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Polytheism and Monotheism: Mutually Exclusive or Interdependent?

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Abstract

Although it is common to assume that monotheism grows naturally from polytheism, each of these religious systems presents, in fact, a distinct and sustainable product of spiritual evolution. The main question that arises in this respect is whether such distinctness and sustainability should result in mutual incompatibility and lack of common grounds or whether the two systems could remain dependent on each other both in substance and in form. In terms of substance, it may be more rewarding to approach the evolution of religion not as a headway progress from inferior to superior but as an evolving response to changes of the scope within which the numinous is perceived by human beings. The author believes that this scope is mostly determined by the predominant social unit within which a given religion is professed and practiced. Thus, animism operates chiefly within the context of extended family; mature polytheism corresponds to the level of clan/tribe, while monotheism proper belongs to the scale of nation/empire. As regards the corresponding evolution of the form, one can say that the above succession/expansion of scope results in a situation where newer religions tend to borrow and assimilate their signs and symbols from their predecessors. This creates a relationship of semiotic interdependence between different systems, which is, however, never perfectly symmetrical due to monotheism's more stronger propensity towards 'religiophagia'. Yet the latter's current tendency towards greater reflection and self-examination inspires cautious optimism with respect to an improved probability of eventual interreligious harmony.

Keywords: Polytheism, Monotheism, Scope, Perception, Substance, Form, Symbol, Interdependence, Religiophagia, Interreligious Harmony

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Introduction

While it is widely acknowledged that there is no strict border between polytheism and monotheism, with many transitional and mixed forms identifiable, it is just as true that in their extreme manifestations the two religious systems can look irreconcilable and hostile to each other. Thus, from the polytheistic point of view, monotheism misrepresents the observable universe where many of us discern an endless struggle between opposing forces rather than any effective rule of a single godhead. On the other hand, from the monotheistic perspective, polytheism violates common sense by assuming that the unity of our universe can be maintained in the absence of a single creator/ruler without facing imminent disintegration and demise.

This apparent irreconcilability cannot be alleviated by the fact that in the course of religious evolution monotheism seems to develop naturally from polytheism. Any evolution, e.g. the one of living organisms, can supply us with numerous examples where its different products, which share a common ancestor or even evolve one from another, can nevertheless become bitterly opposed to each other in their struggle for dominance or resources. To put it more concisely, sharing certain morphological features (even most of them) does not guarantee peaceful coexistence between two given biological species. Yet even the most irreconcilable competitors within the realm of living organisms in most cases eventually arrive at some sort of cooperative arrangement inside a given ecosystem. The simultaneous existence of herbivorous and carnivorous animals, for example, usually does not result in complete extermination of the former by the latter. When, in exceptional cases, an overwhelming dominance of one species over others does occur, the consequences can be as much detrimental to the 'winner' as they are to the 'loser'. The ecological imbalance and lack of diversity which is currently caused by the unconditional supremacy of *Homo Sapiens* is perhaps the best-known example.

But is the same pattern followed in the realm of religion? Does shared morphology among different creeds act both as a source of conflict and a means of its eventual settlement or are the spiritual contradictions more fatally irreconcilable than biological ones? To answer this question we need first to agree as to what constitutes the basic morphological unit of religion. Indeed, what are those 'elementary particles' (to use an analogy from physics this time) or those 'cells' (to use a biological analogy once again) that constitute the 'living tissue' of things spiritual? The short answer is *symbolic forms*. Of course, religion is something infinitely more than a mere set of symbols. However, when it comes to investigating the derivation of one religion from another and their subsequent interaction, this sort of simplification (even reductionism) comes in handy without omitting anything critically important. If that concept is accepted, all we have to do is to find out what causes certain symbolic forms to mingle, interact and replace each other within a given environment.

