desire for communication and friendship is rooted in our very nature as human beings and cannot be adequately understood as a response to technical innovations. (2009).

The Social Networking sites are popular where people want to share personal exchanges and creates a Cyberworld. At recent the interaction online is diverse, everyone can engage in any conversation with the help of fast wireless connections anywhere. “The social media has opened floodgates to self-disclosure of thoughts and feelings and experiences on the Internet” (Bazarova & Y. H. Choi, 2014, p. 653). According to Goddard and Geesin, the traditional term of user and producer, have become “prosumer”. Prosumers are both producers and consumers in the Social Networking sites, an online user could produce his own content, upload photos, videos at the same time an individual is a consumer of the website using it for entertainment, consuming information from friends and receiving public advertisement. (2011, p. 64-65). According to Hardy et al, their study has significant effect of online interaction, people are getting better at filtering out personally relevant information and are becoming more comfortable with chatting online.” (2005, p.84.) People do now intensifies their online interaction. According to Zeng and Wei, friendship develops through the online exchange of functional values as well as sharing of personal preferences and lifestyles (as cited, Zhou et al., 2016, p.70). There is a growing of formation of friendships in online settings, consumers become friends in online brand communities through frequent online interactions. (as cited, Zhou et al., 2016, p. 80). However, as the Social Network sites gains its popularity, there are some incidents that violated the dignity of the person, which is known Cyberbullying. According to Hinduja, Cyberbullying is willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers and cellphones and other electronic devices. (2014, p. 2). There are many methods of Cyberbullying: flaming, harassment, denigration, impersonation, cyberstalking, and sexting. (Cyberbullying: Bullying in the Digital Age, 2012, p.62-68).

Cyberworld an Effective Avenue in Promoting Justice in Our Society

The Cyberworld is too big, fluid and complex ever to be controlled. The intricacy of the Cyberworld, requires us to know our roles and shared responsibility among online users, producers and consumers. It is not only protecting ourselves but also to ensure that the Cyberworld contributes to our society’s justice, respect for human dignity, harmony and maintenance of moral standard. Otherwise, it can only be another avenue for the Cyberbullies, haters, fraud, violence and Internet addiction.

The fundamental ethical principle is “the human person and the human community are the end and measure of the use the media of social communication, communication should be by persons to integral human development of persons.” (Ethics in communications, 2000). Principle of social ethics like justice is always appropriate in the Cyberworld. There is a need to develop the attitude of self-discipline, conformity and respect the dignity of the human person so that justice will prevail on the Cyberworld. Respecting for others would play a key role in governing the use of the Cyberworld. The Cyberworld is a gift, to be able to know how to use it ethically, right choose of words and images shared online. A wonderful gift for human being, a Cyberworld that build friendships and harmony. An abundant gift as we receive this brilliant technology, we also share it to others. By exchanging information with other countries are fruitful and reciprocal. It becomes ethos; the Cyberworld communicating its own images and lived experience aspiration and ideals. We need respectful compliance and building correct relationship between the

producer of the website and online users. Cyberworld citizens must be prudent in posting information and messages. They should know their responsibility by producing accurate, insightful, engaging, honest and truthful information in Social Network sites. At the same time allow people to connect in the real world that will promote harmonious relationship and justice in the society.

Through Media Education will lead a better knowledge in understanding the Cyberworld. What is needed is to take the long road of forming public ethics and of media education in being a part of the Cyberworld and we carry on this in our society. Digital media an avenue of people around the world, to communicate and form relationships across national borders. (Bronwyn & Zenger, 2012, p.206).

By developing a curriculum of Media Education and incorporating it with the useful contribution Social Networking Sites in the classroom. We need to promote media education to be critical online. If the online users have lack of collective identity of the Cyberworld, it threatens the online users. There is a need to learn, to educate online users. It would help adequately to improve the situation by knowing the different roles of online producers, users and consumers. An online user has the power to mediate, looking meaning for an event posted online and sharing with his own words. The challenge to all online citizen to utilize their freedom with moderation and creativity within the roles that are assigned to them and fulfilment of the responsibilities entrusted to them. This will provide specific opportunities for discussion on social injustices online and in-depth study of media education.

Conclusion and Recommendation

In conclusion, the Cyberworld has been a great impact on people's lives but unfortunately there are many injustices raising concerns on social connectivity. An online environment that tolerates total freedom that manifests many social injustices namely: digital divide, lack of gatekeepers, online addiction. There are many risks display online that offers the possibilities of invasion of privacy, expose to the demonstration of the use of prohibited drugs, pornography and cyberbullying. The rise of dependency of online users that continuously use the information and social networking sites are progressively defenseless to the misuse of the Cyberworld.

Security risk in the Cyberworld cannot be easily removed but it could be control. By having Media Education in the classrooms at the same time using different Social Networking Sites will lead to an understanding the rights of privacy, and copyright laws, Terms and services. Media education is an important key role in responding and preventing cyberbullying. Social Networking Sites are topic-based network which are valuable for educational purposes by connecting, sharing, communicating are effective for peer learning.

In applying social ethical principle of justice, there is a need for reflection, discussion and dialogue among the international policy makers, professional communicators, ethicists, moralists, representative of the Cyberworld citizen.

All online users are obliged to use it in an informed, respectful and ethical way. There is a need to develop of international justice among nations in guaranteeing the

rights of privacy, enforcing and keeping the law of peace and security in the Cyberworld over criminals and terrorists.

The complexity of the Cyberworld, however, does not require giving up on justice. It means that there is a need to develop shared responsibility not only to all online users but also to ensure that the Cyberworld contributes to society's harmony, and the maintenance of moral standards and justice.



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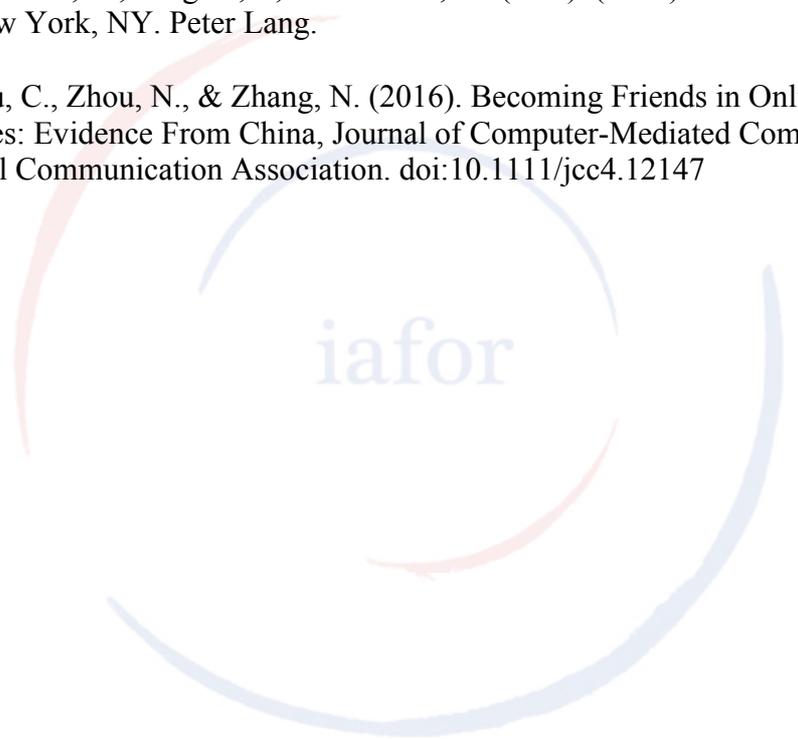
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***Historical Justice or the Dusk of the West?
Messianism and Catastrophism in the Inter-War Philosophical Thought***

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The Asian Conference on Ethics, Religion & Philosophy 2016
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

A quarter-century ago F. Fukuyama announced the end of history, understood in Hegelian terms as a process of a realization of the consciousness of freedom. His statement was immediately met with criticism (with the harshest one coming from S. P. Huntington), stating that further course of history, understood as a process of conflicts between civilizations, is inevitable and it does not bode well for the West (the post-Roman civilization). Many events that took place in the last 20 years indicate that it was Huntington and like-minded philosophers who were right.

From a today's perspective it is worth looking at philosophical concepts born in the inter-war period. Those concepts were an attempt to conceptualize history after the calamities that took place in the beginning of that century (especially the World War I- at the time called the World War- and the Bolshevik revolution, that nearly spread to the whole of Europe). Rather natural philosophical reaction to that were concepts representing various types of catastrophism, based on the thesis of the fragility of the Western civilization (O. Spengler, A. Toynbee and, in Poland, F. Koneczny). At the same time philosophical concepts alluding to philosophical messianism came into the picture.

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The events of the first two decades of the 20th century brought us: the Russo-Japanese war, which ended in the heavy defeat of the Russian navy in the battle of Tsushima, the first great defeat of Europe by Asia in centuries; the devastating First World War; and the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. All led to the rebirth of the European philosophy of history. However, this rebirth did not continue the optimism of the Enlightenment or, in different terms, the Hegelian philosophy of history, which assumed that in history, regardless of any turbulence, a certain process is carried out, which leads to the goal, the realization of historical justice. From the perspective of the cataclysm of war, such optimism seemed pitifully naive and indefensible. The icon of this new philosophy of history was famous two-volume (1918-1922) “Der Untergang des Abendlandes” (The Decline of the West) by Oswald Spengler. Arnold Toynbee, the distinguished British historian and pragmatic political advisor, was initially enchanted by the Spenglerian vision of history, but quickly became aware of certain limitations in Spengler's ideas. They derived from *apriorism*, or dogmatism.

As a matter of fact Spengler's concept was not only *aprioristic*, but also highly metaphysical. This is shown in its central concept, the concept of culture. In Spengler's view it is possible to determine when a particular culture is born, or comes to an end, but it is impossible to determine its goal. “A culture is born in the moment when a great soul awakens out of proto-spirituality (dem urseelenhaften Zustände) of ever-childish humanity and detaches itself, a form from the formless, a bounded and mortal thing from the boundless and enduring. It blooms on the soil of an exactly-definable landscape, to which plant-wise it remains bound. It dies when this soul has actualized the full sum of its possibilities in the shape of peoples, languages, dogmas, arts, states, sciences, and reverts into the proto-soul.”¹ He sees it in the image of man, as something exceptional and unique. Just as men in their lifetime constitute a peculiar duality in unity, being “one” consisting of the body and the soul, culture consists of an idea, which is “culture as a possibility” and its objectification is “culture as reality”. It emerges from something resembling Aristotle's pure potentiality, from some pre-cultural, thus prehistoric state of humanity. This means that it is not humanity that becomes the subject of history (it can be said that humanity does not have history at all) but cultures. And so every culture is unique and untranslatable to other cultures. Culture is therefore the biggest unity and it is not the product of men (because it is culture that creates the “cultured” man) but the environment in which men and women fulfil themselves. A man that becomes a part of this highest unity creates what its subsequent parts - religion, art, science (philosophy), and also nations and countries. The fact that cultures are essentially impervious, that they resemble Leibniz's monads which “do not have windows”, does not mean that it is impossible to transfer some elements or solutions from one culture to another, but the transferred elements undergo reinterpretation in the new culture and become filled with different content characteristics.²

¹Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, Bd. I, Muenchen 1923, p. 142.

²I believe that the Christian „domestication” of the Turkish (or Turkish-Arabic-Persian) “artifacts”, such as a saber, kontusz (type of outer garment, with long and loose sleeves, worn by the Polish nobility in XVII-XVIII century) or the accompanying belt (Slutsk belt) is a good illustration of Spengler's thesis.

Thus for Spengler culture is an organism, a unique spiritual and material singularity, so too is man - an individual. The consequence of such an understanding of culture is obvious - it is subject to the same laws that govern all organisms. So, first of all, cultures are not only born, but they also die: Spengler calculated the average lifespan of a culture at about 1,000 years. Cultures develop, but they also grow old. This aging of culture is nothing else but a kind of burning out, a weakening of its spirituality, which results in the disappearance of the characteristic tensions, which in turn are replaced by cool intellectualism. All forms of democracy, parliamentarianism, liberalism or political parties are political manifestations of old age. Thus, culture enters the phase of civilization. Spengler's distinction between culture and civilization is not dichotomous. Civilization is a stage of a culture (therefore it is a part of it), a stage of decline, the inevitable old age, its "twilight".

A catastrophe is not something inherently inevitable, it is - depending on what definition we decide to use - a sudden event, but not necessarily unexpected. Some of its early signs can thus be discerned. But catastrophe is not an inevitable event. Although the logic of events leading to it is inevitable, the onset of the catastrophe is not, as in a Greek tragedy. A death of an aging organism is not a catastrophe. Spengler is not - as he is commonly regarded - a philosophical catastrophist. His "twilight" signifies self-fulfilment (the closing of the day of life), as well as the gradual disappearance of spiritual forces. Catastrophic visions of history became particularly popular among Poles, who were treated exceptionally brutally by it. The concept of the plurality of civilizations, set out by Felix Koneczny in his writings from the 1930s, deserves special attention.³

Koneczny's basic thesis is this: it is not nations, neither the state nor humanity - which is simply a hypostasis ("a literary phantom") - but civilizations which are the subject of the historical process. There is therefore no universal civilization. Hence the universalism posited by the classical philosophy of history, in which humanity exists as a subject of history in an asynchronous fashion, was its primary error.

Koneczny distinguishes civilization from culture, but this distinction has nothing to do with the one that we find in the work of Oswald Spengler. However they did agree in two instances, namely, that cultures/civilizations are the subjects of history, and that they are closed monads. But these might be the only instances when they agreed with each other. The Polish historian accused Spengler of the fundamental error of *apriorism*; Koneczny considered himself the first significant historical and philosophical inductionist. A second fundamental accusation concerned the biologism of Spengler's concept of culture. Koneczny claims that although many civilizations went extinct, many of them survived, despite existing for millennia (the Chinese, the Brahmin or the Jewish civilizations).

³Koneczny Published his works only in Polish – although after World War II Anton Hilekman, a German professor teaching comparative civilizations and lecturer at the University of Mainz undertook an effort to popularize it. The major work of Koneczny "On the Plurality of Civilizations" was published in London in 1962 (with a foreword by Arnold Toynbee).

Two of Koneczny's concepts capture this complicated structure: Trilaw and Quincunx⁴. He derives Trilaw from the original ancestral system, so these are the three branches of private law (family law, property and inheritance law). Basic limits of civilization are set by the Quincunx. It concerns five main categories defining the social existence of people. They symbolize the unity of the spiritual and material civilization, which reflects the duality (and, at the same time, the unity) of man. So two of these categories relate to the spiritual realm of human social existence, two relate to the material realm, and the fifth combines these two spheres. Therefore Quincunx looks like this:

Goodness	Truth
Beauty	
Health	Prosperity

Goodness defines the sphere of morality; truth is the indicator of cognition (natural as well as supernatural - science and religion). Health defines the relationship of man with his own corporality. Prosperity is a category that describes most economic relationships, which not only result in a complex system of institutions but also in the ideas that are behind them. Beauty is the final category, which connects the spiritual and material (physical) side of social order. It is reflected in particular in art. These categories are mutually interrelated, so Quincunx is in fact a very complex network of institutions, values and ideas which define how civilizations function. As mentioned before, they are connected to the Trilaw system, thus the possibility of various configurations of the ideas and institutions is inexhaustible, and therefore the number of civilizations can be infinite. It is worth noting that the Trilaw system and the various institutions and ideas forming Quincunx may develop to various degrees, or even not form at all.

Koneczny strongly stresses that race does not influence the shape of civilization – different civilizations might exist within one race. Neither does language, but religion can have a significant impact.

The main component that distinguishes civilizations from one another is thought. “The diversity of human devices comes from the differences in human thought. [...] History is governed by abstracts.”⁵ The main problem is the relationship with god; it can be personal or collective. Thus civilizations can be divided into the personalistic and the collective. The personalistic civilizations are organisms, while the collective civilizations are mechanisms.⁶ An organism is understood here in a specific way. Koneczny understands the civilization organism as a whole, which is shaped in history as a result of conscious acts resulting from the best possible way of human mastery over time, which is historicism. Historicism is a particular way of understanding identity - individual and collective - through knowledge of the past and conscious acceptance of ancestral heritage, which ultimately allows an *a posteriori* thinking. Thus organism can be understood as diversity, activism or freedom, while for Koneczny mechanism is uniformity, passivity, coercion. In an organism there is

⁴Literally „five ounces”, five twelfths of a whole. By this Koneczny means a slanted cross, which is formed by a “fife” on a dice (this was also a term used by the Romans, to describe their plating method of fruit tree).

⁵ F. Koneczny, *O ład w historii*, Warszawa-Struga, 1991, p. 25.

⁶ This distinctions have an evaluative, not descriptive nature. This undermines Koneczny’s claim about creating a consequently inductionistic concept.

legal dualism, while in a mechanism there is monism. The point here is that some civilizations are based on only one law - private or public.

The number of “systems on which communal life is organized”, and therefore the amount of civilizations, can be infinite, although we can clearly distinguish 22 of them in history. Only 7 of them still exist, and 4 of them in particular (Latin, Byzantine, Jewish and Turanian) are the focus of Koneczny’s work.

It is easy to notice that the Latin civilization has a special place in this classification. It is individualistic, while the others are more or less collective. It is dominated by spiritual forces, rather than physical. For Koneczny, freedom is fulfilled only in Latin civilization. It is also the only one in which there is a clear distinction between private and public law. In this civilization, law derives from ethics. It is an “organism” not a “mechanism”. Only there does a consciousness of time exist, which leads to the emergence of a nation. Thus, for him, it is the only complete civilization.

What about the other three civilizations that are the focus of Koneczny's work? The Jewish civilization is sacral, and therefore it is "a system of collective life" directly resulting from “religious law”.⁷ In this civilization, therefore, law has its source in religion. The Turanian civilization has its origins in nomadic tribes of northeast Asia and as time passed it started to include eastern Slavs, represented by two cultures - Moscow (Russia), and the Cossack.

So where in Europe is the Byzantine civilization represented? Koneczny’s might surprise us – for him, the Germans are the representatives of this civilization. With time, Byzantine civilization succumbed to the more aggressive Turanian civilization, but it still exists in the West. It existed in Germany, to a smaller extent in Rhineland and a bigger in Prussia.

As the Bolshevik revolution was evidence of Russia representing the Turanian civilization, the taking of power by the Nazis was an evidence of Germany belonging to the Byzantine civilization.

Koneczny argued that “general history consists of the history of the relations between different civilizations. Those are subject to six fundamental laws: commensurability, expansion, inequality, impossibility of synthesis, negative effect of mixtures, facilitated inferiority. The highest of laws, the law of laws states: It is impossible to be civilized in two different ways.”⁸

The first of those laws is that every civilization remains stable as long as it is coherent, so the balance between all the conditions of organizing the “methods of social life” is retained. The second law states that every “living” civilization, thus a developing one, inevitably expands. A dialogue between civilizations is not possible, as it can only take place between cultures belonging to the same civilization. The third law - the law of inequality – is derived from the study of nature, as well as from historical induction. A lack of social inequality must therefore have devastating effects.

⁷ F. Koneczny, *Cywilizacja żydowska*, London 1974, p. 32.

⁸ F. Koneczny, *O ład w historii*, op. cit., p.66.

The next law states the impossibility of civilization synthesis. It is in fact a consequence of the first law (commensurability). So you cannot synthesize civilizations, because it is impossible to synthesize the fundamental values of which they are composed, or the ideas defining them. In particular, it is impossible to synthesize the Latin civilization, which is after all an organism, with any other, because all the others are mechanisms. Mixtures of civilizations are possible - as the fifth law says - but they are harmful. A mixed community such as that loses the prospect of further development of civilization. What does "facilitated inferiority", which is the sixth principle of law, mean? For Koneczny, it is a fact that lower civilizations, with less developed institutions and lacking the values of the Quincunx, and therefore less complicated internally, do not require great strength to maintain their internal cohesion, as opposed to a higher, more developed, civilization. The challenge of such civilizations therefore the former may spend more strength "outside".

The content of the final law might sound to a member of the Latin civilization like a warning bell because, when confronted with it, every other civilization uses "facilitated inferiority". Fortunately, these laws are not necessary (they do not apply to the "law of laws"), because history is not governed by necessity. Koneczny understands them as characteristic postulates, inductively derived from the history. For this reason, our historian and philosopher of history is particularly interested in the above mentioned 4 civilizations. It is in Europe, which is a ground for confrontation of the Turanian, Byzantine and Jewish civilizations, where the fate of the only complete civilization (the Latin one) will be decided.

It is easy to notice that the core of the inter-civilizational confrontation lies in Poland, or rather, that Poland could be the core. Jammed between the East and West, between the Turanian and Byzantine civilizations, it has a deeply rooted Jewish civilization within its borders. So it is up to the Polish culture to confront the three civilizations threatening the Latin world.

The problem is not only the fact that we are dealing with the expansion of three other civilizations on our land, but also in the fact that our own civilization has problems with its own cohesion. So if Poland is to fulfil its mission, and thus protect Latin Europe from its impending disaster, it must return to the objectives (these objectives are largely determined by Catholicism) of Latin civilization.

As we remember, a mixture of civilizations is poisonous, so if Latin civilization is to survive, it must get rid of alien ideas and institutions and come back to the core values by which it had been shaped.

After the breakup of the former communist world, which was initiated by Poland (or rather a section of the Poles) in 1989, so at the end of the world of bifurcated politics, certain questions of the philosophy of history, which in the second half of the 20th century was considered unfashionable, returned to theoretical discussions, with three key questions.

The first question was: what really happened and what point did humanity reach in its history? The second one was: how did it happen? And the third: what is awaiting us?

In the early summer of 1989, in the 16th issue of the American quarterly “The National Interest” an article by a previously unknown author - Francis Fukuyama – was published. It was provocatively titled ‘The End of History?’. The author made an unexpected attempt to update the Hegelian philosophy of the universal human history. Analyzing Hegel's thought through the prism of its interpretation conducted 50 years earlier by Alexander Kojève, in this essay he came to the conclusion that the end of the history announced by the author of *The Phenomenology of the Spirit* is taking place now. Therefore Hegel was not wrong, but premature. In other words, according to Fukuyama, history is (or rather was) a process of the emergence of subsequent, alternating ideas of liberty, which is coming to an end before our eyes. For Fukuyama there is only one ideology, without any alternatives, remaining on the battlefield of history. Hegel announced the end of history too hastily, because, firstly, he underestimated the liberal discourse. He simply rejected the foundation of liberalism - atomism. He was also unable to predict the ideologies that were still to arise - communism (first) and fascism (subsequently). While in the nineteenth century communism did seem like a strong competitor to liberalism, the twentieth century showed its practical and theoretical appeal in all its might. After World War I fascism emerged, simultaneously as an ideology and political practice. The world of liberal democracy started to shrink. Although fascism as an alternative to liberalism ended in the ruins of Reichskanzlei, after World War II the world under the rule of communism became substantially bigger. But here, in front of our eyes, says Fukuyama, communism is rapidly exhausting the power of its attractiveness. So for the first time in history humanity found itself in a place where there were no alternative available ideas about freedom. Only the victorious liberal democracy remained on the battlefield, “the final form of human government”.⁹ This is the end of history. This means the end of armed conflict - the very essence of liberal democratic governments excludes war as a means of resolving disputes. On the other hand, the end of history also means the end of the cultural dynamics. So an overwhelming boredom awaits us. After the end of history “there will be neither art nor philosophy, just taking care of the museum of human history.”¹⁰

Fukuyama's article made a great impression. In the next three issues of “The National Interest” many polemical articles by known authors were published. That of S. P. Huntington was possibly the most interesting, and it certainly resulted in the most significant intellectual repercussions. Huntington drew particular attention to the fact that the fundamentally philosophical thesis about the end of history can have highly alarming practical effects. A premature celebration of ‘victory’ can render the politics of the countries with liberal democracy defenceless against threats.

In the summer of 1993 Huntington published an article entitled “The Clash of Civilizations?” in “Foreign Affairs” (vol. 72, no 3). He developed his ideas and three years later they took shape in the form of a substantial book.¹¹

In the preface to that, Huntington stipulates that it is not his intention to write a scientific work in the field of social sciences. However, at its foundation there is an obvious philosophical view of history, which may sound familiar to the fans of F.

⁹ F. Fukuyama, *The End of History?*, p. 2.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 26.

¹¹ S. P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York, Simon & Schuster, 1996.

Koneczny: "The history of mankind is the history of civilizations."¹² Civilization is the highest stage of cultural identity. Thus a civilization is not the opposite of culture, nor is it a stage of culture, as Spengler saw it, but, as in Koneczny's view, is the culmination of cultures manifested at various levels of more or less local identities.

Although in today's world nation-states play a big role in international politics, the main boundaries along which conflicts have arisen are located between groups of countries forming different civilizations.

An affiliation with a particular civilization is decided by the fundamental cultural identity, therefore its philosophical assumptions, value systems, traditions, social relations and finally religion, which is its "central element". Thus religion is the "central element" of a civilization; it plays a major role in the process of the creation and the functioning of a civilization. Great civilizations that emerged in the history of the world usually had a great religion at their core. However, civilizations as closed cultural identities are alien to one other. This fundamental strangeness cannot be a source of inter-civilizational affinity; instead it produces reluctance, or in the worst case, hostility.

Huntington is not so much interested in history (and if he is, it is not distant history), but in the current state of world politics and its possible consequences. Before 1500 - he writes - clashes of civilizations were only sporadic, and later we had to deal with the pressure of one of them (Western) on the others. The 20th century brought a new phase in history, namely the multi-interaction phase, and in the late 20th century the politically bifurcated world of the Cold War has been replaced by a world of civilizational multi-polarity, with the primary axis of the civilizational divide running between the broadly defined East (primarily the Islamic and Chinese civilizations) and the West. Unfortunately, the civilizational powers of the West grow weaker.

"The history of every civilization comes to an end, sometimes more than once."¹³ This is not a death of an old organism, as it was for Spengler. The end of a civilization may have different causes and the time that civilizations exist may vary. What threatens the West in the face of the confrontation with the East is the gradual loss of internal identity. Thus the West has to undergo a moral revival and focus on the values fundamental for its identity: Christianity, pluralism of views and ideas, individualism and the rule of the law.

Looking at those four 20th century attempts to revive the idea of the end of history from the perspective of nearly a century (Spengler, Koneczny) and quarter-century (Fukuyama and Huntington) we can say that two of them - Spengler's and Fukuyama's - shared the fate of meteorites: they gloriously shone before fading from view. The ideas of *The Decline of the West* shone because, after the trauma of the war and the Bolshevik revolution, the West appeared to want to know that it is dying. Fukuyama's idea shone because the West wanted to know that it has emerged victorious after the fall of the Soviet Union. The first one faded because its metaphysical and organicistic foundation was indefensible. The attempt to revive Hegel's vision of history as a teleological, universal process of the development of the consciousness of freedom quickly proved to be outdated.

¹² Ibidem, p. 41.

¹³ Ibidem, s. 462.

The concepts of civilization by Koneczny and Huntington, which share some similarities, have contemporary relevance; to some extent they remain valid.¹⁴ Today, we face the clash of religious fundamentalism and nationalism with the ideas of liberal democracy.



¹⁴ Of course the relevance of Koneczny,s theory applied exclusively to the theory of civilization, and not is diagnosis of borders of conflict, which were proven wrong by the world which emerged after World War II.

Belief Revision and the Mortality of the Soul Hypothesis.

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Abstract

Aristotle considered the soul as form of the body. According to this view, the soul seems to die together with the physical body, thus the soul is not immortal. This is a view that opposes religious beliefs. This paper examines the assumption that a rational agent is informed about that Aristotelian perspective and begins a belief revision process. What other beliefs are going to be affected by the new information and in what way? The research framework in answering these questions is the logic of belief revision.