However, the latter may be not so easy to find out. Of course, we can expect with a sufficient degree of confidence that any major change in the environment will trigger a respective change in morphology. However, while most changes in the biological environment are relatively easy to link to observable natural factors, the religious environment can present a more difficult case. Indeed, what is the main change driver in the spiritual realm? My answer to this question will inevitably look more like a working hypothesis than final pronouncement. I can formulate it the following way: *Most changes in symbolic systems are determined by changes of the scope within which human beings tend to perceive the numinous.*

The above statement can be expressed in more 'orthodox' terms by replacing 'perception' with 'revelation'. But whether the numinous is regarded as something perceived by humans or revealed to them is a question which has no ultimate relevance for the subject of this paper. The actual choice will depend on the reader's philosophical or theological convictions which I prefer not to mess within the severely limited space of this publication. I shall therefore proceed straightaway to a detailed account of those changes in the scope[1] of our relationship with the numinous which determine, in my opinion, the particular stages of spiritual evolution. Specifically, I believe that they ultimately depend on the *social unit* which plays the dominant role in a given religious community.

1. In the beginning

First comes the *primal* religion which is commonly known as traditional or indigenous and in the past also used to be called 'primitive religion' or 'animism'. The social scope it operates in is predominantly that of *extended family*, a small and restricted community supervised by a *pater familias* but also (and even to a greater extent) by his dead ancestors and other tutelary spirits. The ancestor or deity in charge usually resides under the same roof with the living, often localized in the fireplace (hearth), sometimes even identical with it. The contact with that ancestor/deity is an easy and commonplace matter because the volume of information possessed by the household members, both dead and living, is more or less the same, considering the slow pace of change in traditional society. The institute of spirit possession (under which a dead family member cab be summoned at short notice to provide advice to the living) therefore thrives, being quite straightforward to implement and practice.

The symbolic forms that arise at this stage of religious evolution are not hard to infer – they emerge naturally in accordance with the entities which they represent and from which they are almost indistinguishable. At this primordial state of human consciousness, the signifier is almost identical with the signified. The thing and the idea (daemon) of that thing only begin to be differentiated and can be easily mixed up, giving abundant scope for all sorts of magical substitutions and manipulations. Language (another prominent system of symbolic forms) mostly uses its operating units (words) in their plain and concrete meaning; there is neither room nor need for the figurative. Besides, language at this stage is nearly identical with religion: it is employed not so much for exchange of information between community members, as for targeted interventions in the routine course of things, whenever such a need arises. All sorts of spells and incantations cast (and later written) through its means are intended mostly to inflict harm on the enemy (i.e. used as a weapon) or to influence the tenor of daily affairs in one's favour (i.e. used as a tool). Both goals are achieved by acting on the representations of things or persons targeted – their verbal or iconic images.

The specifically religious symbols common at this stage are, quite expectedly, linked to the locations and incarnations of their respective spirits, the fireplace figuring among them *par excellence*. This is perhaps the most ancient abode of deity that we can track down in human history – we simply do not know whether there was anything that preceded the hearth worship or whether it can be considered the very beginning of humanity itself. It is all those lares and penates (or whatever other names that may be known among other nations) who dwell in the hearth and assist humans in cooking their food. They often double as purveyors

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[1] My general approach to the problem has been inspired by Giambattista Vico's *New Science*, where the author outlines the scope 'the children of the new-born human race' as being 'no higher than their mountain heights' (Vico, p.44). I only believe that this field of vision should be narrowed and lowered down even more – to be no higher than their roofs.

of heat and light. At later stages of the evolution, these deities may either retain their original dwelling places or advance towards more elevated positions. Yet even the highest fliers among them can be often pinpointed to their humble beginnings as family gods.

The progress of the Jewish God (YHWH) serves in that respect perhaps one of the most vivid examples. Like many other ancient deities, he begins his career as a fireplace god. The conclusive evidence to that effect is supplied by Genesis 15 which describes the technical procedure performed in response to Abraham's request to formalise (solemnise) the covenant[2] with his divine patron. The patriarch receives the following instructions (I use the JSP Tanakh version on both occasions when I quote from the Bible):

> 'Take Me a heifer of three years old, and a she-goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon.' And he took him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each half over against the other… (Gen 15:9-10)

Although the Bible does not explicitly mention it, Abraham was obviously supposed to walk between the divided halves of the animal carcasses in token of his sealing the covenant, and he certainly did so. It was then the other party's turn to make the move. One must say that Abraham was kept waiting for quite a while – long enough for him to fall asleep, see a prophetic dream, and then wake up to realise that the sun had set down and it had grown pitch dark. But here at last he sees his divine sponsor finally acting on his promise in a visible way: '…behold a *smoking furnace*, and a *flaming torch* that passed between these pieces' (emphasis mine). The god of Abraham chooses his symbolic attributes in perfect correspondence with his current functions – he is responsible, as we have said, for cooking and lighting, and he solemnly displays the relevant utensils as symbols in officiating a transaction with his protégé.