More specifically, when a rational agent is informed of new things about the world, she seems to recognize that the new information complies or contradicts with preexisting relevant beliefs. In the first case, the new information does not conflict with the agent's belief set and is added normally together with any resulting effects. In the second case, the agent recognizes which of the old beliefs collide with the new. In order to avoid inconsistency, she decides whether to accept the new information or, because of the new input, reject relevant preexisting beliefs.

A key assumption here is that a belief set, represented by statements, is logically closed. The study shows that even though a religious belief set is not logically closed, it is however doctrinally closed. Namely, a minimum justification exists even if that serves only as a binder between statements.

Keywords: Aristotle, belief revision, soul immortality

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Introduction

Aristotle considered the soul as form of the body. According to this view, the soul seems to die together with the physical body, thus the soul is not immortal. In this paper I examine the assumption that a rational agent is informed about this specific Aristotelian perspective and begins a belief revision process. What other beliefs are going to be affected by the new information and in what way? The research framework in answering this question is the logic of belief revision.

A main challenge of this paper is the methodological connection of logical reasoning with religious beliefs. Although, as will be shown below this relationship is not given, I believe there is a connection, at least theoretically, that permits the investigation of this scenario. So, this paper refers to a thought experiment. Thought experiments are considered imaginary devices used to investigate the nature of things (see Brown & Fehige, 2016). They investigate some hypothesis, or principle for the purpose of thinking through its consequences. For this they are employed in a variety of areas, including philosophy, economics and the sciences.

At first I will examine the concept of soul in Aristotle and then the theoretical application of the theory of belief revision, based on specific data.

Aristotle on Soul

According to the body-soul hylomorphism of Aristotle, the soul can have no independent existence, since all objects are "composites" of form and matter. The form consists of the qualities that make each thing what it is. Matter is the subject, the substrate of form. In the case of human beings, the human soul as form activates all (potential) material-physical characteristics, and even though it can be distinguished from the material body, cannot exist independently. Thus, together with the post-mortem decomposition, the soul also ceases to exist. This seems incompatible with Christian theology. That is a reason why the nature of the soul was for theologians an example of dangerous Aristotelian ideas during the Late Middle Ages.

Shields (2015) notes that "... it is unsurprising to find Aristotle identifying the soul, which he introduces as a principle or source (archê) of all life, as the form of a living compound. For Aristotle, in fact, all living things, and not only human beings, have souls...It is appropriate, then, to treat all ensouled bodies in hylomorphic terms...So, the soul and body are simply special cases of form and matter". Furthermore, the soul is also the final cause of the body. As is well known, Aristotle recognized four types of things that can be given in answer to any 'why' question: 1) The material cause 2) The formal cause, 3) The efficient cause, and 4) The final cause. Especially the final cause referred to the end, that for the sake of which a thing is done. So, it could be argued that any given body is the body that it is because it is organized around a function which serves to unify the entire organism (see Shield, 2015).

In trying to answer the question of what is a soul, one should distance herself from any theological or Christian conception. The soul is to be conceived as whatever is the cause of something to be alive. The word soul in Latin is anima (see 'De Anima') which has the same root as 'animate', that is bring to life, give something or someone the appearance of movement. Also, in Greek it is translated as psyche which has the same root as psychology and psychic, meaning that is relating to the mind. Of course, plants have souls also. They both live when they have a soul and die when they do

not. So, the soul is not a separate thing in Aristotle's account. It is the form of the body, a manner of organization to bring about life and not an independent substance. In addition, body and soul are hetero mobile: one moves the other. A soul cannot move/exist without the body and a body cannot move/exist without a soul. The first case appears to dispute the possibility of the soul's immortality, while the second eliminates the possibility of actual living.

In relation to religion, Shiffman (2011, p. 6-7) degrades the religious side of the issue when he notes that "...Aristotle's 'De Anima' ('On the Soul') both is and is not about the things we might expect. It does turn out to be about the sense in which soul is incorporeal, but it articulates the non-bodily character of soul in terms of the intrinsically related principles of material and form, rather than in terms of the dualistically opposed principles matter and spirit. It does raise what we might consider a religious question about whether the soul is immortal or not, but treats this as somewhat tangential to the main line of inquiry, secondary to the question of what soul is". This remark does not exclude the religious implications of the philosopher's thesis. As noted by another Aristotelian scholar: "To the extent that soul is posited to account for the functions of mortal living things and only functions with bodily instruments, **there is no reason to suppose that it can continue when the body becomes largely dysfunctional, especially so that it cannot support nutritive functioning essential to mortal life.** Of course there are temporary dysfunctions, for instance, sleep, drunkenness, fainting, injury, sickness, that permit recovery, but death seems more final. The only way soul could have continued significance is if it could become reincarnated..."¹ (Polansky, 2007, p. 6).

On the subject of reincarnation, Aristotle has formulated a theory in his work 'On the Generation of Animals' ('De Generatione Animalium'). More specifically, the rational soul is transmitted through material substances and particularly warm frothy semen. Moreover, in 'De Anima' we read that soul reincarnation is based upon the following assumption: "And further, since it manifestly moves the body, it is reasonable that soul imparts to the body the same motions as those by which it is moved. But if so, then those asserting the converse will also speak the truth, that it is moved by the same motion as that by which the body is moved. But the body is moved in locomotion, so that the soul too would change with respect to place, relocating either as a whole or in part. But if this were possible, then it would also be possible for it to reenter once it has left; and from this it would follow that living things that have died could revive" (De Anima, 406a30-406b5) (Shiffman, 2011, pp. 34-35). This study will not examine the specific case of reincarnation, but the immortality of the soul.

Belief Revision

The research framework of this paper is Belief Revision. More specifically, belief revision is the process which takes into account the presence of new information. In a normative framework it studies the question of how should rational agents change opinion. Its logical formalism refers to philosophy, cognitive science, logic and

¹ At this point a distinction should be noted on how the ancient Greeks and later Christian teachings perceived the notion of the soul. For the ancients the soul coincided with the mind. A body that no longer has cognitive ability does not have a reason to continue living. While in Christian teaching the soul represented a feature that is instilled in man by God himself. It is something metaphysical and wider as a concept, both than the human body and the human mind.

artificial intelligence. So, the focus is on information received by a rational agent. More specifically, when a rational agent is informed of new things about the world, she seems to recognize that the new information complies or contradicts with preexisting relevant beliefs.

In the first case, the new piece of information does not conflict with the agent's belief set and is added normally together with any resulting effects. In the second case, the agent recognizes which of the old beliefs collide with the new. In order to avoid inconsistency, she decides whether to accept the new information or, because of the new input, reject relevant preexisting beliefs.

In introducing the logic of belief revision, Gärdenfors (1992, p. 1) offers the following example: "Suppose that you have a database that contains, among other things, the following pieces of information (in some form of code):

- a: All European swans are white.
- b: The bird caught in the trap is a swan.
- c: The bird caught in the trap comes from Sweden.
- d: Sweden is part of Europe.

If your database is coupled with a program that can compute logical inferences in the given code, the following fact is derivable from a - d:

- e: The bird caught in the trap is white."

Gärdenfors (1992) then supposes that, as a matter of fact, the bird caught in the trap turns out to be black. This means that the fact $\neg e$, i.e., the negation of e, has to be added to the existing database. But in doing so the database becomes inconsistent. In order for the database to be kept consistent, which is normally a sound methodology, it needs to be revised. Besides choosing which of the a-d beliefs to retract, we have to take also into consideration the fact that "beliefs in a database have logical consequences, so when giving up a belief you have to decide as well which of the consequences to retain and which to retract" (Gärdenfors, 1992, p. 1-2).

In general, a new belief is either accepted or rejected in a belief system. According to Gärdenfors (1992, p. 3) there are three kinds of belief changes, a) Expansion: A new sentence f is added to a belief system together with the logical consequences of the addition, b) Revision: A new sentence that is inconsistent with a belief system is added, but, in order to maintain consistency in the resulting belief system, some of the old sentences/beliefs are deleted and c) Contraction: Some sentence in the belief system is retracted without adding any new facts.

This scenario will be investigated on the basis of revision. As already mentioned, belief revision is the process of inserting the new information into a set of old beliefs without generating an inconsistency. The reason for this choice is that in the case of revision both the old beliefs and the new belief/information refer to the same situation. Furthermore, any inconsistencies between the old and new information could be explained by the possibility of old information being less reliable than the new one. And this might be the case in the following thought experiment.

The “Immortality of the Soul” Hypothesis

The hypothesis in the current thought experiment is that a rational agent is also an individual that follows a particular religious doctrine. This doctrine supports i) the existence- obviously- of God, and ii) the primacy of the spiritual substance over the material with the former enjoying at some point (see afterlife) the presence of God. So, in this case we are referring to a religious belief set. All information in it is derived by specific religious teaching and conclusions that the individual has drawn from this teaching.

Of course it should be noted that at first glance it seems paradoxical to speak of logic regarding our religious beliefs. And indeed, there are theories that distinguish rational reasoning from this kind of belief. For example, according to Evans & Frankish (2009) we might in fact have two minds. Two distinct cognitive systems in our brain that contribute to belief. The first cognitive system is automatic, unconscious, and fast, an evolutionarily ancient one, shared with animals, that runs on instinct and intuition. The second cognitive process is controlled, conscious, and slow, an evolutionarily recent invention, unique to humans, that permits abstract reasoning. Therefore, these two minds, underlying human reasoning, have to come to terms. Evans and Frankish (2009) argue that our two distinct systems constantly battle for attention in our decision-making process. In defending this theory he maintains that neuroimaging provides evidence that different regions of our brain are involved in either analytical reasoning or intuition. In addition, Gervais & Norenzayan (2012) examined whether or not critical thinking promotes religious disbelief. The results of their experiments confirmed their hypothesis by showing also how our two minds compete in reaching a decision about what we believe.

But even if logic and rationality represent the basis for our thought process, dividing our epistemology for knowledge & truth and helping us decide whether a claim is true, false or something in between, it could be employed also for more dogmatically epistemological fields, such as religion². Philosophers have traditionally approached religious belief by investigating its rational as well as evidential claims (see Ontological Arguments for the conclusion that God exists). Rene Descartes, especially in his fifth meditation, insisted that the existence of God could be proven. For this purpose he used entirely deductive reasoning (see Cottingham et al., 1984). David Hume wrote at length about the evidence of miracles and on arguments for God. As Russel (2014) notes, Hume's critical writings concerning problems of religion are among the most important and influential contributions on this topic. This study of religion on the basis of reason and evidence is termed natural theology. It is a theology that provides arguments for the existence of God based on reason and nature.

² A distinction has to be made between propositional beliefs (belief-that) and attitudinal beliefs (belief-in). A propositional belief is a belief that something is the case. It is a factual belief as to the state of something, implying a claim of objective truth. On the other hand, attitudinal beliefs refer to a point of view that an individual has towards something. Religious beliefs fall into this category. To believe in something is mainly to express a psychological attitude of trust that is usually absent in propositional belief. This distinction is important because it demonstrates the different value that belief-in seems to place upon reason and evidence. So it comes as no surprise that some philosophers have gone so far as to deny the role of reason in religious belief altogether.

Coming back to our hypothesis and following Gärdenfors' (1992) example, the individual's belief set could contain, among other things, the following pieces of information:

a: All spiritual beings are immortal.

b: My soul is a spiritual being.

c: My soul is part of my entity.

d: My entity is part of the world.

The following fact is logically derivable from *a* - *d*:

e: My soul is immortal.

Now let us suppose that the individual is informed (for instance after reading "De Anima") of Aristotle's thesis that "the soul is form of the body" which means that "the soul is not immortal". Furthermore, she regards this view as a matter of fact. This means that she has to add the fact $\neg e$, i.e., the negation of *e*: My soul is immortal, to the belief set. As already mentioned, within the logic of belief revision inevitably her database becomes inconsistent and she needs to revise it. Within this process, she needs not only to choose which of the *a-d* beliefs to retract, but also to decide which of their consequences to retain and which to retract. If she decides to retract *a*: All spiritual beings are immortal, this information has as logical consequences the following two (among others):

a': All spiritual beings except my soul are immortal.

And

a'': All spiritual beings except some part of my entity are immortal.

The question now is the following: In revising her beliefs, does she want to keep these sentences in the revised database? The answer depends on the criterion to be applied. More specifically, there are two general criteria for revision (see also Hansson, 2016). The first is *minimal change*. The assumption is that the agent's knowledge before and after the insertion of the new piece of information should be as similar as possible. This criterion allows for as much information as possible to be preserved by the change. So, if the criterion for retracting a belief is that the information lost must be kept minimal, then: From *a-d*, *a* seems to have more logical consequences than the others within the individual's belief set. It is a kind of general metaphysical principle generating and most importantly justifying other related beliefs. Such beliefs appear to come from dogmatic teachings, So, she will probably keep *a* and retract one of the others.

The second criterion is *importance*. If the criterion for retracting a belief is that some beliefs are considered more important than others, then: From *a-d*, *c* seems the most important and thus less likely to be retracted. Although the soul 'lost' its immortal character, is still part of her entity. This is the most significant and basic belief for herself. This belief in the actual existence of the soul represents the backbone of the doctrine she has adapted. Finally, if we were to attribute a degree of importance to each of one of the others, that would be in descending order: $d \rightarrow b \rightarrow a$.

Conclusion

This research introduces the question of how a rational agent may revise religious beliefs. What is particularly important is the collation of two kinds of belief (beliefs about the world and beliefs about oneself) referring to the same subject field (religion and immortality of soul). Analysis showed that even though a religious belief set

cannot be only logically closed, it may however be doctrinally closed. Namely, a minimum justification exists even if that serves only as a binder between statements. This justification bypasses logic, without implying that it ultimately works differently. Finally, there is no doubt that the present study is but an introduction to the problem of religious belief revision. In that sense, it could trigger a further study of the issue.



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The Good Sense of the Modern: Revisiting Heidegger's Social Ontology

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Abstract

By the term social ontology I mean to argue Heidegger's definition of the social existence of the self. In this paper I will look at Dasein as an engaged modern self, located in its context and history within the specifics of self's embeddeness. The good sense of the modern is the manifold ways in which dignified human flourishing can be imagined, which, as Charles Taylor points out, is the mainstay of modernity as a condition of being human. Dignified human flourishing upon the planet, amidst all its beings, and without obstructing the open space that humanity nurtures for the circulation of manifold meanings of realities, should mean that technological modernity in its emerging total shape cannot sustain the good sense of the modern. Technologically supported human flourishing, concretized through the international market system of overproduction and overconsumption, is a definitive denial of the good sense of the modern. The paper will attempt to retrace some of the ethical, spiritual and innate human qualities whereby we can reimagine and re-enchant modern identity amidst an overwhelming Technological Modernity. Modernity is not to be rejected but its good, wholesome and meaningful sense is to be interpretively appropriated. I will elucidate the notion of the modern self from an engaged perspective, which is embedded in a social and cultural context and which is bound to manifest justice.

Keywords: Heidegger, Taylor, Engaged Agent, Modernity, Technology

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Introduction: The Ontology of the Engaged agent

In the history of Western philosophy, there are two broad pictures of the human knowing agent: (i) the agent who is able to disengage herself from her context and situation, capable of abstracting pure, universal and objective knowledge, as if she was not a part at all of her world of engagement; and (ii) the agent who is radically engaged with her context, situation and her world as the hermeneutical subject of the whole knowledge production activity. The dispassionate ideal of knowledge and the knower is privileged in the modern age and has led to the privileging also of the dispassionate knowledge of the natural sciences. Whereas, according to the ideal of the knower as the engaged agent, the primordial basis of all knowledge is the world of engagement of the knower, and so, the disengaged knower and the knowledge thus produced, say, scientific knowledge, is a derivative form of engaged knowing.

The notion of selfhood is a running theme in the huge philosophical opus of Charles Taylor. In his magnum opus, *Sources of the Self*, Taylor gives an exhaustive and teleologically interpretive history of the modern self. He, in fact, is in search of an account of the intellectual history of modern identity, precisely the modern westerner's sense of selfhood. By 'identity' Taylor means the ensemble of the understanding of what it is to be a 'human agent', a 'person', a 'self'. He aims to show how the ideals and interdicts of this identity shape our philosophical thought, our epistemology and our philosophy of language, largely without our awareness, and how these intellectual-cultural outputs, in turn, affect our sense of selfhood. Heidegger depicts the knowing self in terms of engagedness, situatedness and embodiment in direct opposition to Descartes' disengaged knower. The agent who accesses her world is not a doubting, thinking, logical self; rather, she is, in Taylor's words, 'shaped' by her *form of life*, history and bodily existence. For example, that the subject is embodied means that her manner of accessing the world is very unique to an agent with the human kind of body. The embodied human agent can get hold of things nearby immediately, but to get things from farther away, she has to move that far. Certain things she can grasp effortlessly, whereas certain other things she can do so only with a struggle. "To say that this world is essentially that of this agent", notes Taylor, "is to say that the terms in which we describe this experience... make sense only against the background of this kind of embodiment" (Taylor, 2006). Similarly, her experience is also shaped by her context, history, culture and language. There is an already set hermeneutical context that makes our first access to entities as that particular entity possible. At least our primordial way of accessing the world is not background-free and presuppositionless, and the objectification of the object of knowledge (the scientific kind of knowing), while it is very significant, it is to be understood as secondary and derivative of the primordial accessing of the world.

It is for this reason that Heidegger calls our firsthand access of the world as 'understanding' ("understanding of existence as such is always an understanding of the world" (Heidegger, 1973)) and conceives understanding as always already interpretive. This means that when we understand an aspect of our world we understand it already *as* something, *as* some part of *our* world. We are able to do this because the world acts as the background for our understanding. Heidegger writes: "What we 'first' hear is never noises or complexes of sounds, but the creaking wagon, the motor-cycle. We hear the column on the march, the north wind, the woodpecker tapping, the fire crackling" (Heidegger, 1973). And so, the conclusion for Heidegger

is: “An interpretation is never a presuppositionless apprehending of something presented to us” (Heidegger, 1973). Being the way I am—an embodied, cultural, historical, finite, worldly being—the first access I have of the world is conditioned by the entanglements that constitute my Being (that is, embodiment, culturality, historicity, finiteness, worldliness). Disengaging from these entanglements is a secondary exercise and thus derivative of the first. For Heidegger, privileging of the secondary exercise, as we notice in Descartes and the whole of modern culture inspired by him, is inauthentic and needs rectification. The later Heidegger would argue that the privileging of the disengaged model of accessing reality, what he calls *Gestell* or Enframing (technological understanding), an aftereffect of the Cartesian model of knowledge, has the danger of denying the human being’s entry “into a more original revealing and hence to experience the call of a more primal truth” (Heidegger, 1977). In short, modern knowing, entrapped in a technological vision, has the problem of tunnel vision—it denies the possibilities of other modes of knowing, indeed even the more primordial mode of knowing the world in its palpable liveliness and meaningfulness. Thus for Heidegger it is our active engagement in our everyday world that confers our identity as persons.

Taylor draws on both Heidegger and the later Wittgenstein in formulating his attack on the disengaged view. Both of them are, in Taylor’s view, pioneers in thinking engaged selfhood and agency. For Heidegger, we know the world on the basis of an already given finite background; for Wittgenstein, meaning cannot be intelligible without an already given form of life. Both these giants of twentieth century Western philosophy, Taylor adds, propound a theory of ‘the context of intelligibility of knowledge, thought, and meaning.’ Taylor sees both these monumental philosophical achievements as having a counter-cultural significance of puncturing the hold the disengaged view has on modern thought and culture through “the hegemony of institutions and practices that require and entrench a disengaged stance: science, technology, rationalized forms of production, bureaucratic administration, a civilization committed to growth, and the like” (Taylor, 1995a).

Hence, Heidegger deliberately avoids the use of terms like subject and spirit as representative of the human being. He notes that terms like subject, soul, consciousness, spirit, person and ego, which in themselves are thoroughly loaded with metaphysical meanings, are used in philosophy without clarifying these meanings appropriately. “So we are not being terminologically arbitrary,” he writes, “when we avoid these terms—or such expressions as ‘life’ and ‘man’—in designating those entities which we are ourselves” (Taylor, 1995a). On the other hand, he chose the term *Dasein* (Being-there) with the definitive import of the embeddedness and embodiment of the human being. By the use of the term ‘Dasein’ Heidegger also wanted to depict the human being as a non-substantial unfolding from the moment of its birth towards its definitive closure at death. This means also to clarify the meaning of that nebulous word ‘Being’ in a radical fashion. The central argument of *Being and Time* is that an “understanding of Being... itself belongs to the constitution of the entity called Dasein” (Taylor, 1995a).

The human comportment towards the world or agency, Heidegger attests, does not arise from the fact that we are mental substances first and foremost or spirits but because first and foremost we find ourselves existentially engrossed in a world without any subject-object distinction. The view of ourselves as detached minds is a

secondary interpretation we undertake in terms of our relation to objects, giving rise to what is generally called the 'theoretical attitude'. We act in and know our world first and foremost as engaged agents and secondarily as disengaged onlookers. Being as such is accessed by us as engaged agents. Heidegger was bothered by the modern subject's total project of privileging the theoretical view as the only view of Being and of Nothing. That is, the way in which an entity or the totality of entities manifest in their neutrality, calculability and manipulability for the subject is the only legitimate way in which entities can manifest themselves; their other modes and ways of manifesting to the modern subject are not legitimized and hence they become nothing from the modern subject's point of view. The later Heidegger's critique of technological understanding follows this route which began in his early concern with engaged agency.

One of Taylor's central thesis, which can be allied with his Heideggerian ontology, is the dialogical nature of human action. Human life cannot be comprehended merely in terms of individual subjects and their actions. Agency and selfhood can be made intelligible only in terms of shared existence, which constitutes the self. Shared existence is not an addition to the self, but is its very constitution. Heidegger's notion of *mitsein* (Being-with) is comparable here. Our understanding of the self, society and world is a product of our dialogical act. We cannot have it otherwise. Taylor says "that language itself serves to set up spaces of common action, on a number of levels, intimate and public. This means that our identity is never simply defined in terms of our individual properties. It also places us in some social space. We define ourselves partly in terms of what we come to accept as our appropriate place within dialogical actions" (Taylor, 1995b). By the dialogical character of our existence, Taylor means that we cannot become complete human agents, understand and describe our identity without acquiring the capacity for rich expression through a language. Language cannot be learned by oneself without interaction with another; language is learned in responsive communication with others who matter to us. We begin as babies with 'significant others' and gradually extend our circle of communicative expression. "The genesis of the human mind," Taylor writes, "is in this sense not monological, not something each person accomplishes on his or her own, but dialogical" (Taylor, 1994). Hence, dialogicality is not a good addition but a constitutive element of our existence. Relation with others does not merely fulfill ourselves but defines our identity. Moreover, it is not only that human mind and language take shape in dialogical terms; it is a continuous and stable constitutive part of our existence. Even when we are expected to define ourselves and our world by ourselves, as the modern liberal democratic tradition is wont to do, it cannot happen purely in that fashion. Selfhood or identity is constructed by us through the early phase of our life and is refined and reconstructed throughout our lives "in dialogue with, sometimes in struggles against, the things our significant others want to see in us." Even as we outgrow this circle of immediate and significant others like our parents, Taylor adds, "the conversation with them continues within us as long as we live" (Taylor, 1994). This is what is meant by the deep constitutive sociality of human existence, articulated in profoundly ontological terms by several philosophers of the twentieth century, like Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Levinas, Buber, Gadamar, Ricoeur and Habermas, among others.

I have been referring to ‘background’ and ‘embodiment’ on and off in this discussion about engaged selfhood. Both Heidegger and Taylor, as hermeneutic critics of the disengaged perspective on the self, consider that a background or context “as the unexplicit horizon within which — or to vary the image, as the vantage point from out of which — this experience can be understood” (Taylor, 2006). My selfhood, as it is not an abstraction completely unrelated to my context but is concretely related to my context, also arises constitutively out of my background. At least partially, I am defined by my socio-cultural context. I am not doomed and enchained in a ‘type’ but even when I challenge and critique my society and culture I am still partially defined by it. Again, a background understanding is sensible only from the point of view of embodied existence. It would be impossible to understand our humdrum activities of grasping directions and following rules if we were not embodied and not placed within the implicit background from within which we make sense of our explicit significations. The disengaged view of ourselves and our world as representations and pictures locked up within our minds would be akin to playing a cricket match on a computer. Thus, the standpoint of engagement is closely related to the standpoint of embodiment. Taylor is completely preoccupied with the idea of the tacit background upon which what can be known, what is meaningful and what is intelligible shows up, and for such showing up embodiment is a *sine qua non*. For instance, he writes that embodied agent is the one “who acts to maintain equilibrium upright, who can deal with things close up immediately and has to move to get to things farther away, who can grasp certain kinds of things easily and others not, can remove certain obstacles and others not, can move to make a scene more perspicuous, and so on” (Taylor, 2006). Hence, “[t]o say that this world is essentially that of this agent”, notes Taylor, “is to say that the terms in which we describe this experience... make sense only against the background of this kind of embodiment” (Taylor, 2006). So, we have two aspects of Taylor’s hermeneutical thesis: that the agent is embedded or engaged within a background and she is embodied. The two theses are inextricably tied. Our embodiment already means that our experience is also shaped by our context, history, culture and language; these aspects of our embeddedness are meaningful only against a background of our embodiment.

The hermeneutical notion of the engaged self does not mean that our selfhood is what we self-consciously think, plan and visualize about ourselves, or that we are what we want to become. On the other hand, it means that before we plan and visualize something about ourselves, we *are* something, a self, in and through the continuous activity of pre-cognitive interpretation of ourselves. That our selfhood is hermeneutically structured means that our social and cultural context has already constituted our sense of self in an important way and we continue to view all that is not self from the point of view of the self. Both these aspects of our self-constitution (its background/ context and its self-understanding that determines all its other-understandings) has a puncturing effect on the disengaged-self thesis. A representation of ourselves as disengaged agents itself is constructed out of a particular —that is, modernist— self-understanding. This is what Heidegger means when he says that a circular interpretive structure is hidden in the very constitution of meaning and the existential structure of Dasein, which is ‘the understanding which interprets’. “An entity for which, as Being-in-the-world, its Being is itself an issue, has, ontologically, a circular structure” (Heidegger, 1973). The self can never be completely absent from what has meaning for it, be it what is seen or heard, what is theoretically reduced to view, or what is emotionally binding its attention.

The Social ontology

For Heidegger, the engaged self is Being-in-the-world; for Taylor the engaged-self-thesis also is a 'social thesis'. By this they mean that human existence or Dasein stands out into the social space of meaning that is already available for any human existence. This social space of intelligibility is the 'there' of Da-sein. Any human existence becomes a 'self', an engaged identity, only in terms of its dialogical appropriation of its 'there'. It is hence that human existence is 'Da-Sein' (Being-there). As we have seen, Heidegger dramatically characterizes the 'who' of the engaged self in its average everydayness as not the 'I myself' but 'the They' because individuality is a specific negotiation of the 'there' (the social space of intelligibility) of human existence. Even when through resolute appropriation of its possibilities Dasein becomes an authentic self, what it 'owns' is one/ some of the possibilities of its 'there' and thus authentic self itself is 'the they self', the engaged self, in its ownedness rather than in its existential evasion.

This is a profoundly 'social thesis' regarding individual human existence, and can be posited as a thoroughgoing counter-argument against the atomistic, disengaged imagination of the self of the liberal political tradition. Individuality and its meaning-making is inextricably entangled in the social space of significance, and the ontology of the social is not simply a summation of these individualities, but something that is always already there for individuality to emerge in the first place. Truly, individuation is itself a specific appropriation of the sense of community, and hence a sense of community, a standing-out-into-the-communal-space-of-meaning, is constitutive of being human.

Nevertheless, the sense of community is to be seen as the counter-position to liberal individualism. In fact, liberalism itself is based on the principle of community, namely 'fraternity'. The major reaction to liberal individualism, communism, is philosophically the most stringent expression of community—a classless society where every individual is fully free for self-expression. While historical communism turned out to be a colossal denial of freedom, the sense of community that it exposed is never irrelevant. In this paper, I can only leave this space of the sense of community an open space, indeed a sense of sociality and the significance of Being-with, which humanity has not learned yet to fully bring out into the openness of Being as the most beautiful expression of meaning. As Jean-Luc Nancy has pointed out, the moment this sense of community coagulates into a 'We', which is nothing but a 'collective I' as Heidegger points out, we seem to deny the very sense of community we want to negotiate. Hence, it seems to me that the sense of community should animate human agency, a powerful sense of being affected by human absence and presence, but not any concrete or coagulated community as such. That would run counter to the post-axial notions of benevolence and justice to all humans, and the posthuman notion of letting beings be. Restraining the sense of community, as Levinas says fittingly, is a profound, though necessary, betrayal because we are engaged, embedded, temporal and finite selves. However, our ethical gestures of at least not harming the other, when we are restrained by the sense of community not to venture out to positively support and uphold them, is to be seen as an ineradicable guilt marked once again with our inchoate sense of community. Whatever manners of authentic fostering of the other, even distant others, that we can still invent despite the

deep-rooted interruptions of power inherent to the 'there' of Dasein, these need to be shown to have emerged visibly from the sense of community as such.

The Good Sense of the Modern

I have argued in this paper that for reimagining and re-enchanting modern identity, the conception of engaged selfhood shows the way. Modernity is not to be rejected but its good, wholesome and meaningful sense is to be interpretively appropriated. For this the cultural imagination and philosophical clarification of engaged selfhood is the way forward. As the engaged self, the modern self is to be located in its context and history within the specifics of every self's embeddedness. There are manifold ways in which dignified human flourishing can be imagined, which, it must be remembered, as Charles Taylor points out, is the mainstay of modernity as a condition of being human. However, historical humanity's social imaginary or cultural space of meaning is manifold; there are several understandings of Being across human groups in the world. How dignified human flourishing, the mainstay of modernity, is appropriated and made sense of by historical peoples across the globe is the central issue of the good sense of the modern. It is something that animates the current interest of social scientists, philosophers and literary theorists all over the world. Should they all follow the technological-calculative trajectory of western modernity, even on the strength of their historical hindsight, or would western technological understanding of Being in its world dominating contemporary form allow anything but the blind appropriation itself is an engaging question. Partha Chatterjee's essay, "Our Modernity", argues that western modernity became acceptable to Indians during the later part of the colonial era, the era of nationalism, through the prism glass of India's own engaged understanding, though not always successfully. He seems to imply that this engaged understanding of modernity seems to have faded with globalization, the world dominating trajectory of the west's technological understanding of Being. He invokes Indian courage to reignite an engaged understanding of this new avatar of modernity. We must leave the plausibility of this suggestion to the strange movements of human history. But this study suggests that this possibility is a necessary ingredient of the good sense of the modern. Without it modernity is the decadent, meaningless reproduction of equivalence.

This paper suggests a definitive closure to the post-axial modernist demarcation of the sole and total flourishing of the human being as the only meaning of the modern from a posthuman perspective of the good sense of the modern. Dignified human flourishing upon the planet, amidst all its beings, and without obstructing the open space that humanity nurtures for the circulation of manifold meanings of realities, should mean that technological modernity in its emerging total shape cannot sustain the good sense of the modern. Technologically supported human flourishing, concretized through the international market system of overproduction and overconsumption, is a definitive denial of the good sense of the modern. Indeed the technological model of the regimentation of the good in fact disallows human flourishing for the majority of world's people and threatens the sustenance of human flourishing itself for generations unborn.

This study, despite its argument in favour of human guardianship over the interstitial interface or world wherein meaning circulates in all its manifoldness, and in the varieties of forms nurtured by historical peoples, it argues for the ways that support the significance of all beings, that restrain the technological leveling of all meanings,

and that sustain the equal dignity, non-equivalence and variously meaningful flourishing of all human beings within these many interfaces or worlds. Such an imagination, it is argued, is central to the good sense of the modern. This imagination is ontologically post-axial but more than stringently modern because the interstitial interface or world within which we meaningfully encounter ourselves, others and non-human beings is neither the magical sphere nor the interiority of the subject. This proposal is still modern in as much as the modern project of human flourishing was never morally set in motion for the destruction of meaningful human flourishing; it was never morally imagined for the destruction of the earth. The interstitial interface is Being-in-the-world, which is impossible without humanity and impossible with only humanity. As Heidegger says in “Letter on Humanism” in reference to Sartre’s claim that existentialism is a philosophical imagination where there are only human beings, Being-in-the-world is not a space where only the human being is; it is a space where Being or intelligibility dwells in its manifoldness. This is the good sense of the engaged modern self proposed in this proposal.



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Do We Have Epistemic Support for The Existence of Afterlife?

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Abstract

In a paper discussing our attitude towards death, Freud (1915) put forth that it seems impossible to imagine our own death, so much so that in the unconscious we are all “convinced of our own immortality”. In more recent efforts, Smullyan (2003) explicitly endorsed Freud’s hypothesis and took the inability to conceive oneself as non-existing to be the reason for ones belief in afterlife. I suggest that Smullyan’s argument aligns with conceivability accounts in the epistemology of modality, which takes the ability to imagine certain scenarios as a guide to their possibilities. Following such view, that we find the non-existence of our own consciousness inconceivable would provide epistemic support for its impossibility. The consequence of this modal statement (that it is impossible for our consciousness to be non-existent) seems to be a commitment to some form of afterlife--that our consciousness must continue to exist despite the death of the body.

This paper presumes the truth of the conceivability account, and in turn granting that Smullyan’s argument for afterlife is valid. However, I shall suggest two worries of the argument before granting its conclusion. Firstly, I shall examine whether its premise is indeed true--that is, whether we really find the non-existence of our consciousness inconceivable. Secondly, I believe the very same account could turn against afterlife if we start the argument with other appealing premises (such as ones derived from physicalism). Thus, given the truth of the conceivability theory there are at best both evidence for and against afterlife.

Keywords: Conceivability, Possibility, Afterlife, Epistemology of Modality, Consciousness

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Introduction

For pretty much the entire course of human history, inquiring the plausibility of any form of being after bodily death had been a seemingly impossible task, but nonetheless one of deepest concern for our very existence. The task seems impossible, since we could not possibly gain any experiences of it—as Epicurus remarked, ‘Death...is nothing to us, seeing that, when we are, death is not come, and, when death is come, we are not.’ On the other hand, we can’t help but keep pondering this topic, for it strikes us that some important truth beneath the topic directly addresses our ultimate fate. Contemporary thinkers therefore had still been contemplating on afterlife, a recent effort by Raymond Smullyan (2003) argued in favour of the existence of afterlife by appealing to things other than our positive experience of it—in particular, he claimed that he believes in the existence of afterlife because of ‘his inability to conceive of no afterlife.’¹

This paper primarily aims at investigating more deeply into this intriguing thought. I believe that Smullyan was on point in thinking that that particular inconceivability of non-existence contributed at least implicitly to our attitudes towards afterlife. The paper consists of three sections. In section I I shall unpack Smullyan’s claim in more detail, attempting to clear up any notions that might be ambiguous in the premise; in section II I shall look into an existing theoretical account in the literature in support of Smullyan’s argument—in particular, the conceivability account in the epistemology of modality; in section III I shall discuss some possible objections and replies regarding the argument.

Before moving on to section I, one clarificatory point is in order. While believing in afterlife in virtue of the premise, Smullyan did not consider his discussion as amounting to *an argument for afterlife*. He made it clear that the inability of conceiving in his part contributed only an explanatory role to his belief in afterlife—that is, the phenomenon of his believing in afterlife is explained by this certain psychological feature (inconceivability), which bears no role in suggesting the truth of such belief. For all Smullyan knows, he might well be mistaken about afterlife as a result of an incompetent mind. However, this paper aims at establishing a more ambitious claim—that our inconceivability of non-existence indeed plays a justificatory role to our belief in afterlife, in other words, I argue that if the former is true, then we indeed have some epistemic reasons to believe that the latter is true.

¹ Smullyan (2003), pp. 16.

I. The inconceivability of non-existence

When Smullyan (2003) discussed his belief of the existence of afterlife, he admitted that he wishes the belief to be true. However, he also claimed explicitly that such belief is due to the inconceivability of his non-existence, not wishful thinking. This distinction is crucial to the understanding of Smullyan's view, as the two are easily confused. While (in)conceivability remains a plausible candidate for amounting to epistemic support, more non-epistemic factors could intervene in the case of wishful thinking (such as the agent's practical interests). Consider the following case to see how the two notions might come apart. Suppose I were to compete in, say a basketball match. On all occasions I would like to win the match; but at the same time, it is perfectly compatible with me being able to conceive myself losing at the same time—indeed, if the opponents were professionals, it is even a bit hard to conceive myself winning. Thus, if what we sort after is the best approximation of what really could be, it is crucial to keep wishful thinking clearly out of the way.

Let's take a closer look to the inconceivability claim. Smullyan himself did not offer too much elaboration on it. However, he did quote others who share similar view in support of it. Consider for example the reasons Goethe gave for his believing in an afterlife, he suggested that 'he simply could not conceive of himself as not existing, and he could hardly believe something that he could not even imagine.'² Unlike Smullyan who merely granted a causal link between the inconceivability and the belief, Goethe explicitly reasoned that what is believable must be imaginable, which echoes with the conceivability account we will discuss in section II.

However, a deeper exploration of such link was perhaps offered by Sigmund Freud (1958), which pertained to his reflections on our attitudes towards death in face of the great war:

It is indeed impossible to imagine our own death; and whenever we attempt to do so we can perceive that we are in fact still present as spectators. Hence the psycho-analytic school could venture on the assertion that at bottom no one believes in his own death, or, to put the same thing in another way, that in the unconscious every one of us is convinced of his own immortality.³

The passage by Freud was fascinating but perhaps even more mysterious—particularly, when it is impossible for us to imagine our own death, in what sense are we 'present as spectators'? What exactly is present? This brings us to the last point of disambiguation in this section—how should we understand Smullyan's term of non-existence? Obviously this does not refer to the discontinuation of ones bodily functions, such event is not only conceivable but also inevitable. Later in his discussion on sleep and dreams, Smullyan explicitly accounted that he considers one to have no afterlife only if one is consciousnessless, which amounts to having no experience at all. This seems to be the key to understanding Smullyan's form of afterlife—that our consciousness continues to be present after, and therefore independently from, our bodily death. In other words, it is the absence of our very

² Smullyan (2003), pp. 15.

³ Freud (1958), pp. 222-23.

own consciousness that Smullyan found impossible to imagine. More will be addressed in section III regarding consciousness and dream.

II. The conceivability account in the epistemology of modality

The conceivability account of modality is often credited to Stephen Yablo (1993) and David Chalmers (2002) in contemporary literature. However, as we have seen, previous scholars (in Goethe and Freud, and contemporary philosopher Smullyan too) were either implicitly or explicitly committed to the link between conceivability and possibility. In fact, traces of the view could be found in Hume's writing which he declared 'that whatever the mind clearly conceives, includes the idea of possible existence, or in other words, that nothing we imagine is absolutely impossible.'⁴

In this paper I shall borrow the theory articulated by Yablo (1993), which suggested that (in)conceivability is a guide to (im)possibility. Two dialectical points: firstly, I shall not attempt to argue that it is a better conceivability account than its alternative—the stronger entailment thesis proposed by Chalmers (2002). For one thing, the requirements for entailment in Chalmers' account are more stringent and it is less clear that our imaginations about afterlife would meet them. On the other hand, for the purpose of my argument, the weaker guidance account of conceivability would suffice for providing epistemic support. The second important note about this theoretical endorsement is that I do not plan to argue for the conceivability account in general either. There are other competing theories and considerable amount of literature had been dedicated to determine the best one for accounting our knowledge of possibility. Establishing Yablo's account as the correct one is too big a task for this study—the motivation for endorsing his theory is that it fits our current topic of interest (namely, how conceivability provides support for possibility). Therefore more precisely, this paper seek to establish that *if conceivability is a guide to possibility*, then we have epistemic support for our belief of afterlife.

Let's turn our attention now to the formulations of Yablo's (1993) account. By suggesting conceivability as a guide to possibility the conditions for the account is quite straight forward—in short, that p is possible is supported by the fact that p is conceivable. However, the details as to how we are to cast out the notion of conceivability matter. In Yablo's account, a proposition p is conceivable by subject S *iff S imagines a situation that he/she takes to verify p*.⁵ Note that imagining and conceiving are interchangeable in Yablo's terminology. This amounts to the agent searching for a situation that verify the proposition and succeeded in doing so. For example, if one wonders the possibility of raining tomorrow, one needs only to imagine a situation that verifies this statement—namely a scenario in which there's rain tomorrow. If we are able to imagine this situation (in this case we indeed are), evidently that it will rain tomorrow is conceivable to us, and under this account it follows that this proposition is possible. However, consider the possibility of the existence of a round square. No matter how one attempts to imagine, there can be no scenario that verifies the proposition (there could be no scenario in which there exists a round square). Therefore the proposition is not conceivable. However, according to Yablo, this does not follow that the proposition is impossible.

⁴ Hume (1968), pp. 32.

⁵ Yablo (1993), pp. 29.

One crucial feature in Yablo's theoretical framework that demands extra caution is that the negation of conceivability is not equivalent to inconceivability, and vice versa. The reason of the gap between the two notions are the plausibility of undecidable cases—cases in which the scenarios one imagined neither seem to verify nor falsify p . At this point it is necessary to compare the four possible outcomes (according to Yablo) one could arrive at when entertaining a modal proposition:

***Conceivability (CON):** p is conceivable by S iff S imagines a situation that he/she takes to verify p*

***Negation of conceivability (\sim CON):** p is not conceivable by S iff S cannot imagine a situation that he/she takes to verify p*

***Inconceivability (INC):** p is inconceivable by S iff S cannot imagine any situation that he/she does not take to falsify p*

***Negation of inconceivability (\sim INC):** p is not inconceivable by S iff S can imagine situations that he/she does not take to falsify p*

Consider instances of undecidable scenarios. Since they neither verify nor falsify p , they could not be said to be CON or INC—rather they would be considered as \sim CON and \sim INC. In Yablo's theoretical construct, not only is conceivability a guide to possibility—inconceivability is a guide to impossibility as well. The problem here is that one cannot arrive at INC, therefore establishing impossibility of certain propositions, merely by failing to meet CON—this would only lead the case to \sim CON instead of INC. Thus, in order to establish impossibility of certain propositions, one must test if one's imagination meets the specific requirement from INC—that in any situation imagined, one takes it to falsify p .

The case of a round square does not seem to be an undecidable, so let's see how it fares in the INC test. Now in every situation one imagines, not only is the existence of a round square not verified, it must indeed be falsified, since whether there exists a round square is not undecided in any of the situation—it is straight out false in all scenarios. Thus, we come to the conclusion that the existence of a round square is inconceivable, thereby grounding our belief that such entity is impossible.

Not only is CON and INC surprisingly independent from each other, their capabilities in guiding our knowledge of modal propositions should be treated separately as well. There are epistemologists who endorse the thesis that CON is a guide to possibility, but reject INC as a guide to impossibility. Furthermore, Murphy (2006) pointed out that the reliability of INC as a guide to impossibility is logically stronger than the reliability of CON as a guide to possibility—in that the former entails, but is not entailed by, the latter.

These two remarks about the CON vs INC distinction turns out to be crucial to our present topic. Smullyan's claim of finding no afterlife inconceivable is, after all, an instance of INC. Therefore, in order for the argument in favour of afterlife to work, we must be able to test its inconceivability by the INC requirement; and we must further presume the truth of a logically stronger proposal—that inconceivability guides our knowledge of impossibility.

For what matters, I'm inclined to think that it is indeed a case of INC and therefore an instance of impossibility. Consider Smullyan's claim once again, he believes in afterlife because he could not imagine his own non-existence. From here there seems to be no clue to tell whether the scenarios he imagine indeed falsify the non-existence—it might well be the case of \sim CON for all we know. However, I believe the power of the argument resides in Freud's deeper elaboration of this intuition—'It is *indeed impossible to imagine our own death*; and *whenever we attempt to do so we can perceive that we are in fact still present as spectators.*' Reading 'present as spectators' as 'the continuous existence of the consciousness despite the perish of the body' as I outlined section I, what Freud meant was essentially that according to our imagination, us ceasing to exist seems to be falsified in every possible scenario. The point is not about our inability to verify our non-existence, which leads to \sim CON; rather it has to do with our imagination being unable to stop regarding ourselves as existing (as spectators, according to him), which offers the falsifying power INC needs. To summarise, the argument goes as follows: in efforts of imagining our own non-existence, we cannot stop regarding our own consciousness as continuing to exist, therefore we find the cease of existence of our consciousness falsified in every possible scenario (therefore meeting INC), which in turn provides epistemic support for the impossibility of the claim. Thus, it is impossible that our consciousness does not continue to exist. Let the continuous existence of our consciousness be CE, formally we have obtained epistemic support for \sim ◇ \sim CE, which is equivalent to \square CE (necessarily, our consciousness continues to exist).

III. Challenges and replies

One immediate question is to challenge the main premise—is it really the case that we can't help but continue to regard ourselves as existing? In Smullyan's devil's advocate he presents a potential scenario against his own intuition—a scenario that not only denies INC but perhaps even establishes CON (that our own non-existence is conceivable). The scenario in play is a mental state similar to a dreamless sleep. Many of us had experienced dreamless sleeps in life and could arguably imagine such scenario. However, if such scenario is indeed analogous to the cease of existence, then it would seem that we could imagine the latter after all.

To respond to such challenge, one might argue that more specifications regarding the dreamless sleep are needed in order to appreciate its similarity to non-existence. As for now it is not at all clear that a dreamless sleep resembles non-existence close enough. Following Smullyan's response, it seems that even in the case of a deep sleep where no specific content of dream could be identified, there still seems to be some experiences of being in a blank state involved—in other words, even in a scenario where one experiences emptiness, certain degree of consciousness continues to exist—this is inevitable, as something must exist in order for experiences to be possible. For Smullyan, however, the absence of afterlife amounts to a total annihilation of ones consciousness⁶. If this is what dreamless sleep amounts to, Smullyan argued, then it is impossible for us to conceive/imagine it, since imaginations are experiences, and the latter inevitably involves some degree of consciousness—even the experience of emptiness requires a consciousness as a

⁶ Smullyan (2003), pp.15.

subject. Emptiness simpliciter, the annihilation of consciousness altogether, would preclude any experience at all, and therefore can never be imagined.

The second challenge comes from the appeal to physicalism. Consider for example supervenience physicalism, a popular line of physicalism which suppose that everything (including, most importantly here, the mental) supervenes on the physical. If that is the case, how is it possible for our consciousness to exist independent from our corresponding bodies in the physical realm (i.e. after our bodily death)? If such independent existence is impossible, then our consciousness must be dependent on something in the physical realm if it were to continue to exist. But this is perhaps even more inconceivable—what in the physical realm could it possibly depend upon without being *ad hoc*? The corresponding body had since then perished and decomposed to scattered particles completely unrelated to each other now in the physical realm, how could our consciousness existence supervenes on these scattered particles? Still, to say that it supervenes on any other combinations of things in the physical are equally, if not more, ridiculous. Thus, it seems that every situation I imagine falsifies the claim that my consciousness continues to exist after bodily death, under the very same inconceivability account, it is impossible that my consciousness continues to exist after the bodily death.

I believe that this is actually a substantial challenge to the argument that I could only accommodate in response. Granted, for people who endorsed physicalism in the first place, running my line of argument could equally generates epistemic support against the existence of afterlife—nevertheless this would not cancel out the original support we obtained for afterlife, since the premise was based on a different source, indeed, a source that is deeply embedded to every conscious being as Smullyan and Freud suggested. Thus, I believe that for this group of physicalists, this potentially results in a cognitive dilemma—in that they possess epistemic support for and against afterlife. Such dilemma, of course, need not be actualised, as they might not be aware of these supports explicitly. As Freud pointed out, the inclination to believe in afterlife might well be ‘in the unconscious.’ Moreover, this is not the only way to go for physicalists—they could always abandon the theoretical commitment to the conceivability account and thus decline their epistemic support both for and against afterlife, leaving the options open for themselves. On the other hand, people who wish to keep epistemic support only for but not against afterlife could opt to reject physicalism. After all, the discussions above made theoretical assumption to begin with, and neither of the theories are remotely close to being universally accepted among philosophers. Thus, this paper is far from presenting a knock-down argument for either side. Rather, the consequence of ones beliefs lies in the hands of the believers themselves—by choosing their set of theoretical commitments. One might refer to the taxonomy of theory endorsements and their consequences as below.

	(In)conceivability	~(In)conceivability
Physicalism	Support for and against afterlife—potential dilemma	No support
~Physicalism	Support for afterlife	No support

Concluding remarks

In conclusion, while it is intuitive that we have difficulties not imagining ourselves as existing, this does not automatically transfer into epistemic support. Much depends on one's theoretical commitments. If one takes inconceivability as a guide to impossibility, then the belief of afterlife could be supported. On the other hand, if one further endorses physicalism, it turns out that the inconceivability account would bring about both epistemic support for and against afterlife.



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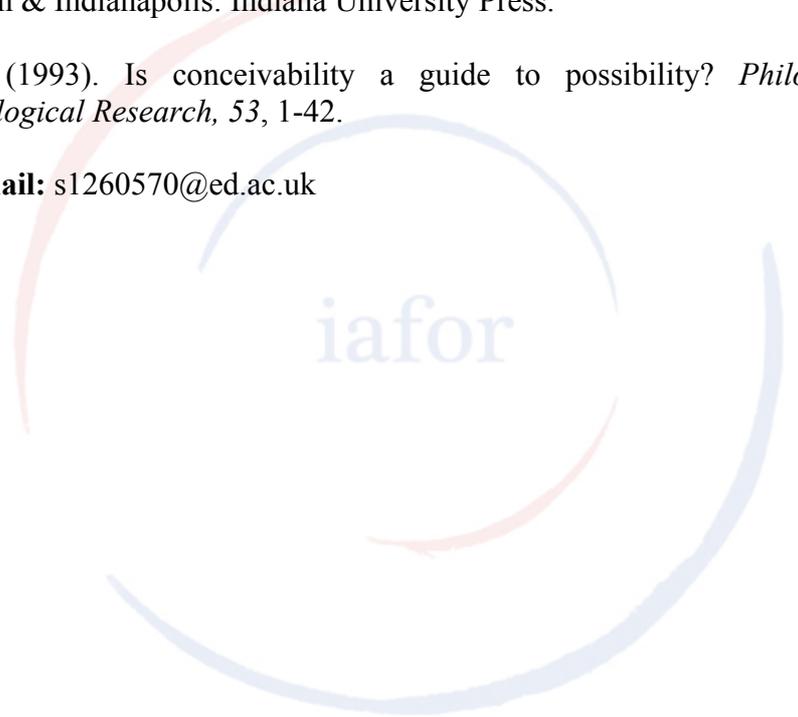
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The logo for the International Association for Philosophy (iafor) is centered on the page. It features the lowercase letters 'iafor' in a light blue, sans-serif font. The text is enclosed within a circular graphic composed of two overlapping, semi-transparent arcs: a larger light blue one and a smaller, slightly offset red one, creating a sense of depth and movement.



Ethical Judgments of Directors' on Earnings Management Practices

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to determine directors' ethical judgments of earnings management practices. We use the questionnaire which was originally designed by Bruns and Merchant (1990) which consists of 13 earnings management scenarios. The questionnaire asked the directors to rate their acceptability of earnings management practices using a 5-point scale ranging from ethical to totally unethical. We find that the ethical judgments of directors are affected by the types of earnings management. The directors view accrual-based earnings management is more unethical than real-based earnings management. Our findings require attention of auditors and regulators to be aware of overlooked area in financial information as firms can switch from accrual to real-based earnings management method in preparing their financial statements.

Keywords: Earnings management, Types, Directors, Malaysia

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Introduction

Issues related to earnings management has been a topic of great interest for the past two decades to accounting profession, academics, standard setters and press (DeFond, 2010; Dechow, Hutton, Kim and Sloan, 2012; Luippold, Kida, Piercey and Smith, 2015). The issue has become more controversial due to a series corporate failures and criticism regarding the quality of financial reporting during the Global Financial Crisis (Heinz, Patel and Hellmann, 2013). Furthermore, the move towards principle based accounting standards globally requires extensive use of professional judgment that allows greater discretion for managers in preparing their financial statements (Okamoto, 2011).

Despite the importance of this area of research, earnings management is difficult to observe (Elias, 2002; Heinz, Patel and Hellmann, 2013). Investigating earnings management remains a challenge for archival empirical research to convincingly document earnings management behavior (Graham, Harvey and Rajgopal, 2005). Due to the nature of earnings management that can be either legal or illegal earnings management, it is highly ambiguous and requires further investigation (Okamoto, 2011; Heinz, Patel and Hellmann, 2013).

Thus, we conducted a survey to understand the directors' ethical judgment with regards to earnings management practices focusing on types of earnings management commonly used by managers in managing earnings. We focus our sample on directors sitting on the board of Malaysian public listed companies. In the study, the directors are required to rate their acceptability of earnings management practices taken by manager. Managers may manage earnings either through accrual or real-based earnings management. Our study intends to understand the directors' judgment on different types of earnings management practices as their view is important to promote ethical accounting practices in their companies.

Our results indicate that the directors' judgment on earnings management practices are affected by types of earnings management. Our results demonstrate that the directors believe that real-based earnings management is less unethical than accrual-based earnings management. This is consistent with our expectation that directors may be more tolerance on real-based earnings management due to greater scrutiny by the capital market on the accrual-based manipulation. Our study contributes to business ethics research that investigates the ethical judgment of directors. While prior studies focused on earnings management from a capital market perspective mainly on detection, magnitude and consequence of earnings management, little research has examined the ethical perception of this practice (Elias, 2002).

Furthermore, our findings contribute to different environment settings, an emerging country that often associated with weak investor protection and low enforcement actions (Ipino and Parbonetti, 2011). We expect our results to be differ from those studies conducted in developed markets as the developed market firms is constrained by strong investor protection environments thus reduce the ability for the managers to manage earnings.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. The next section provides literature on earnings management studies related to our research, followed by the research methods in Section 3. The final two sections present the results and concluding remarks, respectively.

Literature Review

Earnings management is defined as manipulating reported earnings to achieve the desired financial results which may inaccurately present economic earnings (Goel and Thakor, 2003; Luippold et al., 2015). As argued by Healy and Wahlen (1999, p.368), earnings management may occur ‘...when managers use judgment in financial reporting and in structuring transactions to alter financial reports to either mislead some stakeholders about the underlying economic performance of the company or to influence contractual outcomes that depend on reported accounting numbers’. While there are scholars who support the legality of earnings managements that conform to GAAP, others have questioned the ethics of earnings management practices that make the characteristics of earnings management as dubious (Okamoto, 2011).

There are several ways that managers can exercise their judgment in choosing the methods to estimate the accounting numbers in the financial reports. Judgment creates opportunities for managers to manage earnings by choosing the reporting methods and estimates that do not accurately reflect a firms’ underlying economic performance of the company (Healy and Wahlen, 1999). The wider range of choices brings opportunities to management team of a firm to manipulate earnings for their own advantage. As suggested by Christensen, Hoyt and Paterson (1999), when managers have both the incentives (i.e. contractual incentives, market incentives and regulatory incentives) and the opportunities to manage earnings, they are more likely to engage in earnings management. Prior empirical evidences suggest that the incentives to manage earnings may possibly arise from the need to increase personal bonuses and remunerations (Goel and Thakor, 2003; Latridis and Kadorinis, 2009), to gain opportunities for promotion, to meet annual profit targets (Graham, Harvey and Rajgopal, 2005), to benefit the companies (Chen and Tsai, 2010) as well as to meet other parties’ requirements (Chen and Tsai, 2010; Yang, Chi and Young, 2012). A survey by Graham, Harvey and Rajgopal (2005) reports that eighty percent of chief financial officers choose to decrease discretionary expenditures when faced with the possibility of earnings falling below the company desired earnings targets. The CFOs believe that hitting earnings benchmarks could build the market confidence and increase or at least maintain the stock price of their companies (Graham, Harvey and Rajgopal, 2005).