2. First among the equals

The next stage of religious evolution is what is traditionally called polytheism proper. It arrives when the scope enlarges from family/clan to tribe which consists in a merger of several basic units. Each participating family/clan contributes its own patron deity to the tribal pool. Each of those deities initially enjoys equal rights with its peers. However, soon enough, one of the families grows more powerful than the rest and becomes the main supplier of ruling elite for the whole tribe. Quite naturally under such circumstances, the dominating family begins to promote its own patron deity to the rank of tribal god. The deities of other families are either suppressed or have to be content with the status of minor gods, thus forming a proto-pantheon. Direct contact with the elevated deity becomes increasingly harder, even for the dominant family, as this god has now assumed responsibility for households with whose ancestry or way of life he or she may not be perfectly familiar. Gradually, the institute of spirit possession declines in importance giving way to divination and prophecy. A prophet, of course, is someone who also claims to be possessed by divine spirit, but it becomes increasingly difficult to ascertain how genuine that claim is. One has simply to take it at face value and thus the word 'faith' makes its first humble appearance on

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[2] The first author to draw our attention to this remarkable ceremony was, of course, James George Frazer in *Folk-lore in the Old Testament* (Fraser, part II, chapter I, The Covenant of Abraham). This book is now largely neglected, while quoting Frazer is generally considered to be hopelessly old-fashioned. Yet the only fault of that author consists in his reading religion as a fact of individual psychology – something that William James with his *Varieties* still gets away with, usually even with great approbation.

the religious stage. We have now come a long way from Genesis to Exodus, from Abraham to Moses. The completion is this transition corresponds to the eventual shift from polytheism to monolatry (i.e. worshiping a single deity while admitting the existence of others) followed by the start of the final move towards monotheism.

3. Between the hearth and Sinai

If we now turn to the corresponding symbols that spring up at this evolutionary stage, we shall soon notice that they do their best to migrate as intact as possible from the previous stage, yielding to change only under duress when their inadequacy to the new realities becomes too blatant to be ignored. Thus, the God of Moses is still occasionally characterised as 'consuming fire' (Exodus 24:17, Deuteronomy 4:24). He obviously retains the association with his original duty – to protect and maintain the fireplace as an essential source of food, heating, and lighting. Yet, having been elevated to the status of tribal god, he can no longer be represented or designated by such humble attributes. The torch turns into an elaborate lamp – the menorah; the furnace becomes an altar. Furthermore, it is no longer the creative but the destructive ('consuming') aspect of fire that now comes to the foreground. Instead of providing heat and light to a given family, the deity is now responsible for 'concocting' the welfare and warfare of an entire tribe in return for consuming his share in the tribe's assets and spoils. Usually it is certain part of the carcass burnt specially for the deity on the altar and presenting him or her with a 'sweet savour' (the rest of it obviously being consumed by the human members of the tribe). This divine consumption is now purely symbolic, in the sense that it serves no practical (nutritional) purpose, apart from demonstrating the tribesmen's willingness to destroy part of their possessions in token of gratitude to their divine patron. The utilitarian and symbolic uses, previously united within the same entity, have now drifted apart, never to converge again.

Yet the deity's 'family business' is not completely forgotten, which is best evidenced by the way it makes contact with his human subordinates. Although now a tribal god, YHWH never reveals himself to the entire tribe, always mindful of the particular family from which he originally made his first advancement up the divine ladder – the one of Moses and his next of kin – his brother Aaron and his descendants. Although the whole tribe of Levi is technically granted the right of privileged access to YHWH, whenever families other than that of Moses attempt to claim it, they incur an utmost displeasure both from Moses himself and his divine protector. The punishment for that half-hearted mutiny is severe, as we know two well from Numbers 16:31-35:

> And it came to pass, as he [Moses] made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground did cleave asunder that was under them [the rebels]. And the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up, and their households, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. So they, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit; and the earth closed upon them, and they perished from among the assembly. And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them; for they said: 'Lest the earth swallow us up.' And fire came forth from the LORD, and devoured the two hundred and fifty men that offered the incense.