There are two types of earnings management which have been identified in the literature: 1) accrual-based earnings management, and 2) real-based earnings management. Gunny (2010) suggests that accrual management involves the manipulation of information within the range of Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) to hide the actual financial condition. On the other hand, Mizik (2010) suggest that real activities management may be done through the alteration of operational practices that reduce actual economic earnings in order to generate favourable market reactions. According to Gunny (2010), while accrual management can take place after a fiscal year end, which is the period during which the need for earnings management is very high, real earnings activities may occur prior to a fiscal

year end. Although both practices relate to a deliberate attempt to either increase or decrease earnings, the relevant distinction between these two types of earnings management is that real earnings management imposes real costs on firms (Ipino and Parbonetti, 2011).

Findings from study by Bruns and Merchant (1990) report that managers view that management of accounting method (accrual-based earnings management) is less acceptable compared to manipulating operating method (real-based earnings management). They called the standard setters to get managers involved in discussion on short-term earnings management practices to establish clearer accounting and operating standards in a company. According to them, those who engage in earnings management practices may not necessarily be bad people but sometimes they do not have a clear understanding of the implication of their practices. Similarly, a subsequent study by Merchant and Rockness (1994) who surveyed general managers, staff managers, operation-unit controllers, and internal auditors also find that the accounting manipulations are judged more harshly as compared to operating manipulation.

Elias (2002) surveys practicing accountants, accounting faculty and students to identify the determinants of earnings management behavior. Based on 763 respondents who answered the questionnaire, he reveals significant differences among group of respondents on the ethics of earnings management. On the other hand, study by Giacomino and Akers (2006) document no significance difference between students and business managers' perception regarding earnings management practices. Using undergraduate students and MBA students who played the role of business manager, Jooste (2013) also reports no significant differences between students and business managers' perceptions regarding the morality of earnings management practices. She suggests that more exposure to and understanding of earnings management be given to business students with greater emphasis on accounting curricula on earnings management practices.

Research Methodology

To gather data regarding directors' ethical judgment of earnings management practices, a questionnaire survey designed by Bruns and Merchant (1990), which consists of thirteen (13) short scenarios, was used. Each scenario describes potentially questionable earnings management activity undertaken by the general manager. Out of 13 scenarios, 6 questions dealt with real-based earnings management and 7 questions dealt with accrual-based earnings management. Several studies have investigated earnings management ethics using this questionnaires such as Merchant and Rockness (1994), Elias (2002), Giacomino and Akers (2006) and Jooste (2013).

A set of questionnaires was sent to the directors of the sample firms through the mail in October 2012. The sample firms were randomly selected from the list of public listed companies on the Bursa Malaysia website. A total of 300 questionnaires were mailed. The directors were asked to evaluate each scenario by indicating their judgment as to the acceptability of earnings management practices using Likert 5-point scales ranging from ethical (1) to totally unethical (5) (note: The questions are available in Harvard Business Review, March-April 1989, pp. 220-221). The respondents were given 3 month to complete and return the questionnaire to the

researcher. Out of the 300 questionnaires, 31 (10.33%) valid questionnaires were returned and used for discussions.

Findings

Table 1 presents the background of the respondents.

Table 1: Background of the Respondents

Descriptive items	Frequency	Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Gender			
Male	25	80.6	80.6
Female	6	19.4	100
Age			
30 or under	3	9.7	9.7
31-40	8	25.8	35.5
41-50	7	22.6	58.1
51 or older	12	38.7	96.8
No answer	1	3.2	100
Race			
Malay	20	64.5	64.5
Chinese	9	29.0	93.5
No Answer	2	6.5	100
Highest education level			
First degree	15	48.4	48.4
Master degree	6	19.4	67.8
Others	9	29	96.8
No Answer	1	3.2	100
Professional qualification			
Yes	14	45.2	45.2
No	17	54.8	100
Current position in the company			
CEO	1	3.2	3.2
Executive directors	10	32.3	35.5
Independent directors	7	22.6	58.1
Others	13	41.9	100
Years in the current position			
10 or under	21	67.7	67.7
11-20	5	16.1	83.8
No answer	5	16.1	100
Involvement in decision making			
Yes	19	61.3	61.3
No	11	35.5	96.8
No answer	1	3.2	100

Based on Table 1, 25 (80.6%) of the respondents are male and 6 (19.4%) are female. In terms of age, majority of respondents are 51 years old or older (38.7%). More than half of the respondents are Malay (64.5%). With regards to the highest education, 15 (48.4%) out of the 31 respondents have a first degree and the remaining respondents

have either a masters degree (19.4%) or other professional qualifications (29%). 1 (3.2%) of the respondent is CEO, 10 (32.3%) out of the 31 respondents are executive directors, 7 (22.6%) are independent non-executive directors while the remaining respondents are in other categories, i.e. finance manager, account manager; 13 (41.9%). The respondents have been serving in their current position for a period ranged between 1 to 20 years. Finally, 19 (61.3%) of the respondents have been involved in decisions that touch upon earnings management during their tenure. Table 2 reports the means scores and standard deviations for each of the 13 scenarios of the respondents in this study.

Table 2: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations ($n=31$)

Question	Mean	Std. Deviation	Range
1	2.19	1.06	1-4
2a	2.39	1.16	1-5
2b	2.58	1.34	1-5
3	3.48	1.07	1-5
4a	2.39	1.13	1-5
4b	1.74	1.08	1-5
4c	2.23	1.41	1-5
5a	3.35	1.31	1-5
5b	3.55	1.34	1-5
6a	3.19	1.33	1-5
6b	3.00	1.46	1-5
7a	3.35	1.31	1-5
7b	3.94	1.22	1-5

Consistent with prior findings by Merchant and Rockness (1994), large ranges of responses and high standard deviations that are observed from Table 2 suggests disagreement among respondents for most of the scenarios. Similar to Merchant and Rockness (1994, p. 91), our data shows *'far less than unanimous agreement about where the line between right or wrong should be drawn'*, thus, require further attention.

Table 3: Acceptability of Earnings Management Practices ($n=31$)

Attribute	Questions	Mean Rating	Std. deviation	t -statistics
Accrual-based earnings management	3, 5a, 5b, 6a, 6b, 7a, 7b	3.4101	0.87345	-5.991**
Real-based earnings management	1, 2a, 2b, 4a, 4b, 4c	2.2527	0.66370	

** $p < 0.01$

Consistent with prior studies (Bruns and Merchant, 1990; Merchant and Rockness, 1994), our results indicate that the acceptability of earnings management practices by directors is affected by the type of earnings management. As shown in the Table 3 above, the directors view that accrual-based earnings management is more unethical than real-based earnings management. Hence, real-based earnings management is more ethically acceptable form of earning management practices as opposed to

accrual-based earnings management. As suggested by Gunny (2010), firms prefer real earnings manipulation due to several reasons: 1) aggressive accrual manipulation may result in subsequent regulatory scrutiny and litigation, 2) limited flexibility in managing reported earnings through discretionary accruals, and 3) while accounting choices are subject to auditor examination, real earnings manipulation is controlled by managers. Therefore, she suggests that real earnings manipulation is more likely to pass unnoticed by regulatory bodies and auditors as compared to accrual manipulation.

Furthermore, the mandatory adoption of IFRS further may constrain accrual-based earnings management due to a heightened scrutiny of accounting practices by regulatory bodies. Ipino and Parbonetti (2011) report a decrease in accrual-based earnings management after the mandatory adoption of IFRS. In countries with weak legal enforcement framework, managers change their preference in managing earnings by using real-based earnings management rather than accrual-based earnings management that lead to a much stronger decline in performance subsequent to IFRS adoption. Kuo et al. (2014) suggest that the costs of manipulating accruals increase as a result of greater scrutiny by the capital market following the regulatory changes. As a result, firms switch from accrual-based earnings management to real-based earnings management activities.

Conclusion

Our study documents evidence on directors' ethical judgment on earnings management practices. Our study contributes to earnings management research on the behavioural perspective which is not observable through archival empirical research. Using survey instruments, our results indicate that ethical judgments by directors are affected by the type of earnings management where the directors view that accrual-based earnings management is more unethical than real-based earnings management.

Directors' judgments towards earnings management practices have important practical implication for auditors who need to be more vigilant in their search for errors in the financial statements. As pointed out by Luippold et al. (2015), the more skeptical auditors are more likely to discover earnings management. Auditors' responses to earnings management may reduce attempt by managers to manage earnings thus help to improve the quality of the reported earnings. Furthermore, on policy implication, we recommend regulators to be aware of the overlooked area while improving the quality of accounting information. Despite regulatory changes that resulted in greater availability of information, Kuo, Ning and Song (2014) suggest that there is always an opportunity for firms to continue manipulating earnings as they can switch from accrual to real-based earnings method.

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Empirically Informed Theorizing about Justice and Distributive Justice Reasoning among Asians

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Abstract

Although some philosophers who are committed to applying the method of wide reflective equilibrium to theories of justice have already argued that evidence from the social sciences should inform theorizing about distributive justice, it remains unclear how or whether evidence on the impact of sociocultural factors on patterns of reasoning about just distribution should similarly be considered. Neither David Miller, John Rawls, or his followers, consider the work done by social psychologists on patterns of distributive justice reasoning among subjects from different parts of Asia. In this paper I fill the foregoing gap by closely examining what it means to be committed to empirically grounded theorizing about justice while being sensitive to sociocultural factors that affect distributive justice reasoning such as a deep and ongoing concern about interpersonal harmony and an overall relational orientation. I argue that although considering these sociocultural factors have both theoretical implications for a theories of justice that endorse the method of wide reflective equilibrium and a potential for practical recommendations on policy. More specifically, I briefly discuss how some of the evidence from social and cross-cultural psychology can be used for promoting the conditional cash transfer program in the Philippines.

Keywords: Justice, Distributive Justice, Reflective Equilibrium, Cross-Cultural Psychology

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Introduction

Although philosophers have been developing and arguing for empirically informed accounts of distributive justice nobody has considered and outlined the implications of empirical evidence which show that distinct patterns of reasoning about distributive justice has been observed in populations from Asia. The relevant evidence is mostly from social psychology, developmental psychology, and cross-cultural and comparative psychology. Here I discuss such evidence and make a case for an empirically grounded theorizing about distributive justice that is sensitive to sociocultural factors.

Reflective Equilibrium and the Commitment to Empirically Informed Theorizing About Justice

Let us look at a prominent methodological commitment in developing a theory of justice that requires consideration of empirical evidence. The method of wide reflective equilibrium, which was established by John Rawls (1971, 1974) and developed further by Norman Daniels (1996), requires us to work towards coherence among our moral principles, judgments about the world, and *best current understanding of the world* (emphasis supplied). The idea is that the best account of justice would only emerge after an extended deliberative process in which beliefs about judgments on specific cases, reflectively endorsed principles of distribution, and all relevant facts about the way humans think and behave are examined, clarified, and revised to arrive at a maximally coherent position. Such a procedure requires working back and forth between general principles and specific judgments while at the same time examining relevant empirical evidence and associated theories from the natural and social sciences. It is the latter part of the procedure that is more directly connected to developing an empirically grounded account of justice.

Although David Miller (2001) criticizes aspects of Rawls's deployment of the method of wide reflective equilibrium he argues that philosophers must pay more attention to empirical evidence when they develop a normative theory of justice. According to Miller, "The aim is to achieve an equilibrium whereby the theory of justice appears no longer as an external imposition conjured up by the philosopher but as a clearer and more systematic statement of the principles that people already hold (Miller 2001, p. 51). The chief difference is this: whereas Rawls talks about arriving at an equilibrium point from the point of view of an individual, Miller explicitly takes on the point of view of a community. He says that only taking on the narrow perspective of a single individual would render it nearly impossible to do something very important: to see whether a judgment that one makes is shared by others and to discover the basis of any difference of opinion (Miller 2001, p. 55). Miller seems to be right on this point, not least because consideration of our best current understanding of the world ought to importantly include the ways in which views on justice held by different individuals converge and differ.

Before moving on to the next section it is worth noting an important warning from Adam Swift (1999) who argues that public opinion does not straightforwardly justify any principle of just distribution. Swift concedes the relevance of public opinion by saying, "what people think (and what they can be reasonably expected to come to

think) on distributive matters can be an important factor for the political theorist to take into account for reasons of legitimacy, or feasibility, or both” (Swift 1999, p. 338). On my view, Swift’s warning is a reason for clarifying not only what sorts of evidence on public opinion are relevant for justifying a normative account of distributive justice, but also how exactly such evidence figures in the justification of such an account. Miller’s articulation of the complementarity between empirical research and normative theorizing about distributive justice nicely provides the necessary clarification. Miller says,

On the one hand, the empirical researcher, the sociologist or the social psychologist, needs a normative theory both to enable him to distinguish beliefs and pieces of behavior that express justice from those that do not, and to explain such beliefs and behavior adequately. On the other hand, in setting out a theory of justice, the normative theorist who is guided by something akin to the Rawlsian idea of reflective equilibrium and public justifiability needs evidence about what people do in fact regard as fair and unfair in different social settings (Miller 2001, p. 59).

Miller’s articulation of the mutual influence between empirical research and normative theory points to the need for finding a balance between taking people’s opinion into account and still developing an account of distributive justice that provides coherent recommendations that require people to change the way they think and behave.

Now that it’s clear that wide reflective equilibrium, which is widely accepted among those who theorize about justice, requires consideration of empirical evidence, let us look at gaps in consideration of such evidence. It is one thing to accept that an empirically informed approach to theorizing about justice is required and quite another to apply such a methodological commitment in the right way. For instance, although our best current understanding of the world includes knowledge about distinct patterns in distributive justice reasoning among people from Asia, such evidence has not directly figured in normative accounts of distributive justice. Neither Rawls himself nor theorists who have adopted his method of wide reflective equilibrium have considered the evidence just mentioned. Miller criticized Rawls for not being interested in arriving at an equilibrium point from the perspective of a community, but Miller himself did not consider the evidence not all people hold, or at least prioritize, exactly the same reason for reflective endorsement of the same norms for fair, or at least acceptable, distribution. In the next section I provide a brief precis of the relevant evidence on the distinct patten of distributive justice reasoning among people from Asia.

A Quick Glance at Some of the Relevant Evidence

Let us take a brief look at the evidence on distributive justice reasoning from populations in Asia and associated cultures. First, consider a study which shows that notions on distributive justice seem to be culturally constructed.¹ Schäfer and her

¹ Although the study in question is does not involve populations from Asia it is relevant for the point I am making in the paper for two reasons. First, the conclusion that merit-based distribution is not universally shared across cultures is possible to establish using the relevant contrasting populations, even if none of them are from Asia. Second, the findings in this study are fully consistent with findings in studies that do involve populations from Asia. I will discuss one such experiment shortly.

associates inquired into the prevalence of merit-based distribution by comparing the responses of children from three different societies: (1) Germany, which is modern Western society; (2) ≠Akhoe Hai||om, a partially hunter-gatherer egalitarian society in Namibia; and (3) Samburu, a pastoralist gerontocratic society in Kenya (Schäfer, Haun & Tomasello 2015).² According to the researchers Hai||om society, like others that heavily depend on hunting and gathering, is “characterized by a high degree of equality among group members, which is actively maintained by social norms that discourage the accumulation of wealth and status” (Schäfer, Haun & Tomasello 2015, p. 1253). Meanwhile the gerontocratic Samburu society is characterized by an age-based hierarchy in which group elders hold most of the wealth and autocratically decide on assigning work and distributing resources (Ibid.). Schäfer, et. al., gave paired children from all three societies a task in which they fished for magnetic cubes out of two containers. The conditions were rigged such that one child always fishes out three times as many cubes as the other child. The children were then rewarded on the basis of the total number of magnetic cubes they obtained and left to decide on how to distribute the jointly acquired reward among themselves. The results indicate that German children favored a merit-based distribution while Hai||om children distributed rewards most equally, with Samburu children distributing rewards the most unequally. However, the distribution of Samburu children did not divide rewards according to merit at all; in a good number of pairs among Samburu children the high-merit child received less reward. The researchers conclude that norms of distribution based on merit are not universally shared and that such norms are most likely constructed.

Second, consider a study that investigates the similarities and differences in distributive justice reasoning in American and Filipino children. Allison Carson and Ali Banuazizi (2008) discovered that although American and Filipino children both prefer an equal distribution of resources they gave very different reasons for such a preference. One very interesting feature of this study is the way in which it highlights the salience of both merit- and need-based distribution of resources. In one of the experiments, the participants in the study were asked to help the experimenter distribute rewards to two other children who helped to perform a specific task. Of these two children, one was described as having done more work while the other as having greater need for the reward that was to be given. Both Filipino and American children chose to distribute the rewards equally rather than to choose between a distribution that strictly follows merit or one that strictly follows need. It is worth noting, however, that the equal distribution favors the needy child more since the reward to be allocated was limited and giving the needy child as many items, in this case pencils, meant that the meritorious child did not get the number of pencils that matches his or her performance in the given task. However, the most interesting part of this study is the way in which it exposed the difference in reasons given by the American and Filipino children for equal distribution of rewards. The American children focused on fairness or some kind of evening out. One child nicely expresses the idea as follows: “Because then he, he doesn’t [have] some supplies he needs but she picked up more stuff than he did. He needs pencils and she earned pencils. So I think it would make sense if they both just divided it evenly” (Carson & Banuazizi 2008, p. 503). In contrast, Filipino children explained the equal distribution of rewards in terms of the concern over the emotional consequences of an unequal

² Merit or equity based distribution is a strong, intuitive, and very widely shared norm that requires an allocation of benefits and burdens according to the contribution an individual makes in a joint effort or in the performance of a given task.

distribution, even if that distribution is based on merit. Although the children who performed the task for the experimenter were not personally known to the participants, there was a concern about negative emotions. More specifically, the participants spoke of possible resentment, jealousy, or strain in friendship in the event that the reward is distributed unequally. Here is a more detailed account of the position taken by the Filipino children:

For Filipino children, in addition to avoiding negative emotions, an equal distribution was thought to contribute to positive feelings between the two recipient characters. The explanation offered by a Filipino boy (H2) in favor of an equal distribution is illustrative of such presumed positive consequences: “If they are given differently, and if the other one won’t lend the other a ball pen, like when one runs out of ink, for example, they might fight. When it is equal, they can still be friends.” The preference for an equal division on the grounds that it would help to maintain friendships is reflected also in the following statement by another Filipino child (BB2): “It should be 50-50 ... because it’s fair and square I want them to be friends.” Inherent in these statements by the Filipino children is the notion that negative emotions threaten friendships and should therefore be avoided. (Carson & Banuazizi

Here it is worth noting that the difference between the reasons given by American and Filipino children for equal distribution of rewards is consistent with an interpretation of their results given by Schäfer, et. al. According to them, the difference between German, Hai||om, and Samburu children can partly be explained by “the fact that in large-scale societies ... relationship-neutral norms might be particularly important for regulating transactions between individuals who do not share personal history or interact only temporarily in specific contexts” (Schäfer, Haun & Tomasello 2015, p. 1258). The strategy of distribution deployed by both the American and German children in the two studies is consistent with the perspective that it makes sense to focus on a single transaction or encounter in isolation because the likelihood of establishing long-term interpersonal connections between those involved is low. In contrast, the distribution strategy of the Filipino children operate from the view that the decisions about distributing school supplies in this particular situation is but a small part of ongoing forms of relating between those involved.³

Third, let us look at a study which shows that people from collectivist cultures use different norms for distribution with in-group and out-group members.⁴ Kwok Leung and Michael Bond (1984) discovered that people from a Chinese background follow the equality, not the equity, norm even with out-group members when there is pressure of social evaluation and they performed better. Leung and Bond’s study is especially important because it explores a previously established pattern in which it was discovered that people from collectivist cultures prefer the equality and/or need-

³ It is unclear whether the same can be said of the Hai||om and Samburu children. The behavior of the latter is especially difficult to interpret because they do not follow norms of merit, equality, or need. Indeed, Schäfer, et. al., speculate that living in a gerontocratic society has made the Samburu children so unused to making decisions about distributing resources that their decisions turned out to be “very unequal, but undirected” (Schäfer, Haun & Tomasello 2015, p. 1259). The behavior of the Hai||om children is a bit similar to those of Filipino children.

⁴ Collectivist cultures are not monolithic in an interesting study participants from Hong Kong and Indonesia, Murphy-Breman and Breman (2002) discovered that there are interesting differences of opinion on allocation choices even though both cultures can be considered collectivist. Indeed, Murphy-Breman and Breman emphasize that collectivism is a multidimensional construct and that their study was premised on the understanding that Hong Kong and Indonesia “represent different faces of collectivism” (2002, p. 158).

based norms only for those whom they consider their in-group; toward those who don't belong to this group, collectivists follow the merit or equity norm even more closely than those who belong to individualistic cultures. Moreover, Leung and Bond's study feature adults instead of children so that their findings are more relevant for a normative theory of distributive justice. It is also noteworthy that the findings in Leung and Bond's study is consistent with closely connected studies in which the participants are children. One of the findings in a study conducted by Nirmala Rao and Sunita Mahtani Stewart (1999) on Chinese and Indian children is that these children show a preference for the norms of equality and need. So let us go back to the study conducted by Leung and Bond. They compared the allocation choices made by Chinese and American subjects in conditions where they were tasked with distributing monetary reward after performing a certain task. In one version of the experiment the participants were told that they performed twice as well in the task in a set up in which the other person was an out-group member. The finding is that Chinese male subjects followed the equality norm even when their performance was better and the other recipient of the reward is an outgroup member, but only when evaluation pressure is present. Leung and Bond explain the finding as follows:

collectivists may be more sensitive to social evaluation and more willing to try to maintain a favorable image in front of significant others. The use of the equality norm, especially when one's performance level is high, conveys to the recipient and the experimenter an image of friendliness and solidarity and is therefore preferred by the Chinese subjects in the public allocation conditions. (Leung & Bond 1984, p. 798).

If this interpretation of the finding is right, then it has interesting implications for helping people shift from following a merit-based norm to an equality-based norm. Provided that a separate justification for such a shift is given, the understanding of how people from collectivist cultures behave could help normative theorists to make better recommendations for action.

An Initial Assessment of Practical and Theoretical Implications

The initial assessment of the implications of the evidence canvassed in the previous section will be organized under two broad headings. First, what are the theoretical implications of the evidence presented? Second, what kind of practical application can be derived from such evidence? Let us consider the first question. Agreement on following a given norm or principle for distribution, which could very well figure in the kind of equilibrium envisioned by Rawls and Miller, masks substantial difference of opinion for acceptance of such a norm or principle. This means that two individuals or groups who accept the same norm or principle could very well disagree on other specific applications of such a principle and/or some closely connected issue. If this is right, then it is possible that a single true equilibrium point cannot be reached for all peoples, given the difference in the way that they construe allocation decisions and interactions between individuals. People from collectivist cultures have a deep and ongoing concern for interpersonal harmony and an overall relational orientation. So in shifting back and forth between their judgment on specific cases and endorsement of particular principles the people from Asia will most likely go in a different direction compared to those who do not put a premium on interpersonal harmony or operate from a relational orientation. Saying this does not amount to acceptance of the idea

that any form of coherence is acceptable. Rather, the point is that substantially different coherent systems or equilibrium points can have an objective basis for being acceptable. Although I do not have time to discuss the details more here, the position that I am describing is similar to the one that David Wong (2006) defends and develops in his book *Natural Moralities*.

Let us turn now to the second question, the one about deriving practical recommendations from the relevant evidence. Here I would like to consider a specific policy in a particular setting: Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program in the Philippines. CCT has been implemented in many parts of the world, starting with Latin America. The program aims to reduce short-term poverty by making direct cash transfers to poor families and long-term poverty by imposing the condition that beneficiaries engage in behavior that increase their human capital. In the Philippines, CCT is called Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps). Under 4Ps families are given a certain amount: Php 500/month for the entire household for health expenses and Php 300/month for ten months as an education grant for every child of that household (maximum of three children per household). So a household with three children may receive up to Php 1,400 a month or Php 15,000/year for five years. In return the family has to fulfill the following conditions: (1) Pregnant women must get pre- and post-natal check-ups and be attended to by a trained professional during childbirth; (2) Parents or guardians must attend family development sessions on topics such as management of finances, responsible parenting, health, and nutrition; (3) Children from 0-5 years must get vaccines and regular check-ups; (4) Children aged 6-14 must get deworming twice a year; and (5) School age child beneficiaries (3-18) must enroll in school and maintain an attendance record of at least 85% of class days every month. Some Filipinos who do not belong to the section of the populace that benefits from 4Ps call the program a dole-out and condemn it for allegedly rewarding reprehensible indolence and lack of initiative.⁵ Such a condemnation appears to be an arguably inappropriate application of merit-based distribution to those whom one does not consider as ‘one of us’ (i.e., out-group members). Considering that CCT in general and 4Ps in particular have been credited for being an effective safety net program that enables a substantial improvement in human capital, it makes sense to ask how we can shift questionable application of a merit-based norm to norms based on equality and/or need. The study conducted by Leung and Bond presents us with interesting possibilities: increasing the salience of evaluation pressure can help people to move away from applying merit-based norms. The fine-grained details of using this idea needs to be fleshed out before any testing can be done and it is beyond the scope of this presentation to provide such fine-grained details. But if anyone is now interested in developing and testing the recommendation for helping people move from a better application of a distribution norms, then empirically grounded theorizing about justice will have gained a little more ground.

⁵ Elsewhere I have written about a similar attitude among Filipino elites, see my “Virtue Ethics, Situationism, and the Filipino Business Leader’s Compassion for the Poor” (Cleofas 2016).

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***How Can the Pursuit of Equal Opportunity Be Reasonable in Education?:
A Perspective from the Rawlsian Theory of Justice***

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Abstract

This paper attempts to elaborate a reasonable principle of equal opportunity in education through a reinterpretation of John Rawls' theory of justice. To do so, firstly, I point out that there have been disagreements on the definition of the concept of equal opportunity in education, and the difficulties this concept entails. Secondly, I introduce Rawls' theory of justice and clarify the implications of his principles of justice for educational systems. Finally, I examine the criticisms of Rawls' principles of justice, and thereby show the possibility that his theory of justice will avoid the difficulties of the pursuit of equal opportunity in education. This paper concludes that securing people's self-respect is essential in pursuing equal opportunity in education according to Rawls' theory of justice, and providing freedom is the indispensable means by which self-respect can be achieved.

Keywords: equality of educational opportunity, John Rawls, self-respect, freedom

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Introduction: Difficulties of the pursuit of equal opportunity in education

The significance of establishing good and just educational systems is widely recognized in today's world, and there are many ideals educational systems should achieve. The idea of equal opportunity is one of these ideals. However, there have been disagreements on the definition of the concept of equal educational opportunity, and serious doubts have been raised that the pursuit of equal opportunity in education is even desirable.

Although the concept of equal educational opportunity appears to be simple and clear, historically, various definitions of this concept have been raised and examined.¹ For purposes of this paper, from the body of all the definitions put forward, three simplified, but typical, interpretations will be examined. Firstly, some might see equal opportunity as formal or legal rights to access education for all. This may be the most minimal and basic view on equal opportunity. However, since this interpretation mentions nothing about the conditions of schooling, such as curriculum, educational equipment or government expenditure, it would amount to a vague concept or, at best, a concept only certain libertarians would support. Thus, a second interpretation is the substantive view, which means providing equal input, such as a common curriculum and equal educational resources, to each student. This view, however, may be inadequate to support students who need more resources than others, such as those in severe poverty or those having a physical or mental handicap. As well, some could object that it is insufficient to prevent the reproduction of class or social inequality. Therefore, thirdly, there are egalitarian versions of equal opportunity. Some contemporary egalitarians claim that students should have equal prospects of educational achievements irrespective of their social class or, even more radically, their natural talents. Although there are a number of dissenting voices in the camp, contemporary egalitarians generally think that people's voluntary choices or efforts should be relevant to their prospects but that the effects of other factors, which people are not responsible for, should be equalized. The argument for 'educational equality' by Harry Brighouse (2010) can be seen as a representative and sophisticated example of such egalitarian versions of equal opportunity. Thus, disagreements on the definition of the concept of equal educational opportunity persist. However, the pursuit of equal opportunity is ultimately inclined to favor egalitarian versions because these types of equal opportunity seem to reflect a common intuition on social justice, and therefore, the following argument will consider the problems egalitarian versions of equal opportunity entail.

Even if there were an agreement on the definition of the concept, the pursuit of equal opportunity would still be faced with serious difficulties. There are basically two kinds of difficulties from a normative perspective. One is the relationship between equality and other values, such as family values, educational excellence, and benefiting the least advantaged (Brighouse, 2010). As the achievement of complete equality would not be possible without disregarding family values, there are always potential conflicts among these values. Thus, the order and the degrees of priority of these values must be considered. The other is leveling down objection, which is an intrinsic difficulty of pursuing equality. Historically, critics of egalitarianism have,

¹ For example of specific definitions, see Coleman (1968); Evetts (1970).

more or less, cited this difficulty to cast doubt on the desirability of pursuing equality, and therefore, this paper will mainly focus on addressing the leveling down objection.

Leveling down also has at least two versions in education.² Firstly, if some think that equality is intrinsically valuable, and sees it as the sole criterion to consider, a logically possible way to achieve it is to lower the academic standards. For instance, in a system where there are two students, but their prospects are at different levels due to the effects of social class or natural talents. On the other hand, in another system, policies disadvantageous to the advantaged student have been adopted, so that the prospect of the advantaged student has been lowered to the level both students can equally achieve. Thus, if some only see an intrinsic value in equality, the latter system would be better than the former. However, this solution is counterintuitive and most people would rarely accept it. This is a case of leveling down, which makes pursuing equal opportunity unreasonable.

The second version is even more common as a criticism of egalitarianism: the inefficient allocation of educational resources. For instance, in order to realize equal prospects for achievements irrespective of social class or natural talents, huge amounts of educational resources may need to be spent on improving the least advantaged students. However, this spending might fail to contribute enough improvement, and thereby, excessive investment could result in a shortage of resources and an overall decrease of academic standards. This case is partly matter of fact, which cannot be affirmed without empirical studies, and, strictly speaking, is not the intrinsic difficulty of the logic of egalitarianism. However, it is often brought up as an objection to egalitarian versions of equal opportunity.

Overall, although only two cases have been shown, these cases clearly show the typical but serious doubts cast on egalitarianism in education. Therefore, it would be quite a meaningful task for philosophical and normative study to elaborate a reasonable principle of equal opportunity in education. In the following sections, examining John Rawls' theory of justice, and reinterpreting his principles of justice will be quite useful for the task.

John Rawls' theory of justice

John Rawls was one of the most distinguished philosophers in 20th century North America. Among his many works, the original edition of *A Theory of Justice* (Rawls, 1971) will be focused on in this study. Rawls' theory of justice has been interpreted as a kind of egalitarianism in the history of debate, and the focus of many criticisms of his theory is common to the difficulties mentioned above. Thus, finding a way whereby his theory can avoid the criticisms and difficulties could be helpful in elaborating a reasonable principle of equal opportunity.

Rawls proposed two principles of justice, and argued that social institutions and policy should be designed to satisfy these two principles. The first principle can be called the Equal Liberty Principle, which basically means each person is to have an

² Two versions of leveling down objection are also distinguished in Macleod (2010). On account of leveling down as an intrinsic difficulty of egalitarianism in distributive justice, see Parfit (2000).

equal right to equal basic liberties. The second principle defines the conditions of morally permissible social and economic inequalities. Rawls argued that, while each person should have an equal right to basic liberties as suggested in the first principle, every kind of inequality is not necessarily unjust. Therefore, social and economic inequalities are to be morally permissible when the second principle is satisfied. The second principle is further divided into two parts; the principle of fair equality of opportunity (hereafter FEO) and the difference principle (hereafter DP). For the purpose of this paper, the second principle is the main focus.

Firstly, in defining FEO, Rawls (1971) writes, “[t]he thought here is that positions are to be not only open in a formal sense, but that all should have a fair chance to attain them” (p. 73). A more specific definition is the following: “assuming that there is a distribution of natural assets, *those who are at the same level of talent and ability, and have the same willingness to use them, should have the same prospects of success regardless of their initial place in the social system*” (Rawls, 1971, p. 73, emphasis added). Thus, FEO mainly focuses on social factors, such as people’s social class backgrounds, and tries to mitigate their effects on people’s life prospects.

FEO also has some implications for educational systems. Rawls (1971) states, “[t]he elements of this framework are familiar enough, though it may be worthwhile to recall the importance of . . . *maintaining equal opportunities of education for all*. Chances to acquire cultural knowledge and skills should not depend upon one’s class position, and so *the school system, whether public or private, should be designed to even out class barriers*” (p. 73, emphasis added). In this passage, although there are still some ambiguous points, Rawls emphasizes the significance of maintaining equal opportunities of education for all, and suggests that educational systems should be designed to even out class barriers.

Secondly, there are a number of implications of applying DP. Although DP states that social and economic inequalities should be arranged to be the greatest benefit to the least advantaged, its interpretation and validity are both quite a controversial. Therefore, only one possible policy will be discussed, which is the prior distribution of educational resources to the least talented students. According to Rawls (1971), “the difference principle gives some weight to the considerations singled out by the principle of redress. . . . In pursuit of this principle [of redress] *greater resources might be spent on the education of the less rather than the more intelligent*, at least over a certain time of life, say the earlier years of school” (pp. 100-101, emphasis added). This is not the only and definitive implication, but it is certainly suggested by DP. Although the least advantaged students may be disadvantaged in both terms of social and natural factors, in contrast to FEO, DP mainly focuses on natural factors, such as student’s natural talents, and tries to mitigate their effects on their life prospects.

In addition, there is quite an important constraint on the applications of the principles of justice, which is called ‘lexical order.’ The first principle has lexical priority over the second principle, and this requires social institutions and policy to satisfy the first principle before the second principle. Likewise, within the second principle, FEO has lexical priority over DP. Therefore, DP can only be implemented after FEO has been implemented.

Criticisms of Rawls' principles of justice

Rawls' theory of justice has been criticized from many quarters, since *A Theory of Justice* was published. Correspondingly, his second principle has faced a proportional amount of criticisms, especially DP. Compared to DP, however, FEO has attracted less concern. Nevertheless, severe criticisms have been raised against FEO and its place in Rawls' theory, and their points are particularly relevant to this study.

A representative criticism of FEO can be found in the writings of Richard Arneson. Although his criticism covers several points, he points to a counterintuitive consequence of applying FEO and its lexical priority over DP. Arneson (1999) states, "Rawlsian justice demands that if by huge expenditure of resources we can offer extra education to the upper middle class youths that marginally improves their prospects of competitive success as compared with their counterparts with equal talent born into even more privileged households, we must do so" (p. 82). For instance, in a hypothetical scenario, there are three students. Two of them are at the highest talented level but their prospects are slightly different because one is from a rich family and the other is from the upper middle class. The third student is the least talented person with the fewest prospects. According to Arneson's criticism, since lexical order forbids the implementation of DP preceding FEO, the primary concern for the Rawlsian educational system would have to be equalizing the marginal difference between the higher two students, but the improvement of the least talented student would be postponed until this equalization had been done. Arneson (1999) also writes, "instead of lavishing fancy education on the upper middle class extremely talented in the setting just described, suppose that we could use the same resources to institute a tax and transfer scheme that would double the income of the (untalented) worst off members of society" (p. 82). Thus, he criticizes that the Rawlsian educational system would reject the flexible distribution of resources, but rather the prior improvement of the worst off should be just the demand of justice in this case.

This problem pointed out by Arneson can be seen as a developed version of the difficulties of pursuing equal opportunity in education. Not only FEO requires educational systems to persist in full equalization among the same talented people, but also lexical order prevents them distributing resources flexibly, however inefficient the way of distribution is, and whatever consequences will entail for other people. Thus, he proceeds to attack the grounds for the priority of FEO over DP as insufficient.³ Arneson (1999) questions, "[w]hy give any priority at all to Fair Equality when it comes into conflict with the Difference Principle" (p. 83)?

Therefore, in order to fully reply to Arneson's criticism, the grounds for the priority of FEO over DP must be firmly presented. However, for the purpose of this study, this paper examines another question, that is, whether FEO really requires educational systems to persist in such strict equalization. If the reason for pursuing FEO does not consist in strictly equalizing the marginal differences, the problem caused by FEO's prioritization would be largely mitigated. Although this strategy is not complete

³ Alexander (1986) also points to lack of the grounds for the priority of FEO over DP, and its counterintuitive implications.

answer to Arneson's criticism, and considering the grounds for the priority of FEO over DP is a task for another paper, reexamining the reason for FEO would reveal a different aspect of Rawls' principles of justice, and thereby, give suggestions to elaborate a reasonable principle of equal opportunity in education.

How Rawlsian equality of opportunity can avoid the difficulties

Before examining the main subject, a misunderstanding of FEO by Arneson's criticism should be briefly noted. Arneson (1999), to some degree, interprets FEO as a meritocratic principle, which "holds that other things being equal, those who are naturally more talented and develop their talents to higher excellence levels should enjoy greater prospects of good fortune in life" (p. 85). Quoting again, FEO certainly requires that "those who are at the same level of talent and ability, and have the same willingness to use them, should have the same prospects of success" (Rawls, 1971, p. 73). However, it never mentions that the higher talented people should be prioritized over the less talented people, and the priority between the two groups remains open. This misinterpretation seems to lead to the emphasis of the conflicting interests between the two groups, and thereby, of the conflicting roles of FEO and DP. Contrary to this view, in the following argument, a consistent purpose of these principles would be revealed, which is securing people's self-respect through providing their spheres of freedom.

Firstly, Rawls (1971) presents the reason for FEO as follows: "[i]t expresses the conviction that if some places were not open on a basis fair to all, those kept out would be right in feeling unjustly treated even though they benefited from the greater efforts of those who were allowed to hold them. They would be justified in their complaint not only because they were excluded from certain external rewards of office such as wealth and privilege, but because they were debarred from experiencing the realization of self which comes from a skillful and devoted exercise of social duties. *They would be deprived of one of the main forms of human good*" (p. 84, emphasis added). This passage suggests that the lack of FEO may prevent people gaining not only certain rewards but also self-realization and even 'the main forms of human good.' In other words, the role of FEO does consist in enabling people to gain these goods through removing barriers, which prevent them.

Secondly, a similar type of argument can be found in DP. Concerning the prior distribution of educational resources suggested by DP, Rawls (1971) states, "the value of education should not be assessed solely in terms of economic efficiency and social welfare. Equally if not more important is the role of education in enabling a person to enjoy the culture of his society and to take part in its affairs, and *in this way to provide for each individual a secure sense of his own worth*" (p. 101, emphasis added). Thus, the significant aim of education is in enabling people to enjoy the culture, to take part in social affairs, and, ultimately, to secure their sense of one's own worth.

Therefore, this paper finds that the consistent purpose of FEO and DP is securing people's self-respect. As Rawls (1971) writes, "the most important primary good is that of self respect" (p. 440), and "it includes a person's sense of his own value, his secure conviction that his conception of his good, his plan of life, is worth carrying

out” (p. 440), the phrases such as ‘the main forms of human good’ and ‘a secure sense of his own worth’ are thought to be equivalent to self-respect.

In addition, the spheres of freedom enabled by removing barriers would be a crucial element for securing people’s self-respect. For instance, if some are not given freedom to carry out their plans of life, this means a denial of the public recognition of their plans of life, and thereby, they would not be able to have convictions that their plans of life are worth carrying out. Thus, providing opportunities functions as a removal of barriers to their freedom, and thereby, the securing of their self-respect. Furthermore, according to Rawls (1971), “self-respect implies that a confidence in one’s ability, so far as it is within one’s power, to fulfill one’s intentions” (p. 440). Since FEO requires educational systems to provide educational opportunity for all, people can develop their ability irrespective of their social class, and this would result in expanding their spheres to be able to fulfill their intentions, and in enhancing their confidences in their ability. Likewise, the prior distribution of educational resources by DP would enable the least talented people to fulfill their intentions more broadly and surely. In any case, an indispensable element common to both FEO and DP can be found, which is a removal of external and internal barriers to fulfill people’s intentions, and this enable them to do or become something more freely.⁴

Conclusion

Overall, the consistent purpose of FEO and DP is not in strictly equalizing the marginal differences but in securing people’s self-respect through removing the external and internal barriers to their freedom. Therefore, the problem caused by FEO’ prioritization would be largely mitigated; the Rawlsian educational system would not have to persist in absurd policies, such as ‘lavishing fancy education on the upper middle class.’ Therefore, although there are still some difficulties, such as how to determine the threshold level of self-respect, this paper concludes that a more reasonable principle for the pursuit of equal opportunity in education would aim to provide the requisite spheres of freedom, which enable people to carry out their plans of life, and thereby, to secure their self-respect.

⁴ See also MacCallum’s triadic formulation of freedom; “x is (is not) free from y to do (not do, become, not become) z” (MacCallum, 1967, p. 314).

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Disclosure of Zakat information: Is it Important?

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Abstract

Zakat has been emerges in Muslim economic since the rule of Prophet Muhammad and becoming the best solution in bridging the gap between the rich and the poor. To date Zakat is still becoming the best tool in combating poverty. However with the abundant of zakat fund collected it is now crucial for the appointed organization in this case Zakat institutions to explain to the public on the management of Zakat fund. Focusing on Malaysia, public is concerned on the management of Zakat fund. They do question on how the Zakat money was managed and whether it does reached the qualified asnaf. Therefore this paper aims to explore the breadth and depth of Zakat information dissemination by Zakat institutions. The discussion focused on the available information provided to the public and why such it is crucial for such information to be disclosed. In brief, this study also covers the explanation on how Zakat become important part in Muslim economy. This study provides public and stakeholder first-hand information regarding the management of Zakat fund in Malaysia.

Keywords: Zakat fund, Muslim economy, asnaf, Zakat information

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Introduction

Zakat institutions in Malaysia hold a huge responsibility in managing Zakat money collected from the Zakat payer. This Zakat money will then be distributed to the qualified asnaf according to the portion. In total there are eight qualified asnaf which eligible to receive the Zakat money including the institutions itself under amil classification. Although there is no specific requirement on whether Zakat money should be distributed equally to these eight qualified asnaf the basic distribution is 1/8 to each group. However it is now publicly debate in informal media where Zakat money was not properly distributed.

Referring to Zakat institutions, it is well known that these institutions are non-profit organizations. Again, even there are no specific guidelines on how Zakat money should be reported. The current scenario shows lack of proper information dissemination provided by Zakat institutions. This situation left public in quest on how this money was managed. In fact the management of Zakat money varies according to the state. Thus it can be seen that there is a variety of reporting approach adapted by Zakat institutions state wise.

Looking at both situation, it shows public are curious with the management of Zakat money. They seems hunger for detail information from Zakat institutions. The public specifically the payer and recipients are in desperate needs for Zakat information dissemination. In fact complete information provided by Zakat institution is important for the institutions image. Considering this, the aim of this study is to explore the current Zakat information available for public viewing. Further the discussions were extended to the importance of being transparent and provide useful information for public viewing. The information gathered through available sources and interview with relevant officers lead to the outcome that Zakat institutions do managed Zakat fund in ethical manner and based on Shariah compliance.

Further discussion presented as follows: next section covers the brief discussion on past literature followed by the methodology section. Discussions sections provide details explanation on data gathered through document analysis and interview while final section conclude the study.

Literature review

A large amount of studies has been devoted to observe the development of Zakat in Malaysia (Mahmud, 1991; Ismail, 2007; Khairi and Mohd Noor, 2012). These studies focused on the discussion on Zakat in term of collection, distribution and overall management of Zakat fund. Before understand in depth on the knowledge of Zakat it is worth to understand the detail concept of Zakat. Zakat usually described as an act of worship to Allah which assists Muslim in the process of purifying wealth, cleansing their soul and mind as well as benefits themselves to others which also being highlighted as a good Muslim (Bowen, 1993). In fact through Zakat Muslims learn the beauty of sharing concept where the rich shares their wealth with the poor thus reduced the wealth inequality (Abu Bakar, 2007). Commonly when thinking about Zakat recipient people always think about the poor (Ibrahim, 2008; Abdul Rahman, 2012; Ab Rahman et.al, 2012, Mohd Ali et.al, 2013; and Embong et.al, 2013). In fact the studies highlighted above emphasize on the failure of poverty eradication although

Zakat collection increase every year. Adding to this, other than amil, poor and needy studies also neglected that there are other five groups of asnaf whom are eligible for Zakat fund to include new converters, slave, debtor, Fi-Sabilillah and Wayfarer also share the same right on the Zakat money.

The synergy of Zakat fund is not only stop at individual level; purifying once wealth or enhance the quality of life of the recipients, but also can be extended in macro level. Studies by Suhaib (2009), Sarea (2012), Darma et.al (2012) and Hoque, et.al (2015) extend the discussion on Zakat at macro level by looking at the contribution of Zakat on economy. Sarea (2012) for instance suggest that Zakat can be a proper measure of economic growth. This is when people are able to pay Zakat; it shows that the economy is in good condition. Adding to this Darma et. al (2012) explains that Zakat can be a source of development funding, which further facilitate better functioning of local organizations and social capital formation. This is further supported by Hoque et.al (2015) in most recent work which focuses on the discussion of Zakat as an economic aid which assist economic transformation.

Based on the above discussion, a large amount of literature focus on Zakat discussion in term of managing the collection and distribution expect. However lack of studies address the important of providing the information to the public. Seminal paper by Adnan and Abu Bakar (2009) initiate the importance of accounting treatment in this case for corporate Zakat. The study found out that there is a misconception of Zakat when referring to the standards and regulations. It is proven in profit organization that ease accessibility of information may contribute to high income (Akhigbe et.al, 2013). As non-profit organization, although Zakat institutions operation was not with the aim to gain high profit, it deals with the organizations trustworthiness by the payers and recipients. Prudent financial report should be in placed to tell the public about the institutions, and how honestly the fund was managed. Although improvements have been made by Zakat institutions on the operation which covers the collection and distribution, it will not reach the public if these changes are not well communicated to them.

Data Collection Method

The data was gathered in two phases. First phase related to compilation of data through published documents by Zakat institutions. The main document used to for document analysis was the Laporan Zakat PPZ-MAIWP for the period of 2007 to 2014. To strengthen the discussion open ended interview with selected Zakat officers was conducted. Officers directly involved with the preparation of financial statement for three Zakat institutions which are Majlis Agama Islam Kelantan (MAIK), Majlis Ugama Islam Dan Adat Resam Melayu Pahang (MUIP) and Majlis Agama Islam dan Adat Melayu Terengganu (MAIDAM) were selected to provide firsthand information regarding the reporting matters.

Discussions

The discussion of output of this study will be divided into two sections. The first section focuses on the descriptive data on the availability of Zakat information to be assessed by the public. During the collection of available annual report produced by

Zakat institutions, we are unable to retrieve annual report for most of the state as listed in Table 1. This table shows the annual report released by Zakat institutions for each state from 2007 until 2014. Based on the observation, only 7 from 14 states in Malaysia have consistently released their annual report from 2007 to 2014. However the situation is getting better where in 2004 only 4 states did not provide public access to their information.

Since zakat fund is managed by each state, there is no standardization in issuing annual report. In fact the financial data comprises of details on how Zakat fund is recorded not being provided in the annual report as we can usually see in profit organization annual report. Based on the review of available documents and looking at this data, transparency and reliability of annual report has been and still is a severe problem in Zakat institutions. The reason that may contribute to these is when there is no obligation for Zakat institution to publish the report for public viewing. They only answerable to a council and the council are answerable to the ruler of each state. The states that produced the annual report and give the public free access did this on voluntary basis. However there are some states did not give any access to the report due to autocracy issue.

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Johor	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Kedah	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	√
Kelantan	X	X	X	X	√	√	√	X
Melaka	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	√
Negeri Sembilan	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Pahang	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Pulau Pinang	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Perak	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X
Perlis	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Selangor	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Terengganu	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	√
Sabah	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Sarawak	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	√
Kuala Lumpur	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

Table 1: : Availability of Zakat Institutions Annual Report for each state for the period of 2007 to 2014.

Table 2 shows the data of Zakat collection and distribution in from 2010 to 2014. Based on the information provided in the table there are situation where Zakat distribution are over collection or Zakat distributed not even reach 50% from the amount collected. This table triggers confusion on how exactly the Zakat fund is managed and if there is an excess amount of Zakat where it will be located. It is clear that Zakat should be distributed to the eligible asnaf and the amil or Zakat institutions are also eligible for Zakat portion. Thus if the amil has already received the eligible portion, the excess amount should be distributed among the other seven eligible asnaf. However when the annual report of one Zakat institutions is scrutinize, it is found out that the excess amount is recorded as income for the institutions. On surface, it seems that Zakat institutions received more than what they are eligible for. This issue may

create a negative perception in the society concerning the management of zakat fund. The Zakat payer and Zakat recipients may not be satisfied with the distribution aspect of zakat, especially the issue of undistributed zakat.

	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014	
	C	D	C	D	C	D	C	D	C	D
In millions										
Johor	122	110	137	165	172	143	199	160	196	NA
Kedah	77	66	106	80	106	92	109	96	121	106
kelantan	70	64	94	80	113	101	NA	NA	NA	NA
Melaka	34	31	38	34	44	49	53	NA	55	57
Negeri sembilan	50	48	58	59	65	61	75	77	84	98
Pahang	81	59	89	58	103	68	116	NA	103	110
Pulau Pinang	54	54	62	55	77	69	85	73	84	80
Perak	70	67	86	77	100	83	NA	NA	NA	NA
Perlis	38	30	62	43	79	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Selangor	337	330	394	366	451	402	517	463	562	596
Terengganu	76	62	88	65	107	85	121	67	114	67
Sabah	33	26	34	32	49	37	49	48	NA	NA
Sarawak	39	24	44	27	51	NA	69	35	NA	NA
Kuala Lumpur	283	201	349	247	410	272	492	328	533	NA
TOTAL	1,364	1,172	1,641	1,388	1,927	1,462	1,885	1,347	1,852	1,114

Table 2: Total collection and distributions of Zakat from 14 states in 2010 to 2014

Source: Laporan Zakat 2010 – 2014 MAIWP

Note: C and D represent collection and distribution respectively.

Due to the curiosity on how Zakat fund was managed by Zakat institutions this study proceed with interview session with selected Zakat officers in MAIK, MUIP and MAIDAM. The general idea of this interview session is to answer the confusion raises from the document analysis. Referring to the management of annual Zakat collection, the officers emphasize that the problem with the data that shows huge undistributed amount is when too much Zakat payment received at the end of the year e.g. December. This resulted to the inability of the institutions to distribute the amount to eligible asnaf. However this does not represent whole case as distributions process are based on budgeted allocation which been made in previous month or year. So distribution spending are not based on current year collection but previous year collection. Further this also caused the condition where Zakat distributed is more than what is collected. The problem with the reporting is any undistributed amount is not clearly disclosed in the annual report. However the officers do mentioned that the amount is separated and will be used solely for the eligible asnaf. The detail information is kept by the accounting officers whom managed Zakat collection and distribution. On the other hand, there are cases of the distributed amount are not disclosed. In fact the person whom uncharged on the reporting does not disclosed the undistributed amount to distribution division. Thus the distribution division does not aware on the figure of undistributed amount. The information on the usage of undistributed amount to support the other expenses apart of the direct distribution to eligible asnaf usually not being directly disclosed.

The above discussion shows in brief the management of Zakat fund and the availability of data to be retrieved by public. It is thus argued here that it is a need for Zakat institutions to be transparent in providing information on the management of Zakat fund. The report should detail out on how each Zakat collected was spent and

the percentage of Zakat distributed to each eligible asnaf including the amil. Another possible suggestion is Zakat collection and distribution should be recorded separately and the undistributed amount will be disclosed in that report. This can help to clear public misconception on the way Zakat fund was managed. In addition, despite the Zakat fund was managed statewide, it does not cause any harm for all Zakat institutions to have uniformity in the way of Zakat fund reporting unlike the current situation where different states used different treatments. By circulating the financial report only for internal access where the public just has to rely with the limited amount of information can cause public misconception.

Conclusion

As discussed earlier this study was conducted with the aim to expose the public on the Zakat information dissemination by Zakat institutions. Throughout the observation and interview session, it is found out that there is no consistency of reporting among Zakat institutions in Malaysia. Some give consent for public viewing and some for internal access only. It is believed that Zakat institutions will find it useful if they provide a clear picture to the public on the financial reporting of Zakat fund. This has led to public misconception towards Zakat institutions on how they manage the fund. Detailed observation on their reports shows that Zakat money was properly managed by the institutions. In fact it is also being distributed to qualified asnaf. The misconception only exists when the public is left with a limited amount of information for public viewing. Overall this study is hoped to shed some light on how Zakat institutions should disclose the information for public viewing and why it is so important for their reputation. Besides, this is of importance not only for the image of Zakat institutions but also to encourage payers to pay Zakat through Zakat institutions.

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The Rise of Western Pop Music and Pole Dancing in Taiwanese Traditional Religious Festivals

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Abstract

In traditional Chinese religious festivals, a procession in which the participants, prior to returning home from a holy pilgrimage, would tour to and visit the neighboring villages. This is called *raojing* 繞境 (patrolling tour). The detour is to share the blessings from the pilgrims in order to bring good luck and prosperity to their fellow communities. However, this sacred patrolling has been incorporated with Western pop music and pole dancing in Taiwan to draw crowds and keep them amused for the past few decades. The paper examines the social impact of this particular religious rendition and argues that the accommodation is not a mere ethical challenge but rather a creative one, aiming for preserving a prior ritual order.

Keywords: Chinese religion, tradition, pilgrimage, inspection tour

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The Patrolling Tour in a Traditional Chinese Pilgrimage

In Chinese popular religion, the term, pilgrimage is called *chaosheng* 朝聖 (approaching the sacred) or *yezu* 謁祖 (paying respects to the ancestors) (Figure 1).¹ The idea of a pilgrimage is to pay a visit to a particular temple, a sacred place or a holy mountain, where a soul could be purified, a petition could be granted and a better life could be sought.² This religious procession could be organized by people or interest groups with no fixed date, route or destination, and could sometimes be combined with tourism to stimulate the economy of a specific place. The trip is often conducted in a relatively low profile without trying to draw the public attention.

However, there is another kind of pilgrimage, which is formed by the committee members of a specific religious cult, aiming to pay homage to their ancestral temple on a regular basis. This is normally a much larger religious procession with one or several communities involved. The main purpose of the pilgrimage is to keep the lineage of a specific deity with his/her (ancestral or mother temple). Therefore, it should be as colorful and loud as possible, preferably interesting enough to stimulate the general public's awareness and support.

There are two major events from this kind of pilgrimage. The first is called *jinxiang* 進香 (presenting incense), which is the deity from regional temple presenting incense sticks to pay homage to the ancestor temple upon arrival.³ By presenting incense, which is deemed as a gift in Chinese material culture, the subsidiary temple verifies the kinship of incense fire between the two.⁴ Following the presenting, a ritual named *fenxiang* 分香 (division of incense) is proceeded to have some of the incense ashes removed from the urn of the ancestral temple to be brought back to the regional one. This is a gesture of goodwill, meaning the rewarding from the ancestral temple. This

¹ The term, Chinese popular religion, is borrowed from Meir Shahar and Robert Weller's study of the relationship between Chinese divinity and society, referring to the religious beliefs and practices that are shared by the majority of the Chinese laity without the restrictions of canonical scriptures and have become part of their daily life. For further information, see Meir Shahar and Robert P. Weller, "Gods and Society in China", in *Unruly Gods: Divinity and Society in China*, ed. Meir Shahar and Robert P. Weller (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996), 1.