Having been promoted from family spirit to tribal deity, YHWH always remains a 'jealous god' not only in his intolerance of any divine competitors but also in respect of the long-favoured family to which he owes his initial promotion.

4. The poor of symbol

Yet the above spiritual monopoly, however long it may last, will be always challenged by the 'dispossessed' members of the tribe or perhaps even dispossessed tribes of the nation (whenever time comes, if it ever does, for it to succeed the tribe as the dominant social unit). One of the surest ways to undermine that monopoly would be to make the elevated deity as impersonal as possible, i.e. to divest it as much as possible from the symbols inherited by it from the age when it was still the modest head of a family business. This is the message of many prophets, Hebrew or not. By exhorting his fellow tribesmen, or later fellow citizens, to overthrow the idols or deface the images of their fathers' patron deities, the prophet actually invites his countrymen to erase the vestiges their original belongingness and adopt hardcore monotheism. Hence the emphasis on destruction, rather than creativity, that now becomes, compared with the previous stage, even more pronounced. Polytheism, wherever it still survives, thus falls victim to monotheism perhaps more on sociological than theological grounds.

The common result of this 'creative destruction' is the extreme impoverishment of the semiotic stock of the religion engaged in this exercise, which culminates in the preservation of only a couple of symbols which, albeit polytheistic in their origin, are now raised to the status of nearly exclusive signifiers of the divine. The remaining symbols are either buried in oblivion or declared to be diabolical. The visual forms are usually attacked and eliminated first. Although they can be occasionally tolerated, like the cross (crucifix) in Christianity, they can still be frowned upon (cf. the treatment of the crucifix by newer Protestant sects). Architectonic symbols may be allowed on a one-off basis (e.g. the Jerusalem Temple in Judaism or Kaaba in Islam) but once they are lost to external agencies (e.g. wars) they become virtually impossible to regain or restore (like the Third Temple which is most likely never to be built).

The above process, although inevitable, can never go to the very end, i.e. to the complete elimination of all symbols. No religion, even a most radical one (like Buddhism for example) can do without them. The fewer of them are preserved, the more valuable the remainder is perceived to be, the more important and complicated is the role assigned to each of them. If absolutely all symbols do get eliminated, religion stops being itself and is transformed into a quasi-religious philosophy of the kind we can observe in Spinoza. Yet even a system like that cannot satisfy those who view the symbol as an obstacle to the communication between the human being and the Other (in whatever sense the latter is taken), as any philosophical system (including atheism) still relies on verbal expressions whose plentiful residual meaning (originally closely linked to religion) can never be fully eradicated. Phenomenological reduction in the style of Husserl, despite all its claims to being free from the old inheritance, still relies on language as any other system of this kind. The only possible way to overcome this dependence on legacy symbols would be to convert all religious and philosophical prepositions into mathematical formulae. I said 'possible' but that possibility may be purely theoretical, and I strongly doubt the success of that exercise.

Conclusions

Coming back to our starting point and its key question – how interdependent, if at all, polytheism and monotheism are – we can state that although such interdependence does exist, it is far from being perfectly symmetrical. The main reason for that asymmetry is the

impossibility to overcome the ultimate irreconcilability of the theological and semiotic bases of the two religious systems.

This irreconcilability is only exacerbated by the fact that in the normal course of religious evolution its later products usually rely on importing their symbolic stock from their predecessors, rather than on generating their own. This is not surprising: the more abstract and generalised a religion is, the more it struggles to establish links with the concrete that would assure its practical relevance, not only its universal significance. Yet such importation / migration / inheritance (whatever name we choose to call it) can never consist in transferring the symbolic forms from an older into a newer religion in their entirely and with their original meanings fully preserved. A great number of them have to be eliminated, simply because no monotheism can stand even a remote suggestion of plurality. The symbols that are allowed to stay are subjected to all kinds of rethinking, reconsideration, and even reinvention, of which the most common result is that they become to be perceived as less motivated and more arbitrary than in the predecessor religion where they usually retain closer links to material objects.