² The trip to a holy mountain or a temple in a holy mountain is called *qiaoshan* 朝山 (paying respect to a mountain), which is used to describe the pilgrimage practices associated with sacred mountains said to have their Buddhist or Daoist origins, see Edward L. Davis ed., *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Chinese Culture* (London: Routledge, 2005), 648

³ It is worth noting that the term, *jinxiang* has often been associated as equivalent to *chaosheng* or pilgrimage, which is not entirely correct. For the Chinese, presenting incense to the mother temple is merely a means of paying tribute to the celestial world. It is the initial part of the pilgrimage, I would argue, not the final result. The end purpose is to gain the ashes from the incense urn of the mother temple, and bring them back to the child temple as an endorsement of authenticity and confirmation of lineage. This kind of re-endorsement is the guarantee of continuing blessings and power from the celestial world. For the power of Chinese incense, see Chang Hsun, "Xiang zhi weiwu: jinxiang yishi zhong xianghuo guannian de wuzhi jichu" (Scent as Substance: the Material Basis of Chinese Incense-Fire Rituals and Concepts), *Taiwan Journal of Anthropology*, 4, No. 2 (2006), 37-73.

⁴ Incense sticks are used by Chinese as a symbolic form of food, which is regarded as an offering or gift to communicate with gods, ghosts and ancestors. For the functionality and symbolic meaning of gift exchange in Chinese society, see Jiang Jun, "Cong renlei xue shiye kan mingdai fenggong tixi: guanyu liwu de fenxi" (The Grant and Tribute System in the Ming Dynasty From the View of Anthropology: Analysis of Gift), *Harbin xueyuan xuebao* (Journal of Harbin University), 25, No. 9 (2004), 22-26.

kind of gift exchanging ritual further seeks for the endorsement and infusion of spiritual power from the divine.⁵

The patrolling tour (*raojing* 遶境 or *chuxun raojing* 出巡遶境), on the other hand, is another major event of this kind of pilgrimage. It focuses on the deity's way to and back from the ancestral temple. The tour is more of a community based ceremony, which can be interpreted as a neighborhood watch program from the spiritual world during the tour.⁶ The term, *raojing*, literally "borders crossing patrol" refers to an intentional detour to the neighboring communities in order to share the blessings from the spiritual world. That is, prior to and after the returning from the ancestral temple, the deity would deliberately take a roundabout route, visiting his/her neighboring villages from one to another in order to make sure that the areas close by to his/her jurisdiction is also well established. The neighboring villagers would in return welcome the divine with passion and enthusiasm, accompanied by exotic dances and music performances to light up the crowd or *renao* 熱鬧 (crowd time), which is a Chinese expression, meaning to put on a good show to draw in more noisy and hot crowds.

Therefore, it is not surprising that on the route of the patrolling tour, the deity is often greeted by the surrounding communities with a series of spectacular fireworks, skittery Chinese traditional music, and luxurious dance performances to gain the stamp of this worldly approval, and in the name of summoning the blessings from the otherworldly.⁷ Furthermore, some regional altars would set up temporary platforms along the site to house their patron gods to support their communities and to proclaim their lineage from the spiritual world as well (Figure 1). In addition, street vendors would also join the ceremony taking advantage of the procession by selling food or event merchandise to the worshipers or onlookers (Figure 2). The community based religious ceremony would then turns into a genre of socialization and communication, sharing common interest between the real and the imagined of which both are materialized to construct a noisy-hot public sphere.⁸

⁵ Denis Byrne, *Counterheritage: Critical Perspectives on Heritage Conservation in Asia* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 124.

⁶ Lin Mei-Rong, *Mazu xinyang yu taiwan shehui* (The Belief of Mazu and the Taiwanese Society), (New Taipei City: BoyYoung Culture, 2006), 15.

⁷ *Beiguan* along with *Nanguan* (South Pipes) are two distinct and dominant traditional music genres in Taiwan. For the differences between *nanguan* and *beiguan* music, and the development of *beiguan* music in Taiwan, see Jian Shangren, *Fuer mosha zhimei: taiwan de chuantong yinyue* (The Beauty of Formosa: Taiwan's Traditional Music), (Taipei: Xingzheng yuan wenhua jianshe weiyuanhui, 2001), 134-142 and 195-196.

⁸ For the materialization of the Chinese popular religion, see Lin Wei-Ping, *Materializing Magic Power: Chinese Popular Religion in Villages and Cities* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015).



Figure 1: Some regional altars would stage alongside the route of the patrolling tour. Source: Photograph by Min-Chia Young, 2015.



Figure 2: Street vendors would crowd around to celebrate the religious procession. Source: Photograph by Min-Chia Young, 2015.

The Changes and Transformations of the Taiwanese Patrolling Tour

For most Han Chinese in Taiwan, they are migrants from the southeastern coast of China, especially the area called (Southern Min), which roughly consists of residents from Fujian, Guangdong and Hainan. Hence, Taiwanese retain a strong Southern Min culture.⁹ For them, presenting incense to the ancestral temple to pay tribute to the divine and bringing incense ashes back to the child temple as an endorsement from the spiritual world are parts of the Chinese tradition. This kind of tradition is required to house various types of *yige* 藝閣 (opera stage or parade float) and *zhentou* 陣頭 (parade performing troupe) to increase the heat and noise of the crowd time.¹⁰ These splendid performances can be deemed as the result of the collective effort of the public masses in their quest for a better life in this life and the life after.

⁹ Lin Wei-Ping, “Virtual Recentralization: Pilgrimage as Social Imaginary in the Demilitarized Islands between China and Taiwan”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 56 (2014), 136.

¹⁰ The term *yige* is used to describe the decorated parade float leading the pilgrims in a traditional religious procession, see Loa Lok-Sin, “Master Puppet Theater Stage Painter Recalls Hard Times”, *Taipei Times*, 16 August, 2011. However, the invention of *yige*, as a novel feature in the Chinese Lantern Festival, was during the Song dynasty (960-1279), a possible influence from the increasing merging of Buddhism and popular beliefs, see Ho Yi-Chin, “Taiwan chuantong yige yishu yanjiu” (The Art Research of Taiwan Traditional Yi-Ge), (Master’s diss., National Taipei University, 2008), 14. The formation of *zhentou*, on the other hand, is a kind of regional folk art performance, sponsored and supported by different communities and societies. It originated from the term *sanyue* 散樂—meaning the performance of extraordinary feats—which was the acrobatic performances during Chinese temple procession, see Zhang Yating, “Taiwan zhentou luogu zhi yanjiu” (The Study of Taiwan Traditional Percussion Group), (Master’s diss., Nanhua University, 2004), 4-6.

In order to maximize the mechanism of these performances to gain more recognition for the spiritual power, these presentations not only need to be energetic, purposeful and splendid for maximum entertainment, they also have to follow the social value and beliefs under the guidance of a materialized view and the rule of engagement for a direct access to a better life is “no pay, no gain”. This rule further goes and changes from time to time and from place to place. Hence, we see the performing stage changes from bamboo structure to a more elaborate aluminum truss framing (Figure 3), the music stretches from traditional Han Chinese style to a more dynamic Western-influenced popular music (Figure 4), and the theme of immortality shifts from still images to energetic child performers, and then from classical opera play to a more exotic pole dancing (Figure 5).¹¹



Figure 3: The performing stage changes from bamboo structure to aluminum truss in a traditional Taiwanese patrolling tour. Source: Photograph by Min-Chia Young, 2015.



Figure 4: The traditional Chinese *Beiguan* music with *suona* 嗩呐 (double-reeded horn), *luo* 鑼 (gong), *bo* 鈸 (cymbal) and *gu* 鼓 (drum) set players (left) and a one-man band with various types of electronic devices playing Western popular music (right). Source: Photograph by Min-Chia Young, 2015.

¹¹ Ho, “Taiwan chuantong”, 19-25. For the record of Taiwan’s first use of paid girls to perform in a patrolling tour, see Tang Zan, *Taiyang jianwen lu* (A Record of Things Seen and Heard in Taiwan), (Nantou: Taiwan wenxian weiyuan hui, 1996), 145.



Figure 5: The performers on a parade float change from innocent children to erotic pole dancers in a traditional Taiwanese patrolling tour. Source: Ho Yi-Chin, “Taiwan chuantong yige yishu yanjiu” (The Art Research of Taiwan Traditional Yi-Ge), (Master’s diss., National Taipei University, 2008), 21 (left) and Photograph by Min-Chia Young, 2015 (right).

These changes and transformations involve a much larger budget allocation and a much sharper power shift in which a regulatory authority can be challenged and contained. One small case study in Taiwan is provided as evidence of how the regularity of the heavenly realm can be interfered and changed by the standard of this material world.

The 2015 Patrolling Tour of the *Yuanqing shizai* 圓慶拾載 (10th Annual Celebration of Full Blessings) in Taiwan

The patrolling tour of the 10th Annual Celebration of Full Blessings in Renwu, Taiwan was an after event following a regional altar’s pilgrimage to Changhua County to pay tribute to the Tian-Hou Temple of Lugang on June 28, 2015. The main purpose of the patrolling tour, as the poster clearly depicted, was to:

恭祝仁武聖瀾會天上聖母前往鹿港天后宮謁祖進香，
圓滿回駕暨會慶拾載平安祈福遶境踩街慶典。

Congratulate the success of Renwu Holy Waves Society’s incense presenting to its ancestral temple, Lugang Tian-Hou Temple, and to welcome and celebrate its returning to perform an inspection tour for the sharing of full luck and blessings to the neighboring communities (Figure6).



Figure 6: The *Yuanqing shizai* 圓慶拾載 (10th Annual Celebration of Full Blessings) hosted by *Renwu shenglan hui* 仁武聖瀾會 (Renwu Holy Waves Society) on June 28, 2015. Source: Photograph by Min-Chia Young, 2015.

In order to gain the full access of divine blessings, the Renwu district's joint communities blasted out the sky with firecrackers, Western pop music, and loads of erotic pole dancers on the parade floats to capture the interest of the crowds (Figure 7). As the Chinese and Taiwanese alike, generally believe that the more human interaction, the more attractiveness and cohesion between the sacred and the profane would be. A myriad of spectacular parade floats leading the way of the religious procession were sponsored by different communities or individuals to compete for the sheer glory of their achievements (Figure 8). Tons of green and artificial materials were implemented in a mixture of old and new fashions to capture the attention of this-worldly and the otherworldly.



Figure 7: Loads of firecrackers blasted the sky of Renwu District in a 2015's patrolling tour. Source: Photograph by Min-Chia Young, 2015.



Figure 8: The parade floats were decorated in a combination of old and new fashions, which look like an exotic edition of the Rose Parade. Source: Photograph by Min-Chia Young, 2015.

The main event of this spectacular procession was the pole dancing on the so-called high-tech *dianzi huache* 電子花車 (electronic flower car or EFC), which is a truck converted into a neon-lit platform for hot noisy Western pop music and erotic dance performances (Figure 9). This unusual feature has its origin during the reign of Emperor Guangxu of Qing (1875-1908), when hiring female entertainers with mini skirt forming a marching band to play Western music and perform exotic stunts in a funeral event to amuse the dead was acknowledged as a sign of wealth and filial piety in Taiwan. It then went further for the Taiwanese to ask these professional entertainers to add more erotic elements, such as stripping or parading naked to their performances during the Japanese Colonial period (1895-1945) to draw more noisy crowds to the funeral to gain more respect from the family members. This was a popular belief due to the generalization that the gods, ghosts and ancestors alike would prefer some sort of colorful entertainments. The idea of the spiritual world would also like to have a little bit of hot and spicy entertainments, though not necessarily endorsed by all social classes, soon spread among the popular masses, making this erotic performance became a must during a funeral, a temple fair or any religious festival. A religious ceremony held on the street without a lot of noise and spicy events could be deemed as a disgrace to the *luzhu* 爐主 (host patron) or community and a disrespect to the otherworldly. Needless to say, any regional altar or society, who eagers to gain recognition and solidarity from their worshippers would not jeopardize their standing in the community for not meeting this novel demand or

creation. Hence, this sensational innovation has become a “soft power” under the guise of Chinese traditional religious performance interacting with modernization and globalization in the Taiwanese society

Conclusion

The need for gods, ghosts and ancestors is universal but the way to approach and summon these spiritual beings is individual. The rise of Western popular music and pole dancing in the Taiwanese religious beliefs demonstrates that the Chinese view of the spiritual world is uniquely structured on a material basis, which allows constant changes and transformations to meet the flow of public interests. These changes and transformations, no matter how exotic they may be and no matter how twisted they may seem, are the soft power of the popular culture, which can cause instrumental effects taken seriously by different parties from privilege class to general public. This kind of cultural summoning or assimilation, be it domestic or intentional, is and has always been a distinct type of the Chinese perception having no difficulty accommodating their own “universal” world. Hence, the change of Chinese traditional music to Western popular one and the transformation of opera performance troupes to erotic pole dancing girls can both be justified as a distinct Chinese way of approaching the divinities.

Although these special religious installments may not seem to appropriate the Chinese traditional dichotomy of sacred and profane perfectly, they are a perfect fit in the contemporary Chinese society, which successfully preserves a prior ritual order, accommodates different parties with different interests, and creates an ambiguous reference between the real (profane) and imaged (sacred) worlds. This ambiguous view of the Chinese religious society, however, further embraces the value of the Chinese popular religion and paves a common ground for people from different societies to look forward and move on in their endless quest for a better life

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Justice through Recognition

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Abstract

In the current times, it is the political debate and the philosophy of politics that reveals how relevant the theme of recognition is, and in what manner the progress and well-being of human beings, who are part of different groups and communities, depend upon it. The psychology of recognition underlines how complex and deep the process of recognition is. It constantly involves an articulated dialectics which Ricœur demonstrated to have a direct link with personal emancipation. The sociological-speculative research on recognition reveals how central the intersubjective dynamism of communication and action is in the public sphere, both for the process of self-emancipation and for the emancipation of a given society. The dialectics between justice and recognition cannot “simply” be reduced to the critical analysis of the double movement of ‘justice through recognition’ and ‘recognition through justice’, nor to a question of public agreement or legal formalisation and determination. In the end, it is through the challenges referred to and developed between self-emancipation and intersubjective action that the future of our civilisation will be at stake. There will not be social emancipation, social justice, and social (mutual) recognition without the personal engagement of citizens, and without emancipation of them.

Keywords: recognition, hermeneutics, emancipation, sociology, religion

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Introduction

If in politics the concept of recognition had a long history of uses, on the ground of political and legal theory this concept has emerged only recently – actually, in the nineties, thanks to Charles Taylor's book *The Politics of Recognition* (1992). Most recently, in his *The Course of Recognition* (2004), Paul Ricœur productively resumed the different philosophical uses of the concept of recognition (namely, in theory of knowledge, in philosophical psychology and anthropology, and in political philosophy) demonstrating their reciprocal correlations and connections with disciplines like psychology, sociology and, of course, politics. We would observe the same in some of the most important recent speculative researches around the theme, mainly those of Habermas, Honneth, Thompson, and Fraser; and this, beyond their particularities and differences. Specifically, it is sociology that plays an explicit and immediate role as a counterpart or an “orientation” point for philosophy; while psychology enters indirectly into the discourse. Sociology even has the role of an intermediary position, between psychology and politics. In fact, the social-political point of view in the uses of recognition has predominantly intended connecting the theoretical-ideal models of personal identity both in reference to self-comprehension and the modality with-whom a person is recognized in given contexts. Ricœur has expressed well the essential truth behind this vision summarising the triangular relationship between psychology, sociology, and politics through the following expression: ‘We do not mistake ourselves without also being mistaken about others and our relations with them’ (Ricœur 2005, p. 257). Taylor too had somehow offered a key of interconnection distinguishing between *recognition as respect*, which is essentially to consider in social-political, moral and legal terms; *recognition as esteem*, which is mostly referred to good social practices and to the politics of difference, as well as to education and culture; and, finally, *recognition as love*, which refers to the inner, psychological life, as well as to the private relation sphere.

As a consequence, the dialectics between justice and recognition cannot “simply” be reduced to the critical analysis of the double movement of ‘justice through recognition’ and ‘recognition through justice’, trying to determine which one comes first. It is necessary to develop a tripled, parallel approach between psychology, sociology and political theory, under the mediatory function of philosophy. This, will certainly be useful for a comprehensive speculative approach, but it will give at the same time a more enriched and deepened understanding of the multiple and complex implications of the social-political dynamics of recognition and mis-recognition. Even the two major thematics that have for the most part struck and affected the public debate and social life about issues on recognition reveal that a true constellation of different elements are at work within the dialectics between justice and recognition; and without doubt even for the idea of justice it must be a varied definition, corresponding to the diverse disciplines involved at each passage. First of all, the themes of cultural relativism and multiculturalism require an approach of theory of politics which goes beyond the theory of politics in itself for embracing a critical philosophy exercised as a critique of culture and ideology (Taylor's *Politics of Recognition* and Habermas' research indicate and follow this line). The second thematic addresses the question of conflicts-mediation and of intercultural rights and focus the moment of a psychological analysis as unavoidable (because, there are not simply conflicts between individuals as well as between groups, but rather because the attitude or capacity of a singular person to manage conflict may make the

difference in singular cases as well as in complex situations). It is a theme of practical order that calls into question as much political philosophy as psychology and education; as much critical sociology as philosophy and morality; and, of course, as much law (especially, international law) as peace studies and ethics. But, as a practical problem, it requires a philosophical approach that is not only able to mediate between these disciplines synthesising their diverse contributions, but even to actively work with and for psychology, politics, ethics and even religion in order to coordinate the diverse resources of knowledge and capabilities, effectively finding and indicating practical solutions. Differences, tensions and conflicts are inevitables, permanent and structural. The new horizon of the social and moral challenges, individual and collective, may be *to transcend* conflicts and differences in the same sense in which it has been considered and prospected by Johan Galtung, but perhaps a more generalised and deepened approach is that of the religious philosopher Daisaku Ikeda, who – beyond his personal Buddhist creed – emphasises the generalisable idea that one has to have full responsible involvement in transforming situations by reforming and emancipating himself. Conflicts and challenges may be used as an opportunity of personal and social growth, enrichment, and intercultural development. This vision has many elements in common with other non-violent approaches religiously based, such are those of Tolstoy, Gandhi, M. L. King, and Mandela.

Without a doubt, analysing the current trend we easily recognise that this conception and perspective is far from being largely embraced and recognised as a practicable, wise, way; even law and politics do not seem to move in this direction, nor toward the direction of a new intercultural era of multicultural recognition and creative cooperation. Today, issues of politics of recognition which are *stricto sensu* political are receiving the response of a defensive public criticism and the spread of nationalism; while, in terms of policies of rights, the current challenge seems to no more give in terms of (normative and political) resolution of differences, of identitarian politics, of separatist politics, but of reception and management of differences, acceptance and management of conflicts, acceptance and management of the increasingly next identitarian diversities. And, what about philosophy? Philosophy is generally denying its direct, theoretical and practical, full involvement into this question. In perpetual conflicts against itself, it is revealing a more and more divided spirit between a totally detached approach – which, essentially, is the sterile, “pure”, approach of a large part of Anglo-Saxon analytical philosophy – and a sectarian, radicalised, approach, fragmented because of being religiously or ideologically angled (instead of critically and argumentatively). Accordingly with Xanthaki’s essay “Multiculturalism and International Law: Discussing Universal Standards” we may say that the basic elements of multiculturalism have penetrated the public sphere (Xanthaki 2010, pp. 21-48), and disciplines such as law – we may include even non-critical and non-practical philosophies – are, in one way or another, acting and contributing as regulatory social mechanisms. They are defending the *status quo*; they are continuing to work according to coercive interest and rational logics. However, what is important for us is to focus and deepen the fact that multiculturalism raises the question of personal emancipation not only professionally, but morally and culturally. In fact, each one of us is perpetually involved, personally and responsibly. But what are the principal psychological and sociological elements involved in this dialectics, and in what way may they be subsumed into the circle of a theoretical-practical philosophy?

In the following paragraphs the authors of major reference will be Ricœur and Habermas, respectively for resuming a philosophical moment essentially based on psychology of recognition and, subsequently, on sociology of recognition. As previously mentioned, in each one of the singular perspectives we find a constant, interdisciplinary connection between psychology, sociology and politics of recognition. All those disciplines must be of central reference in a general theory of recognition, but this theory does not yet exist (Ricœur 2005, p. IX). However, the approach of a critical philosophy may already help, even if it is without the basis of an already well systematised theory.

The critical philosophy must have a theoretical and practical approach, or better, it must have a theoretical approach with an essential ethical mark; it must also be interdisciplinary and practically involved. Taken as a whole, Ricœur's approach – which, following his own presentation can be summarised as a “*reflexive* philosophy” that remains within the “sphere of Husserlian *phenomenology*” as its “hermeneutical variation” (Ricœur 1991, p. 12) – seems to mirror all these needs. Therefore we will be following it.

The psychological way of recognition

The question of recognition is particularly significant in the field of cognitive psychology, but its use is both theoretical and clinical in other psychological schools, like in psychoanalysis where the issue of recognition emerges both in the theoretical and clinical sphere, specifically in connection to the therapeutic process of the patient-analyst relationship. Ricœur had studied this phenomenon, precisely translating the therapeutic process in terms of dialectics of recognition. He writes:

The analytic situation offers desire what Freud, in one of his technical texts, calls “a playground in which it [the patient's compulsion to repeat] is allowed to expand in almost complete freedom”. Now why does the analytic situation have this virtue of reorienting repetition toward remembrance? Because it offers desire an imaginary face-to-face relation in the process of transference. Not only does desire speak, it speaks to someone else, to the other person. This second starting point in analytic practice (...) does not lack theoretical implications. It reveals that from its beginning human desire is, to use Hegel's expression the desire of another's desire and finally for recognition (Ricœur 2012, p. 96).

Thanks to a productive re-actualisation of Hegel's phenomenological theory, the dynamism of transference-countertransference is here understood as a psychological and at the same time social dialectic of recognition. Studying the psychology of recognition from this point of view we may find it useful to comparatively intertwine Paul Ricœur and Axel Honneth's research, because both make reference to psychology or psychoanalysis using Hegel's theory of recognition. Even, Ricœur's theory of recognition, as it is developed in his *The Course of Recognition* (2004), has an explicit connection with Honneth's *The Struggle for Recognition* (1992). But the French philosopher opposes Honneth's ethics of conflict. Certainly, Ricœur's renewal of the Hegelian theory of recognition tends to incorporate the natural perspective of Honneth's proposal; but it is still true that this renewal lies in a speculative anthropology presented by the author as *a phenomenology of the capable human*

being.

Honneth develops his argumentation through Winnicott's psychology, while Ricœur comes back to his early research on Freud and philosophy, where psychoanalysis is connected and intertwined to Hegel's phenomenology. By comparing Hegel's phenomenology with psychoanalysis, Ricœur describes a conception of personal identity as an ongoing hermeneutic-dialectic process constricted between the opposites of regressive forces and progressive forces, of 'necessity' (the body's needs and instincts) and freedom (the mind's or spirit's will and determination). In his *Freud and Philosophy* (1965) he writes:

The analytic situation does not bear merely a vague resemblance to the Hegelian dialectic of reduplicated consciousness; between that dialectic and the process of consciousness that develops in the analytic relation there is a remarkable structural homology. The entire analytic relation can be reinterpreted as a dialectic of consciousness, rising from life to self-consciousness, from the satisfaction of desire to the recognition of the other consciousness. As the decisive episode of the transference teaches us, insight or the process of becoming conscious not only entails another consciousness, the analyst's, but contains a phase of struggle reminiscent of the struggle for recognition. The process is an unequal relation in which the patient, like the slave or bondsman of the Hegelian dialectic, sees the other consciousness by turns as the essential and as the unessential; the patient likewise has his truth at first in the other, before becoming the master through a work comparable to the work of the slave, the work of the analysis (Ricœur 1970, p. 485).

This important interpretation can also be found in Ricœur's human being conception as used and re-actualised in *The Course of Recognition*, for example via passages like this: 'We do not mistake ourselves without also being mistaken about others and our relations with them' (Ricœur 2005, p. 257).

The sociological way of recognition

Focusing on the sociological theme of recognition, we find Talcott Parsons' *General theory of social action* (1949) as the first major text of reference for sociological research that investigates the question of intersubjectivity and interrelation. Parsons' sociology enters into dialectics with anthropological and ethnological research, becoming particularly interesting for philosophers and theorists of qualitative sociology like Jürgen Habermas. Actually, reflecting around the development of this research between sociology and philosophy, we can say that, generally speaking, the question of recognition in sociology has moved over the decades from a polarisation on the issue of the philosophical and sociological theme of intersubjectivity to the sociological-ethical and sociological-political theme of reciprocity. In Habermas' theory of action we do not only find summarised and discussed Parsons' conception, but even his interdisciplinary approach and "logic" is subsumed. At the same time, this theory of action becomes central for a speculative research, studying the sociological functioning of the dynamic of recognition.

Habermas interprets the sociological question of intersubjectivity and interrelation in an original, critical-practical and interdisciplinary way, transforming it as a question deeply connected to the triadic thematic of 'public sphere', 'discourse' and 'reason',

that is between critical sociology, theory of communication, political theory. As an anthropological basis for this view, Habermas implies Aristotle's conception of man as a 'political animal', as a natural, social and political, being who lives with others, realising himself in the public space. Because of the fact we are constitutively intersubjective, we are radically dependent on each other. Actually, it is in the public sphere that we become persons, because we are learning continually through the interaction with others.¹ The construction and organisation of public spaces – whose structural framework is of a *social* nature – reveals the constructive or decadent, the harmonies or rifts of a communitarianism. It is within the varied, emancipatory or repressive, communitarian dynamism of mutual recognition or mis-recognition to influence and impact the singular life for the majority, as well as the life of a group, a community or society as a whole. Analysing and evaluating the reality of our rationalised and bureaucratised, western, societies Habermas denounces a dynamism of coercive and repressive nature, within which the work of the social, public, critic and the "militancy" of an emancipatory communication is required as necessary and urgent. It is not the "simple" material quality of life or the quality of peaceful inter-relationships to determine a good degree of development of a society and the emancipation of its members. In fact, it depends on the quality of *communicative* relationships. This concept of intersubjective communication constitutes the keystone of Habermas' theory of recognition, in which the possibility of empowerment and emancipation is "played" between the critique of the system and its re-organisation from the one side, and the quality and productiveness of the intersubjective, communicative, relationships. Finally only individuals and groups practising mutual recognition and advancing instances of respect and recognition through dialogue and critical communication can counterbalance the invasive, levelling, pressure of the systems, which has a structural, unavoidable tendency to become authoritarian and repressive.

Conclusion

In the current times, it is the political debate and the philosophy of politics which reveal how relevant the theme of recognition is, and in what manner the progress and well-being of human beings, who are part of different groups and communities, depend upon it. The struggle for recognition is the conceptual key for interpreting a dialectical process which is of a new kind. It has found, and may find again, diverse ways of expression – we have already had, and are still having, anti-segregation or anti-racial or civil rights movements, women's movements, peace movements, green movements, gender movements and so on. This important political process of recognition is an important and interesting dialectics within our democracies. At the same time, it has a sort of inner dark side: in fact, the politics of recognition may easily degenerate in a politics of differentiation. And this, certainly poses problems of relativism and, worst, it may gradually slip into a "democratic" disaggregation, transforming multicultural society in an anarchical anti-social reality focused on differentiation and subjective rights.

The psychology of recognition underlines how complex and deep the process of recognition is. It constantly involves an articulated dialectics that Ricœur has

¹ See: Speech delivered on the occasion of the conferment of the Kyoto Prize, November 11, 2014, published in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, December 11-12th 2004.

demonstrated to have a direct link with personal emancipation. The sociological critical research on recognition reveals how central the intersubjective dynamism of communication and action is in the public sphere, both for the process of self-emancipation and for the emancipation of a given society. As I previously underlined: the dialectics between justice and recognition cannot “simply” be reduced to the critical analysis of the double movement of ‘justice through recognition’ and ‘recognition through justice’. In fact, it is through the challenges referred to and developed between self-emancipation and intersubjective action that the future of our civilisation will be at stake. There will not be social emancipation, social justice, and social (mutual) recognition without citizens’ personal engagement, and without emancipation of them. We are responsible. We are the key.



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Asoke Buddhist Education In Thailand

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Abstract

This paper looks into the Buddhist community-based education in the Asoke Buddhist villages in Thailand. The Asoke Buddhist movement has been running its own schools for the last thirty years. Thousands of young people have been trained in these *samma sikkha* schools. Many of the young people subsequently stay in the Asoke groups and may send their own children to the Asoke schools as well.

Santi Asoke and the Asoke movement has been controversial since its emergence because of its harsh criticism of capitalism, consumerism and corruption in the mainstream Buddhist practices. Asoke movement administers several autonomous self-reliant villages in rural Thailand where it practices sustainable organic agriculture, sells vegetables, herbal shampoos and medicine in its own shops and has opened primary and secondary schools.

The Asoke movement promotes E.F. Schumacher's ideas about "Buddhist Economics", which often are translated into "sufficiency economy" but are better known as *bunniyom* in the Asoke group. *Bunniyom* refers to the spiritual merit (*bun*) that can be earned by producing and selling commodities on a fair price rather than on profit. Hence Asoke *bunniyom* goes against the traditional capitalism *thunniyom*. These values are inculcated to the Asoke students in the *samma sikkha* schools.

Keywords: Asoke, samma sikkha, bunniyom

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Introduction

Santi Asoke is a controversial Buddhist group based in Bangkok. It has several rural branches all over Thailand –the most important ones are Pathom Asoke in Nakhon Pathom, Sima Asoke in Nakhon Ratchasima, Sali Asoke in Nakhon Sawan, Sisa Asoke in Sisaket and Ratchathani Asoke in Nakhon Ratchasima. There are additional smaller villages like Lanna Asoke in Chiang Mai; Phu Pa Fa Nam in Chiang Rai and Hin Pa Fa Nam in Chaiyaphum. Alltogether there are 27 Asoke centres in Thailand. The villages concentrate in organic farming and production of herbal shampoos, detergents and medicine. The products are sold in their supermarkets in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Ubon Ratchathani and Sisaket. The Asoke group also runs primary, secondary and vocational schools in Bangkok and in the villages.

Asoke group is controversial due to its strict adherence to veganism and austere lifestyle. It emerged in the early 1970s as followers of a monk called Bodhiraksa, who openly criticised capitalism, consumerism, commodification of Buddhism and the lax practices of the mainstream sangha.¹ Bodhiraksa was forced to resign from the state sangha organisation (*mahatherasamakhom*) and the entire Asoke group is subsequently regarded as ‘outlawed’. The Asoke monks and nuns battled a court case in the early 1990s when they were accused for being ‘heretics’. Recent years they have been actively involved in political demonstrations on the side of the People’s Alliance for Democracy (PAD) or ‘yellow shirts’ and were in 2014 involved in the anti-government demonstrations that ultimately led to the military coup in May 2014. The Asoke students and teachers have actively participated in all these sit-ins camping for moths in downtown Bangkok. According to their own interpretation, the teachers have used these opportunities to teach politics and social issues to the students.

Asoke Buddhist Teachings

Asoke education is the Samma Sikkha (right studying) primary and secondary schools is entirely based on the Asoke group’s interpretation on basic Buddhist teachings. An overview on Asoke interpretation of basic tenets of Buddhism is needed before this paper can proceed towards describing the Asoke schools and values inculcated to the young students.

Asoke Buddhism emphasises the Four Noble Truths² as the absolute cornerstone of Buddhist teachings. An Asoke Buddhist is encouraged to interpret his personal suffering (*dukkha*) through the principles of the Four Noble Truths. On a practical level, this means that, in Asoke, people must search internally for the origins of their personal suffering (*samudya*) by reflecting on their own behaviour rather than placing blame on external forces. Because of these teachings all spiritual, cult-related activities are regarded as useless and even foolish as personal suffering is not caused by outside forces such as malevolent spirits (*phi*) or ghosts but rather by the action of persons themselves.

¹ Sanitsuda Ekachai “The man behind Santi Asoke” *Bangkok Post* 22.7.1988; reprinted in

² The truth about suffering; the origin of suffering; the cessation of suffering; and the path leading to the cessation of suffering. Goonewardene 196:143.

The second noble truth traces human suffering back to individual craving and greed which is responded to in the Asoke group with absolute anti-consumerism and anti-materialism. The purpose of this response lies in the long term perspective where a person reduces craving for little luxuries, new commodities and sensual pleasures. When living in poverty is presented as an ideal, the suffering caused by craving is easily reduced to the minimum. The third noble truth teaches that there is a way out of this suffering (*nirodha*) and anyone who wishes to find this path out of suffering should obviously carefully study the fourth noble truth that introduces the path out of suffering (*magga*). The fourth noble truth further elaborates the ideas of reducing suffering by introducing the Noble Eightfold Path.

The Noble Eightfold Path and the importance of the ‘right occupation’

The Noble Eightfold Path³ is regarded as the concrete method and the roadmap to follow in order to reduce individual suffering. The first step on this path is ‘right understanding’ (*samma ditthi*). With right understanding the Buddhist literature usually indicates that the root causes of suffering need to be understood. The real causes of human suffering, according to Buddhism, originate from the individual craving for more. As understanding is the first step on the Noble Eightfold Path, it is dictated that a person must actually already understand the importance of the three earlier Noble Truths. If the person still imagines that all his troubles and ‘bad luck’ are caused by outside forces, he cannot properly and correctly follow the Noble Eightfold Path but instead is doomed to go astray on the first step. The Asoke group emphasises the right understanding, and many supporters of the group emphasise that one should see the world as it is, with no delusion (*moha*). The ‘right understanding’ also refers to the understanding of *karma*, *dana*, rituals and the way to becoming an *arahan*.

The second step on the Noble Eightfold Path is ‘right thought’ or also translated as ‘right intention’ (*samma sankappa*). This in the Asoke and in wider Buddhist interpretation is often concretely translated as having a ‘right intention’. To have a ‘right intention’ as such is positive, even if the outcome is negative. Hence the idea of ‘good intentions’ is often repeated also in the Asoke circles. A person with good intentions is a ‘good person’ even if the outcome of his action might result in something negative and damaging. The other translation for the second step is ‘right thoughts’ meaning that one should not entertain any misunderstandings and misinterpretations in one’s mind but develop the ‘right thought’ about a particular situation. In this context, the famous Buddhist slogan on the ‘middle path’ is often mentioned. The concept of the ‘middle path’ tends to offer a noncommitted alternative to practise as anything one does can be seen as the ‘middle way.’ There is always a more extreme way to anything. In the Asoke interpretation, one extreme is life in luxurious consumerism; the other extreme would be torturing one’s mind, for instance, by living isolated in a cave. The ‘middle path’ means being a member of a group where a person can test his Buddhist practice on a daily basis when encountering other people and the materialistic world.

³ Right understanding; right thoughts; right speech; right actions; right livelihood; right effort; right mindfulness; right concentration. Goonewardene 1996:146.

The third step on the Noble Eightfold Path is ‘right speech’ (*samma vaca*). In the Asoke tradition this is usually interpreted as not lying and boasting. In the Asoke Buddhist version, polite speech is also very much appreciated. The way Bodhiraksa preaches is usually regarded as ‘speaking the truth.’ Hence it has become one step on the Noble Eightfold Path to speak the truth, criticising openly when there is something to be criticised and not avoiding the truth just for the sake of social harmony.

The fourth point of the Noble Eightfold Path is right action (*samma kammanta*), sometimes translated as ‘right conduct’ or ‘right behavior.’ This right action is entirely based on the right understanding and right speech. Hence one cannot jump from step to step as one cannot simply have ‘right action’ based on entirely wrong understanding and wrong intentions. Every step on the Noble Eightfold Path is equally important, and misunderstanding the first one or the second one will automatically lead to misunderstanding the rest of the teachings. A misunderstanding of the basic truths can only lead to a wrong action. The syncretistic elements within Buddhist practice are entirely rejected by the Asoke people. Wearing amulets, sprinkling holy water upon the Buddhists or participating in some other vernacular localised rituals appear simply a total waste of time and money for the Asoke people.

One of the most important and controversial points of the Noble Eightfold Path is the ‘right livelihood’ or ‘right occupation’ (*samma ajiva*). Basic Buddhist texts list occupations that are not recommended for practising Buddhists. Activities that cannot be practised are, for instance, any occupation that causes bloodshed. That would include both soldiers and butchers and also some other occupations where the risk of using violent means is imminent. Raising cattle might be problematic as the cattle is after all raised to be slaughtered at a later time. Selling alcohol is not acceptable for a Buddhist; meaning all the bars and restaurants should not be run by practising Buddhists. Trafficking slaves and women is not accepted in Buddhism, but ironically Thailand is rather notorious for the prostitution industry and as a centre of human trafficking of labour force from the rural areas and from the neighbouring countries. According to Thai research, the illegal economy has played a prominent role in the Thai national economy for decades.⁴

For the Asoke group, the recommendation of a ‘right occupation’ is very clear and simple to follow. Alcohol consumption is strictly banned, and as vegetarians they do not come in touch with dead meat and slaughtered animals. The mainstream Buddhism has more problems in interpreting these points as they seem impractical from the point of view of modern Thai economy, which relies on the tourism industry and on exports of chicken, fish and shrimp products to the world market. The fifth point in the Noble Eightfold Path is probably the clearest point for the Asoke followers and Asoke communities and villages. Asoke communities offer practitioners a very concrete way to follow these teachings.

The sixth point is ‘right effort’ or ‘right endeavour’ (*samma vayama*), which is somewhat more abstract. It encourages the practitioners to avoid evil and reject lies. It also encourages the practitioners to ‘know thyself’ and practise according to the persons’ individual abilities and capabilities and progress at their own pace. This is

⁴ Pasuk Phongpaichit, Sungsidh Piriyarangsana and Nualnoi Treerat (1998) Guns, Girls, Gambling, Ganja. Thailand’s illegal economy and public policy.

done in the Asoke group in the sense that each individual follows a somewhat different path of practice. Some eat one meal a day, some eat two meals a day and some eat three meals a day. Some Asoke practitioners leave their worldly possessions and move into the temples either to be ordained or stay as temple residents. Others live outside the temple with their families, go to work and devote only their free time to the Asoke activities. The Asoke community is in this sense unequal as the Asoke followers are on different levels due to the austerity of their practice. This in the Asoke group is interpreted by some laypersons as a spiritual stratification into castes (*varna*) depending on one's level of practice.

The two last steps of the Noble Eightfold Path are connected with a peace of mind and an ability to concentrate. The seventh step (*samma sati*) is translated into English as 'right contemplation' or 'right mindfulness.' The eighth step (*samma samadhi*) is sometimes confusingly also translated as 'right contemplation' or 'right concentration.' The eighth step is often interpreted as right meditation, and hence this interpretation encourages the practice of meditation. The question, however, remains whether one can meditate if one has not followed the previous seven steps on the Noble Eightfold Path. Moreover, what is the benefit of meditating if the earlier steps have been neglected? Can a person who goes entirely against the right occupation still sit down and calm his mind to 'right concentration'?

The Asoke group emphasises mindfulness (*sati*) and many Asoke supporters state that their aim is to be more 'awake, alert, and aware' of their environment and surroundings. This partly explains the 'this-worldliness' of the Asoke group. An Asoke practitioner is expected to follow the news, the world events, the environmental disasters at home and abroad and discuss the impact of these developments on their own life in the Asoke community. The Asoke people, however, do not like to be regarded as *lokiya* (this-worldly) but rather as *lokuttara* (otherworldly). The practitioners are interested in worldly affairs, but they are not 'addicted' to the world; hence they regard themselves not to be *lokiya*. Nevertheless, an Asoke person should not remain ignorant of worldly reality. Asoke Buddhism is Buddhism with open eyes.⁵

Activist Buddhism

The Asoke group does not meditate in the traditional sense of the word. They reject the idea that sitting still in one place and closing one's eyes for twenty minutes a day would somehow be connected to the basic Buddhist teachings such as understanding the causes of suffering. Asoke people emphasise more the aspect of 'concentration' and thus their meditation is concentration in whatever they do whether it be eating, working or sleeping. Every action is carried out with careful concentration which is their meditation. This approach can be recognized as Zen Buddhism, even though the leader of the group, Bodhiraksa, has never had any personal links to the Japanese Zen Buddhist monks. Bodhiraksa's choice of method seems to be based on his own experience and practice.

⁵ Based on my observations and discussions in the Asoke community during the last twenty years.

Another Pali term that the Asoke practitioners cultivate is '*bhavana*.' *Bhavana* could also be translated as some type of 'meditation' but the more literal translation would be spiritual and mental development or cultivation. It is also translated as continuous action to be free from 'defilement' (*kilesa*). This does not mean meditation or contemplation in the same sense as '*samadhi*.' The term *bhavana* fits perfectly in the Asoke context as agriculture and cultivation are emphasised in the group as a concrete form of Buddhist practice. *Bhavana* thus 'gives fruit' as a result. By practising *bhavana* the Asoke people are in fact cultivating their spirits. The whole symbolism around the word *bhavana* refers to practical agriculture, growing crops and nourishing a harvest.

Aside from the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path as cornerstones of all Buddhist practice, the precepts (*sila*) are also emphasised. Usually all Asoke practitioners are expected to follow the Five Precepts. Considering that the precepts are not commands by higher spiritual authorities, the precepts should be understood more as recommendations. A person who wishes to be a Buddhist and live his life as a Buddhist should try and follow the five basic recommendations. Thus the best translation for the precepts would be that the person declares a commitment to avoid acting against these recommendations. The five precepts are not and should not be considered as a set of prohibitions.

The first precept emphasises the value of all life and hence recommends that a practising Buddhist avoid destruction of any forms of life. The recommendation includes both human and animal worlds. It even includes the plants, but as the plants are regarded to have fairly low levels of energy (*kandha*) they are not treated with quite the same level of reverence as humans and animals.

The first precept is closely linked to the Buddhist understanding of 'self.' The individual self (*atta*) is rejected in Buddhist teachings in favour of a more complex set of elements or aggregates of the self. These five aggregates or energies of self are the physical body (*rupanama*), feelings (*vedana*), awareness (*samjñā*), thoughts (*samskara*) and consciousness (*vijñāna*). When considering plants, they do possess 'matter' and a shape but are assumed to be quite low in terms of 'feelings' not to mention 'thoughts' or 'consciousness'. These five energies are the basis of all life, and they follow each other in successive order. All life is based on interaction between these five elements. These five energies are continuously taking shape and being born and reborn in another form in another physical body. These are the principles of impermanence (*anicca*); a self is impermanent, and clinging to this illusory self is a major cause of all suffering.⁶

In the Asoke group the first precept is taken very seriously. No life should be destroyed, no animals be eaten, no animals be killed. Insects and pest such as snakes and spiders are chased away; mosquitos are gently blown away if they decide to sit on one's arm. Spiderwebs are carefully moved away to avoid causing injuries to the spider itself. Cats and dogs are not catered to in the Asoke temples as this would be an

⁶ The terms and translations of the basic teachings here are based on basic general textbooks on world religions such as Colledge, Ray (1999) *Mastering World Religions*. Macmillan; and Nyanatiloka's *Buddhist Dictionary* (2004).

interference in their lives. To feed a dog or cat is to make the animal dependent on human beings and lead possibly to its no longer being able to survive on its own.

When the importance of the first precept is correctly understood, and the person has become fully capable of strictly following the first precept, the following precepts will have become very much easier to follow. Using intoxicants is unthinkable in the Asoke circles. Standard practice dictates that meals are eaten before noon, and no Asoke person goes loitering in and about night entertainment establishments. The temptation to cheat and be unfaithful towards one's partner is also lessened when one does not visit bars and nightclubs. Some jealousies do arise among couples in the Asoke villages, but these have been handled within the community and with little public drama. Typical advice nuns give in cases like these is to face the truth and talk openly about the issues.

To take something that is not yours still happens in the Asoke centres - particularly among the students. I have seldom heard these problems occurring among the adults. Much of the property in the Asoke centres belongs to the temple and the foundations which maintain the temples; It has become public property, which everyone can use but not own individually as private property. The emphasis on anti-materialism and anti-consumerism also makes it less appealing for the Asoke people to engage in thievery among each other or otherwise by illegal means increase their private properties. The Asoke version of Buddhist economics or *bunniyom* (meritism) also runs contrary to capitalism, consumerism and greed.⁷ The Asoke group's recent emphasis on the corruption of Thai politicians should be contextualised in their passionately anti-capitalistic worldview. To be 'corrupted' is equal to being a thief.

The fourth precept is to avoid speaking in a harmful way towards or about others. It coincides with the third step on the Noble Eightfold Path (*samma vaca*) and encourages people to always tell the truth and speak with respect about the other people.

The prior five precepts are the basic recommendations for a practising Buddhist. The next five precepts give a more demanding set of recommendations further limiting consumerism and obsession with materialism. Many of the Asoke laypeople follow the eight precepts, meaning they do not eat anything after noon, they avoid dancing and joining in other types of entertainment, and they do not wear perfume or jewellery. The first sign of a new Asoke convert is that the person strips himself of all jewellery - Buddhist amulets, fancy golden watches and rings. With all these concrete methods of stripping down to basics, the individual craving is reduced, and in the long run suffering will be reduced.

The remaining two precepts are compulsory only for monks and nuns in the Asoke group. The ordained are not supposed to use luxurious, elevated seats and beds, and they are not permitted to deal with money. It is quite common in Thailand and elsewhere in Asia to sit on the floor, eat on the floor and sleep on the floor, hence the ninth precept is not very difficult to follow in any Asian culture.

⁷ See the Heikkila-Horn 2002 on *bunniyom*.

The tenth precept about not dealing with gold and silver – meaning money – has turned out to be rather difficult to observe in the modern Thai society. In the Asoke group it is an absolute rule, but in the outside Buddhist circles it is less strictly enforced. It is not unusual to see Thai Buddhist monks paying for a taxi ride or paying cash for a new computer programme in a shopping mall. Monks in Thailand do not usually have to pay for a bus ride or a train trip, but the generosity of the Thai state or private companies does not usually reach beyond that. In practice, a monk should have a layperson with him to pay the required money. This system is practised in Asoke where the monks and the nuns always travel with laypeople. Laypeople accompany them to hospitals or to opticians so the Asoke monks and nuns receive all the care they need without using money.

The five basic precepts or even the additional more demanding precepts are fairly easy to follow for a person living in the Asoke temples. They might be more demanding for those Asoke followers who live outside the temples and go out with their colleagues in the evenings or live in modern apartment houses with all the trappings of modern comfort and luxury.

The five precepts are paired with five positive actions that the person should do for further practice. The first precept does not only recommend that the person avoid destroying life, but the opposite is also emphasised, meaning the person should nurture and sustain life. This can most easily be done, for instance, with a small garden where the person can grow plants and practise living in harmony with nature. In accordance to the second precept, the person should give away things, be generous and with this practice learn not to be attached to material things. For the third precept, Asoke recommends brotherly and sisterly relations between genders. Asoke as such could be treated as one big family with the shared family name as discussed earlier.

To counteract speaking harmfully about the others means to speak positively about others and always remain polite. This is, of course, a general rule for good behaviour in any society and particularly emphasised in Thai society. In this context, the Asoke people practise among themselves by greeting each other with a polite ‘*wai*’ on all occasions and to thank each other with a *wai* when, for instance, sharing the food and receiving the food cart from another person in line.

A set of other Buddhist teachings are also discussed and well known in Asoke. The practical aspects offered to Asoke people as an introduction to the Asoke Buddhist practice give them the basic guidelines within which they operate and progress.

On Education in Thailand

Much has been written about educational standards in Thailand. Anne Booth (2003) points out that in the 1990s Thailand’s economic performance was singled out as weak among the other Southeast Asian and East Asian nations by a World Bank survey. Thailand stood out as having a rather low secondary school enrollment ratio for its level of income in the boom years of the 1990s.⁸ The poor level of education, especially among new entrants to the labour force, was creating serious economic problems. Due to the skills-shortage, Thailand found it difficult to move into medium

⁸ Booth 2003:173-175.

technology sectors, especially for export, and instead remained in labour-intensive manufacturing, such as garments and footwear, whereas less-developed neighbouring countries were competing with even lower salaries than Thailand.⁹

The education system has been up-graded since then, and officially, the Thai children are supposed to be granted a 12-year education. The discussion has moved from quantity to quality, and the Thai education system is trying to move away from the rote-learning tradition to encourage analytical and critical thinking.

Education in Theravada Buddhist countries has traditionally been the responsibility of the sangha. This changed particularly in the colonised countries, where often Christian missionaries took over the education supported by colonial authorities. Thailand escaped direct colonisation but was heavily influenced by Western advisers who pressured Thailand to modernise along the lines of neighbouring colonies. A Western-style education system was introduced to Thailand during the era of King Chulalongkorn at the turn of the last century.

Many Thai children still study in schools located in temple compounds, but they follow the Western-inspired curriculum. In the Asoke schools, the children study English, natural sciences and computer skills, but there is a strong emphasis on Buddhism and the traditional skills of the rural Thais.

Asoke Buddhist *samma sikkha* – the right study

The Asoke schools are called *samma sikkha* schools, with reference to the Noble Eightfold Path and its steps of Right Understanding (*samma ditthi*), Right Intention (*samma sankappa*) etc. The secondary schools were established more than 20 years ago, and at the moment, there are more than 500 students in the *samma sikkha* secondary schools. Ten years ago, primary schools and vocational schools were also opened.

All teachers are volunteers. Some of the teachers originate from outside schools and sometimes try to push the Asoke schools more into line with state schools. Many monks and nuns work as teachers in the Asoke schools, teaching everything from Buddhism to English and Mathematics.

The *samma sikkha* schools are in a constant process of change as new teachers join the schools wanting to reform them according to their personal visions. The children learn to become quite tough and are well-prepared to defend their rights and interests. The Asoke school children have regular meetings where they learn to discuss their problems, negotiate solutions to conflicts and take responsibility for their own behaviour and for that of their fellow students. This process is supported by the teachers.

Many students leave Asoke schools for various reasons. The ones who stay often stay on in the Asoke communities, even after graduating. Some join the vocational schools at the Asoke centres, some study at the Asoke ‘university’ (*mahalai wang ciwit*) or at the open universities like Ramkhamhaeng University. Very few students entirely

⁹ Booth 2003:181.

leave the community; it is more common to stay in the geographic and spiritual vicinity.

An Asoke school is a place for lay practitioners to show devotion (*siasala*), which is regarded as an important part of Asoke Buddhism. To donate money to the Asoke temples or foundations is not encouraged. Visitors who come for the first time are not allowed to donate any money until they have visited the temple seven times and understand the teachings of the temple. Working for the temple is valued more than any material contribution because work is regarded as spiritual practice.

The basic idea of Asoke education is a holistic approach in which theoretical knowledge goes together with practical skills such as gardening, cooking, cleaning, producing and selling goods, repairing cars and engines, sewing and nursing. The Asoke centres also train their own 'barefoot doctors' in cooperation with a hospital in the Northeast. The students are expected to immediately apply their learnt skills and put theories into practice. A slogan in the Asoke schools for many years has been 'learning by doing.' The students are taught some basic skills to support themselves as adults, often this means production of vegetarian food or herbal medicine, shampoos and detergents.

The education is mainly oriented towards rural children, and consequently, teaching the children to grow crops is of major importance. With these skills, each student can become an economically self-reliant, independent adult, who has at least some basic skills to support her- or himself and her or his family. Moral conduct is hence emphasised more than academic excellence.

The *samma sikkha* Santi Asoke was officially established in 1995, while the court case against Asoke monks and nuns was still pending. Before that the centre had been running a school in the informal education framework. With the 1995 decision, the Asoke school became an ordinary Thai state school, which had to fulfill the requirements of the Thai Ministry of Education. This meant in practical terms, for instance, that a picture of the royal family, a Thai flag, and a formal Buddhist shrine with a few Buddha images all needed to be exhibited on the premises. This was still the time when Asoke centres did not have a Buddha image present; hence the only Buddha images exhibited on the school premises were usually in the teachers' room. The permission to establish the secondary school in 1995 was given to a layperson representing the Thamma Santi Foundation. The curriculum was received from the Ministry of Education and needed to be carefully followed as the Ministry frequently sent inspectors to survey the school.

An important point in the founding was to emphasise that the school was to be free of charge. The ambitious purpose of the school was to produce 'students who will serve the community, society, country and all human beings.' The teachers need to 'have high morality,' work as volunteers and have at least a Bachelor's degree. Students are to originate from 'less privileged families, or have problems due (*sic*) the language and culture,' which would seem to indicate that the school is willing to accept children from minority communities. On the other hand, the rules state that the students must have Thai nationality, so migrant children would not be able to study

there.¹⁰

All teachers work as volunteers, but they are provided with basic necessities, such as clothes and medicine by the Thamma Santi Foundation.

The school is a boarding school and children stay there over the school terms. They need to strictly follow the Asoke rules: only vegetarian food, no snacks between meals and wake up at 4:40 am, go to sleep by 9 pm with no naps between 4:40 am and 6 pm. Also, the students must attend a student meeting once a week and they must take part in daily activities. The students are allowed to possess three school uniforms and two other sets of clothes, eating utensils, a torchlight, a sleeping bag, a mat and a mosquito net. No valuables like jewelry, watches, cameras or radios are allowed.

The Santi Asoke school has been run according to these principles ever since. It offers six secondary school classes with the compulsory state curriculum of Thai, English, Maths, Science and other subjects. Of all the Asoke schools the Santi Asoke branch is likely the most academic one as there is a wider choice of teachers. The school is open to nearly anyone to come to teach. Basic academic requirements are needed, but otherwise no other background checks are made. Many people come to offer their teaching skills for free but tire quite quickly if they are not dedicated followers of the Asoke Buddhist teachings. Some of the Santi Asoke school graduates have been able to continue their studies at universities such as Chiang Mai, Ramkhamhaeng, Srinakharinwirot or Ubon Ratchathani universities. Some students have also continued their studies in the teachers' colleges, now renamed as Rajabhat Universities.

The philosophy of the *samma sikkha* Sisa Asoke school also makes references to 'right living,' and the main concentration is on morality and spirituality. Sisa Asoke school was a pioneer among the Asoke schools in trying to provide the students with clear vocational skills. Academic knowledge and sciences are not emphasised in the Sisa Asoke school.

There were over 200 students in Sisa Asoke in 2010. The Sisa Asoke school started as a weekend school in 1982 mainly for the children in neighbouring communities. In 1990, the community decided to set up their own education system to serve the community needs and to prevent brain-drain from the community.¹¹

According to Suwida, 40% of the education program is devoted to 'moral conduct and right living,' 35% to learning vocational skills and only 25% is devoted to the standard school curriculum on arts and science subjects. Suwida further points out that in fact 80% of the curriculum consists of 'application of integrated arts and sciences' in various work bases, and only 20% is devoted to academic studies.¹² Altogether there are 59 different work bases in Sisa Asoke, and my observation is that

¹⁰ Samma Sikkha Santi Asoke School; leaflet, nd.

¹¹ Suwida Saengsehanat and Bong L.C. (2010) Right Education – the Srisa Asoke Model (online article).

¹² Suwida and Bong 2010.

many of the work bases are entirely run by the children.¹³

There were attempts to teach English at a work base where students would work and the teacher would try to help them to explain what they were doing in English. This method was tested for a while but was not very efficient. Another problem in Sisa Asoke in terms of learning is that manual labour and labour in the work bases is preferred to theoretical studies. The children find it entertaining to work together on a project and the community desperately needs their input due to the labour shortage.

To an American visitor, who stayed in Sisa Asoke for three months, the village appeared as an ‘empire of children.’¹⁴ For instance, students tend to skip their English classes on a fairly regular basis. In 2006, the Sisa Asoke students were busy with ‘studying politics’ on the streets of Bangkok by participating in the demonstrations as a part of the Dharma Army. As a result of all this, the Sisa Asoke students had considerable problems with passing the national matriculation exams.

There is, however, little concentration on graduating and exams. *Samma sikkha* schools are a life-forming experience, and many students are perfectly happy to continue to live in Sisa Asoke or join another village with some of their schoolmates and start their own projects to support themselves. Students are not evaluated on the basis of their academic skills but more importantly on their moral standards – an evaluation made by the monks and the nuns. Their conduct in everyday activities in the work bases is assessed, and their ability to follow the precepts, refrain from the six vices and ability to cooperate with each other in ‘compassion’ and ‘loving kindness’ are emphasised.¹⁵

The Asoke people have also established a community at the Ubon Ratchathani University campus, where since 2007, some 20 Asoke people – monks and nuns included – teach Buddhism and Asoke lifestyle. Also some 30 Asoke laypeople have enrolled at Ubon Ratchathani University to study for Master’s and PhD degrees.¹⁶

Their theses tend to try to present the Asoke *bunniyom* economy as a form of the royalist ‘sufficiency economy’, which has become a catchword among the radical conservatives in the tumultuous years since Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra’s administration.¹⁷ I would, however, argue, that the Asoke *bunniyom* is more related to the spiritual and philosophical concepts related to the Hindu term *swaraj* – self-rule and self-determination also in economic issues.

¹³ The tight schedule for Sisa Asoke school presented in Heikkilä-Horn (1996:49) no longer applies. Asoke communities are under constant change.

¹⁴ Interview in Sisa Asoke March 2004.

¹⁵ Suwida and Bong 2010.

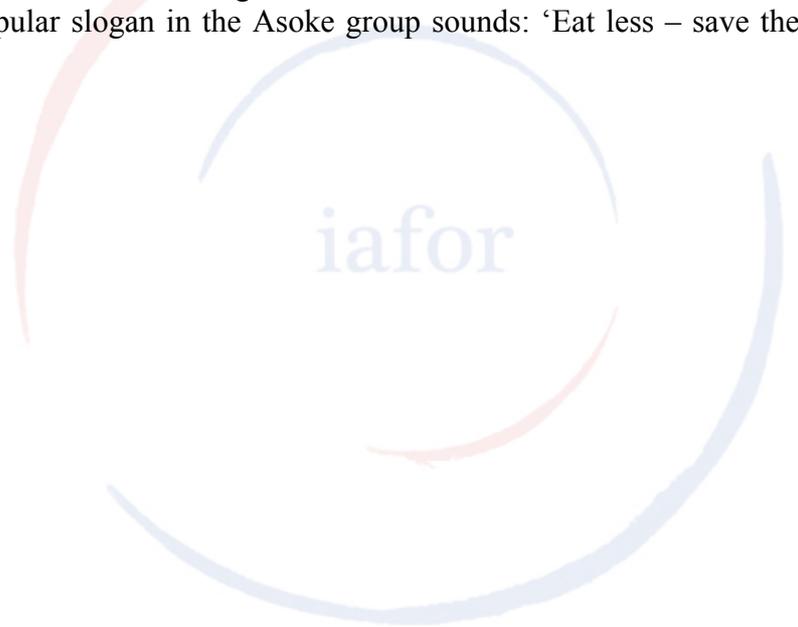
¹⁶ Interview with Dr. Rindharna in Santi Asoke 24.7.2011.

¹⁷ A good example is an unpublished paper titled ‘Sufficiency Economy as the Model of Thailand’s Community Development’ by Thamrong Sangsuriyachan, currently a PhD Candidate in Integral Development Studies at Ubon Ratchathani University.

Conclusion

Asoke education is strongly based on the Asoke Buddhist groups rather scriptural interpretation of basic Buddhist teachings. The Noble Eightfold Path is strongly emphasised, hence leading the followers to seek the ‘right understanding’ of social and economic conditions in Thailand. As a consequence of these considerations, the Asoke group tends to be more ‘politically engaged’ than the state authorities of Thailand generally prefer. Finding the ‘right occupation’ and ‘right livelihood’ to support themselves and their families and communities becomes an essential part of Asoke education.

The aim of Asoke education is to produce ‘graduates’ with strong Buddhist ethics and morals. In practical terms, the Asoke educational model trains underprivileged children from northeastern Thailand to become self-reliant to either practise organic agriculture or engage in small-scale cottage industries producing natural shampoos, medicine and other basic necessities. Much emphasis is also given to repairing and recycling commodities. The guiding principles of Asoke Buddhist ethics are modesty in economic terms and willingness to sacrifice for the benefit of the wider society. Hence a popular slogan in the Asoke group sounds: ‘Eat less – save the rest for the society.’

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Diversity and Fairness in College Admissions

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Official Conference Proceedings**Abstract**

Over the last several decades, the struggle to eradicate racism has inspired many developments in both social and educational policies. The current diversity policies are thought to be a form of corrective justice, making up for past harms. Although educators aim to diminish racism and injustice, they are at the same time frequently unaware that their own policies on diversity are tied to a specific model of society that narrowly defines individuals, who, by and large, do not reflect today's social fabric, especially when it comes to most urban cities in America and other English speaking countries. Society has developed in such a way that a looser concept of diversity is required. The main arguments for affirmative action are criticized, especially those regarding intention. I maintain a more socially conscious response than what has been previously given. This means giving individuals alternatives rather than turning them away. The institutions themselves must bear the burden of collective responsibility. I suggest how the middle class has been disproportionately harmed.

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Introduction

Over the last several decades, the struggle to eradicate racism has inspired many developments in both social and educational policies. These changes aim to correct past wrongs, promote integration, and foster tolerance among an increasingly global population. In the past, minorities were denied admission to universities because they were thought to be inferior; in response, affirmative action and diversity policies have been created to provide educational opportunities that did not previously exist. These policies support preferential treatment for minorities in the college admissions process. However, these programs are sometimes thought to commit the same error they intend to correct; that is, schools discriminate on the basis of race when denying applicants admission. To this, universities reply that their intentions are not formed out of hatred or the belief that the students they reject are inferior in any way. Rather, the university's objective is to be inclusive, providing an educational environment with students of different backgrounds. In this essay, I make several suggestions on how these programs can be improved by looking at and raising considerations regarding compensation and intention, the two main arguments for preferential treatment.

One consideration I raise is if state and city universities have contributed to the exclusion of minorities, then a share in social responsibility must be brought to bear on these institutions as well. Proportionality of debt should be shared so that it does not fall mostly on those of the middle or working classes. Regarding intention, I show that city and state universities can be more socially conscious in rejecting students; this means providing alternatives, leaving no one out if possible. Moreover, in a thought experiment, I show that decision making procedures can be more socially conscious. Finally, although city and state universities aim to diminish racism and injustice, their own policies have disproportionately impacted working class individuals. Society has developed in such a way that a looser concept of diversity is required, one that can accommodate a multiple identity model: work experience is such an identity I propose. I suggest that universities underemphasize substantive reasons that focus on content; this type of reason captures a sense of an individual's contributions, rather than looking at race, which, on or off the record may still count greatly. Work, thought of as a contribution to society, represents content that schools ought to acknowledge.

Correcting Past Injustices

One influential argument that supports preferential treatment in college admissions is that it is compensation for past wrongs. Past injustices inflicted on minorities require redress, and discrimination presently continues. So enrolling minorities in city and state universities allows for the possibility of restoring balance to communities where minorities have had little or no say in their own governance. Historically many schools were not inclined to admit minority students; in 1950, the University of Texas Law School (Sandel, 2009, p. 175), as Sandel (2009) summarizes the case, argued that law firms in Texas "did not hire blacks...its mission would not be served by admitting them"

(p. 175). Some, too, maintain that years of slavery and Jim Crow laws set Afro-Americans back to a degree that compensation is not only morally justified but also socially necessary to rebuild representation on account of the effects of long, entrenched legacies of deprivation. Albert Mosley (2014) reminds readers of just these facts when he says that “for over 300 years in what is now the United States of America, it was socially and legally acceptable to discriminate on the basis of race” (p. 125). Preferential treatment in college admissions, therefore, is a collective action in that members of the majority take responsibility for wrongs done to minorities. Without affirmative action and diversity programs, the wait to include minorities in aspects of government may be too late; decisions have to be made that impact minorities now, and minorities should have a say in policies that affect their lives. Patterns of income, too, suggest that power structures can be more evenly distributed. In these ways, preferential treatment in college admissions is one way to address past and present issues resulting from discriminatory practices.

One central issue has been that an individual, who is rejected by a school based on affirmative action or diversity preferences, though not personally to blame for the mistreatment of minorities, has to pay the price out of a sense of collective responsibility. The rejected applicant, from no fault of her own, must set aside the personal goal of going to a particular university and look to the greater good of the community that the decision serves. Her denial, and, in turn, the minority’s acceptance to the school, can add substantial positive weight to the balance of power in society and make up for past harms. Although schools may claim collective responsibility is indeed not their intention, the sheer fact of building representation alludes to a past in which there was little or none at all. In effect, it is thought that collective responsibility is served when minorities are added to school enrollment; years of discrimination call for rebalance. Ogletree Jr. (2005) describes his experience in saying that the “affirmative action policies promoted by Stanford University recognize that for more than 300 years, African Americans were treated differently because of their race...It will not take 300 years, or even 100 years to address the sad legacy of our nation’s past” (p. 14). As some have pointed out, compensation is currently and surely appropriate and justified.

Typically, the rebuttal to affirmative action and diversity policies on this point, has emphasized that it is unfair for an individual to pay for a harm for which she has taken no part in causing. This view is legitimate for which more clarification and deeper analysis are needed. By focusing on greater enrollment of minorities, admissions officers have overlooked the questionable assumptions and contradictions that are involved in passing over individuals to ensure greater minority representation. Collective responsibility may have some plausibility, but, in this context, inferential errors and personal costs need to be considered.

First the personal costs, for one, college administrators have been dismissive about the personal impact of not getting into a school. Personal considerations may include questions such as these: Are there other affordable schools in the same location? Does the alternative school have my intended major? The rejected applicant understands the difficult circumstances that are involved. The personal finances of moving and uprooting family ties may be costly, and a presently held part-time or full-time job may be lost, if she cannot go to the state university in her area. Going to a particular school can mean better job opportunities, and ultimately, the attainment of a good job can result, of course, in a better life. These are reasonable questions and considerations, highlighting the psychological reasons for such opposition. In one famous article, Judith Jarvis Thomson (1977) argues that many people's reaction to preferential treatment is emotional and not properly thought out. She refers to their attitudes as a type of "gut reaction" (p. 19). In fact, in many cases, the rejected applicants have assessed their personal losses correctly, the experiences they will miss out on, the future possibilities lost. One can imagine that these results are most hardly felt on middle and working-class individuals, such as Marco Defunis, a middle class applicant (Deslippe, 2012, p. 113).

Although academics such as Jarvis-Thomson are sympathetic in many respects, more discussion of the personal effects of such policies may help to explain opposition to affirmative action and diversity in college admissions. Furthermore, there is more relevance and complexity to protests against corrective justice based on psychological and personal reasons. Even for those not opposed to affirmative action or diversity policies, it is not enough to say as Olgetree Jr. (2005) points out that affirmative action "may not be a perfect system..." (p. 12). While it is the case that discrimination suffered by minorities has been cruel, preferential treatment in college admissions has become more controversial because of the way it has been implemented. If it is granted that minorities do deserve some advantage in college admissions, there have been more socially conscious ways to deal with opposing views. In this way, opposition can be taken more seriously, and reconciliation is possible when city and state universities can employ rational decision procedures.

In one on-line article, "Why Diversity Matters in College Admission", Roxanne Ocampo (n.d.), a college admission coach, discusses various myths and facts relating to the admission of minorities to colleges. She writes that this is a myth: "When considering diverse student applicants, do selective colleges unilaterally bypass more qualified candidates for 'minority' candidates? This is a myth." However, in a recent book, Dennis Deslippe (2012) has gathered detailed research, pointing out that court testimony has indicated otherwise. Scoring very high on the Law School Admission Test, in the top 7 percent, Marco Defunis was rejected by the University of Washington Law School, while thirty-six minority students were admitted with lower grade point averages and scores on the law placement test (p. 112-113).

Whether or not a school and its administrators are honest in evaluating applications is not based on policy, but is the result of empirical investigations. Alan Goldman (1977) has suggested that there can be more objective measures to put in place to make decisions fairly, one of which is “an administrative and complaint agency” (p. 208). In fact, far from a myth, years of protest, along with several justices on the Supreme Court in disagreement with affirmative action, require that preferential treatment in admissions be reassessed. Deslippe (2012) accounts that historically “affirmative action opponents ... were galled by the real or threatened use of statistics, proportionality, and quotas in affirmative action plans” (p. 113). In this way, there is a need to characterize the results of their policies, especially on middle and working class families with more honesty.

Institutions Are Responsible Too

Protests against affirmative action and diversity policies also concern the difficulty in understanding why individuals must compensate for past harms against minorities. Critiquing the way in which schools have implemented compensatory measures can offer insights into a possible solution. Essentially, college administrators have asked students and applicants to make sacrifices in order to advance minorities. Former President of the University of Washington, Charles Odegaard, from the landmark case, *Defunis v. Odegaard*, points out in a speech that whites “must expect to walk the extra mile to make up for the past imposition of whites on blacks” (Deslippe, 2012, p. 116). The confusion is legitimate because compensation not only interferes with people’s personal plans but also disproportionately impacts certain individuals, who are usually from the working classes. How can restrictions on personal goals and plans be avoided while compensating for past harms? In assigning blame for the wrongful acts against minorities, schools have created a system that, in general, has successfully transferred the onus of social responsibility to individuals, without sharing enough of the debt.

If state and city universities have made a substantive contribution to the exclusion of minorities, then a share in social responsibility must be brought to bear on the agents of these institutions as well. Proportionality of debt, to be administered properly, should be less private in character, more public, and, without so much transfer to specific individuals. At some institutions, African-Americans could not even work through the front door, let alone be students. By making schools and their managers more accountable, the burden on middle and working class families can be diminished. Historically, an unbroken chain of causation can be established in fact leading to the schools. For example, as in the case cited above, the University of Texas Law School, *Sweatt v. Painter* (Sandel, 2009, p. 175), is the direct agent of the harm, and the political compromise is therefore misplaced. At the expense of individuals, institutions and their administrators share the burden of social responsibility in terms of making accommodations towards minorities. State and city universities have made an explicit appeal to values of equality and diversity. A performative contradiction is committed,

however, if these agents, too, cannot make personal compromises. Some financial adjustments and agreements can be made on the part of schools to increase enrollment for those who merit admission, instead of excluding them because of diversity requirements.

The Intention Argument and Social Consciousness

One of the most contentious arguments for preferential treatment is that state and city universities are guilty of reverse discrimination when an applicant is passed over for one who is a member of an underrepresented minority group with lower test scores and qualifications. The rejected student maintains that she is denied admission because of her skin color; and, in effect, colleges, too, she claims commit racial discrimination, just in reverse. In defense, however, some thinkers and university administrators point out that the applicant is not granted admission from dislike or hatred; rather, the rejection is based on an altogether different intention, which is to embrace a diverse student population. At the same time, schools intend to build unity between different groups and foster social awareness of past injustices. Colleges, therefore, emphasize sensitivity to differences, intending to be inclusive instead of practicing mean-spirited exclusion that rejected students of color experienced in the past. Educators, among others, find the idea of diversity socially beneficial in that it aims at integration and solidarity. Justice Marshall A. Neil expresses the point well when he says that the “‘preference’ minority admissions policy...is clearly not a form of invidious discrimination. The goal is not to separate the races, but to bring them together” (Deslippe, 2012, p. 122). Moreover, diversity can be thought of as an educational tool, enriching discussion and ultimately making students more civil towards each other. “Diversity” as an aspect of academic freedom allows schools to shape an environment conducive to learning. Defending the University of Washington’s affirmative action policies, Slade Gorton argues that in accepting more minority students “the outlook of the white students as well as of the minority students would be more understanding” (Deslippe, 2012, p. 138). Diversity policies are designed with the intent to be inclusive and are different in intent.

In *Justice* (2009), one of Michael Sandel’s famous books on ethics and government, he cites the case of Cheryl Hopwood, a white student, who tries to get into the University of Texas Law School. Hopwood has not come from an elite background but has worked hard, achieving a high score on the LSAT, 83% rank, which means that she has scored better than 83% of the test takers for that test and year. She is not admitted to the University, yet other students, some Afro-American and Mexican Americans have been admitted with lower scores. On this issue, Sandel (2009) concisely summarizes Ronald Dworkin’s insights in saying that all that is required on the part of colleges is that “no one is rejected out of prejudice or contempt, and that applicants be judged by criteria related to the mission the university sets for itself” (p. 182). Many have thought, however, that this is a form of reverse discrimination in that the white applicant is, in

actual fact, rejected on the basis of his or her race. This contention is famously put forward in *Defunis v. Odegaard* (1974), in which reverse discrimination became the crux of the issue concerning preferential policies in college admissions. Judges as well as the public have not looked favorably on the use of race as a criterion for admission, even when it is dressed up with the best intentions.

However, in dismissing the charge of reverse discrimination with a difference in intention, Sandel and other theorists overlook a more socially conscious approach to admissions. Responsible behavior takes more into account than just the goal of boosting minority admissions and pointing out that it is not racism. A decision procedure that is more socially conscious regarding admissions can be understood as one that provides some alternatives or options rather than losing a student's potential, or disrupting a student's personal goals, especially if one for all intents and purposes, has met the criteria. Perhaps a better intention can be formed so that community interdependencies are considered, and that personal and social consequences are not conceptually abandoned. The fact that colleges can claim to have the best intentions in mind for everyone may also make them bullet-proof by avoiding personal criticism with this rationale. Colleges can embrace more thoughtful and sensitive positions, displaying intentions that are considerate, cooperative, and receptive; some intentions are more circumspect and sympathetic than others. Furthermore, a more socially conscious decision procedure in admissions can be thought not to underemphasize an applicant's contribution to society, or his or her working class status, as a later section of this paper will suggest. Accordingly, if concern for minority well-being is a function of diversity programs, then good intentions can be understood to take into account interdependences as well. Consider the following thought experiment.

The Middle Class Medical School Applicant: Mark, who is white, wants to be a doctor. His goal is to open a medical care facility, providing affordable services in Newark, NJ. Having worked and volunteered in hospitals, Mark applies to a medical school close to his hometown. He takes the MCAT (Medical College of Admissions Test); his score, while not bad, is also not too competitive, a 30. Mark fails to get into medical school. He tries the MCAT again and reapplies. This time he scores a 31, and, once again, he is not accepted. For minorities, however, a score of 30 receives admission to the medical school close to Mark's hometown. Because of family obligations, Mark, at the moment, cannot apply elsewhere. The admissions officers make society less productive by possibly losing a future doctor, or by postponing the training of one. Even the minority community is harmed by keeping Mark out of the medical school, since Newark, NJ has a large population of diverse people.

According to the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) by the year 2020, 56,000 more doctors will be needed in the United States due to an ageing population (Hubbard & O'Brien, 2013, p. 71). Although it is assumed that having

diversity in medical school may ultimately benefit society, in this case, the decision harms society by not attending to the more pressing need for more medical professionals. In not accepting Michael, society possibly loses out on a doctor, and once trained and experienced, he may have unique potential. In this thought experiment, the separate standard for minority students indicates that Michael's rejection is based on race, since the score he receives is good enough for minorities to be admitted. Nevertheless, college administrators' rejection of Michael may be premised on the idea that minority doctors are needed to serve minorities. Or, it is more commonly heard and formulated in the context of teaching: more minority teachers are needed to teach minority students. Odegaard also employed this type of rationale in the acceptance of more Afro-American applicants to the University of Washington Law School (Deslippe, 2012, p. 116). This view, however is outdated. In most modern cities, doctors treat diverse populations of patients and do charitable work, even far outside the bounds of their communities, for example, Doctors without Borders.

While some may argue that Michael's goal of opening a medical facility would have granted him admission, minority enrollment most likely overrides this feature of his application. A more socially conscious admissions policy would provide some alternatives rather than take the chance of losing a potential doctor. Why not accept Michael and others like him in an entering class? Little by little, can freshmen classes can be increased? In some cases, faculty have been on the record for thinking about alternatives, suggesting that entering classes should be enlarged (Deslippe, 2012, p. 60). It has even been suggested that medical school should even be free so that society does not lose potential doctors (Hubbard & O'Brien, 2013, p. 71). A more socially conscious decision making procedure can be thought to involve not just telling applicants what they cannot do, but also providing alternatives, giving individuals options. Schools and federal and local government organizations need to consider more carefully the effects of their policies and revise them accordingly. Social purpose is much more complex when considering interdependencies and the future circumstances.

The Intention Argument Based on Inclusivity

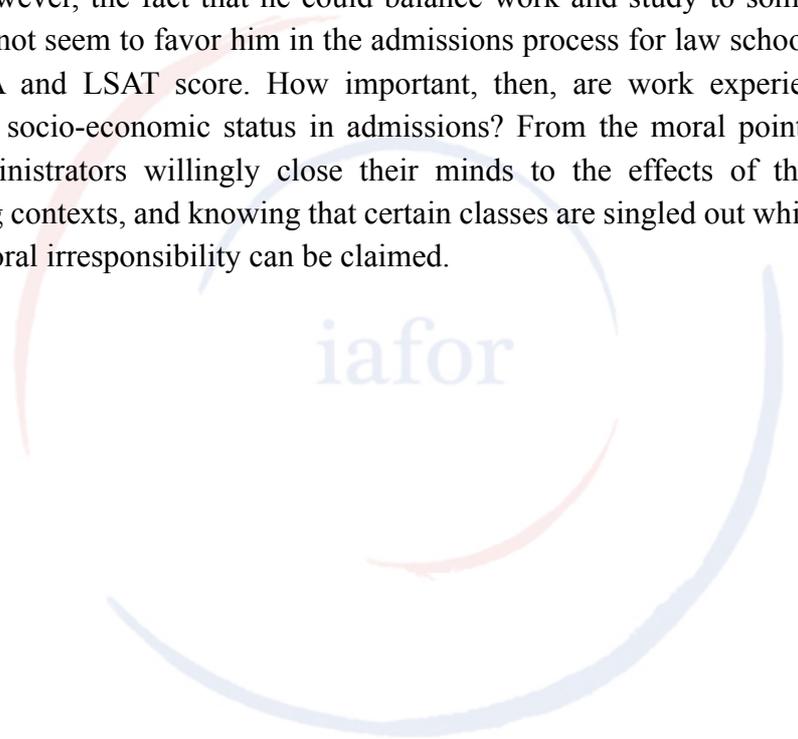
A second consideration related to intention is whether affirmative action and diversity programs violate the rights of a student to be judged on academic criteria alone. As Sandel points out, the answer is negative. Sandel (2009) summarizes Ronald Dworkin's argument concisely that universities do not have to rely strictly on only grades and test scores, claiming that "no applicant has a right that a university define its mission and design its admissions policy in a way that prizes above all any particular set of qualities—whether academic skills, athletic skills, athletic abilities, or anything else" (p. 174). Acceptance to a university is not a question of merit; it is based on the mission statement the school creates. The discussion includes a concession that once universities define their missions, there can be violations of policies. However, further questions are raised about what policies are fair, since many public and private

institutions have certainly created racist policies. Once again, the argument proposing the correctness of affirmative action and diversity policies turns on the distinction that students are not rejected out of hatred or dislike. Sandel (2009) explains, “in its segregationist days, the Texas law school used race as a badge of inferiority, whereas today’s racial preferences do not insult or stigmatize anyone. Hopwood considered her rejection unfair, but she cannot claim that it expresses hatred or contempt” (p. 176). Sandel, Dworkin, and others claim that the intention behind affirmative action and diversity policies is different when rejecting applicants; in doing so, schools are freed from the charge of reverse discrimination.

While schools may claim to mean no harm, as far as the historical record seems to indicate, over the decades, affirmative action and diversity policies have disproportionately affected middle and working class applicants. Although a full historical analysis of establishing this premise is out of the scope of this paper, if true, this recognition undermines the good will intentions on the part of institutions and universities. As Dennis Deslippe’s historical work (2012) shows that protests against affirmative action have often come from hard-hat laborers, police, firefighters and middle class students such as Marco Defunis. Even though Dworkin, Sandel, and others contend that applicants are not rejected because they are thought of as inferior, this does not mean that, in the final analysis, state and city universities have had intentions that are beneficent. In order to boost minority representation, this tendency in the decision making process can create new forms of economic discrimination and insensitivity that have to be addressed. State and city universities may have to rethink their positions on the value of work due to the large number of students who are currently employed. One challenge regarding diversity is that of the applicant’s work identity; applicants inhabit many spheres and have multiple identities, one of which is as workers and contributors to society. Unfortunately, universities may fail to consider an applicant’s employment history adequately; and, in doing so, schools, in effect, do not respond to the social realities of modern students. For many applicants, work is not a choice, and students support themselves, sometimes with several jobs.

According to Marina Fang (2013), 80% of American students work while in high school and up. In the end, state and city universities may have not emphasized work experience enough in the admissions process. Since preferences may, on and off the record, aim at ethnic diversity, overlooking an applicant’s service or contribution. In one instance, the court found that due to the large number of applications to the University of Michigan, efficiency was paramount, and minorities received many points towards admittance to facilitate the process (Maltz, 2005, p. 8). A distinction in guidelines between substantive and formal reasons offers colleges and universities a more balanced decision analysis for college admissions. Substantive reasons come closer to embracing the multiple identities that individuals actually possess, their economic and contributory dimensions, not just their racial identities, which, currently are ambiguous as well. Formal reasons,

on the other hand, preclude these, making the categorization of individuals too easy, and unfairly overlooking the richness and complexity that applicants embody. Formal reasons can be understood as stiff and harsh and often lump people together without attention to their personal identities: one is much more than his or her race. This view is also consistent with the criticism that universities do not consider class in admissions as Kahlenberg points out (2005). In fact, if the effects on working class applicants have been known and ignored, without being addressed or adjusted, then from a moral view, there is sense of irresponsibility on the part of the schools. Middle and working class applicants may bear incredibly harsh financial burdens; their earnings, however, often disqualify them from sources of aid, but, at the same time, their wages are usually not enough to allow them to focus entirely on school. This was the case with Marco Defunis in which he is reported to have worked full time at one point in college (Deslippe, 2012, p. 119). However, the fact that he could balance work and study to some successful degree, did not seem to favor him in the admissions process for law school, even with a high GPA and LSAT score. How important, then, are work experience and an individual's socio-economic status in admissions? From the moral point of view, if school administrators willingly close their minds to the effects of their policies, disregarding contexts, and knowing that certain classes are singled out while others are not, then moral irresponsibility can be claimed.

The logo for the International Association for Philosophy of the Religious Sciences (iafor) is centered on the page. It features the lowercase letters "iafor" in a light blue, sans-serif font. The text is surrounded by several overlapping, curved lines in shades of blue and red, creating a circular, abstract design.

Conclusion

Affirmative action and diversity policies are thought to be forms of corrective justice; however, the implementation of these programs has shown that they can be more socially conscious. What this means is that schools have to be more aware of the personal and social impact these programs have and provide possible alternatives. Moreover, it is suggested that these policies have disproportionately affected middle and working class applicants, and in this sense, the managers of these programs have acted unfairly. To this end, the institutions and their representatives must play a more significant role in making accommodations towards minorities by enlarging classes so as not to leave anyone out. Finally, more attention to content in assessment, in particular, an individual's work, a suggested underemphasized category, is required because of the changing social situation. This essay has made suggestions for a more socially conscious decision making process in college admissions.



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