Thus the asymmetry of the relation between polytheistic and monotheistic religions consists mostly in the latter's need to rely on the former as the main (if not exclusive) source of symbolic stock or, figuratively speaking, source of semiotic sustenance. In a way, such a relation resembles the one that exists between two biological species of which one is a step higher than the other along the food chain, similar to what exists between plants and animals, the herbivorous and the carnivorous, or host and parasite. Under such an arrangement, traditional (animistic) religions would be always placed below polytheistic ones which, in turn, would always take their place below their Abrahamic (monotheistic) counterparts. Moreover, the same kind of relationship can be identified even between religions that belong to the same class (i.e. both polytheistic albeit to varying degrees) as we can observe in the case of Catholicism vs Protestantism where the latter quite obviously relies on the former for the source of symbols which are later earmarked for reworking and elimination / consumption. From that point of view, the top 'predator' within the religious 'ecosystem' would be certainly atheism which, as we know, fares the best when it finds enough symbolic material to subvert and destroy, and which, on the contrary, feels rather starved and stinted when no material to expose and debunk (and occasionally to appropriate) is available in sufficient quantities. Wasn't that the main cause for the collapse of atheism in the now defunct Communist bloc?

However, being a stage higher up the food chain by no means implies being in any way 'superior' to the underlying species. This conclusion certainly comes in contradiction with the more traditional approach that regards evolution as a steady advancement along the Great Chain of Being, where any species that postdates another one in its origin is automatically assumed to be higher, more perfect, and closer to fulfilment of the divine design. The necessary reliance of a 'superior' creature on its 'inferior' predecessor to whom the former may actually owe its very origin and existence is perhaps the best proof of the fact that things are arranged in a slightly more complicated fashion along the evolutionary line. The Abrahamic 'super-religions' should be mindful of the potential situation when their overzealous campaign to exterminate their humble suppliers of symbolic forms may result in semiotic hunger and deterioration of religion's global habitat and wellbeing. The role of carnivorous animals is of course, well known to ecology – to cull the weakest individuals from lower levels of the chain and improve the survival skills of their stronger peers. The only cause for concern is that in today's religious environment, unlike what we can see

among living organisms, the ecological balance seems to have shifted towards the predators who appear to be actively engaged in destroying their last remaining sources of nutrition.

This potential threat may still look like a distant and therefore unlikely prospect in those parts of the world where the 'predators' can still enjoy abundant feeding grounds, as is certainly the case with the Global South, where some Pentecostal churches begin their daily service with listening to repentances of reformed traditionalists (some of whom may have experienced repeated relapses followed by reconversions). Yes this 'religiophagia' (i.e. the process of consuming other religions in order to sustain one's own) cannot be indulged indefinitely and is bound to run out of steam at the very moment when its adherents deem their mission accomplished. They had better learn from what is going on in the Global West, especially in Europe, where the current deplorable state of organised religion is not in the least degree due to the obvious shortage of 'pagan' substratum, the much-needed semiotic 'nourishment' whose sources were largely destroyed by Abrahamic zeal a couple of centuries ago. (On the whole, one can also say that modern Catholicism, with its largely herbivorous nature, is probably better prepared for potential disruption of the semiotic food chain than its Protestant counterparts).

The current tendency in mainstream Christianity towards greater reflection and self-examination inspires cautious optimism with respect to the probability of achieving an eventual interreligious harmony. Whether or not we can we hope for a better balance in the religious environment any soon is not, however, for me to answer in this paper. Those who find its conclusions too speculative and perhaps impractical are welcome to fill the gap from their richer knowledge of the current situation and perhaps their better ability to estimate the future.

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Mechanisms and Ethics of Sustainable Exchange: Interaction and Sympathy in Relationship Marketing

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Abstract

Smith (1896) argued that societal virtues arise through the function of reputational sanctions as self-interested entities engage in repeated transactions. Relationship marketing research, on the other hand, examines sustained business relationships mediated by trust and commitment to the exchange partner. Modern consumers with freedom of choice engage in repeated transactions of general consumer goods without recourse to the coercive power of sanctions or authority. The nature of the actions and the subject matter of such transactions are likely to differ from Smith's assumptions. This study conducts a theoretical examination of the mechanism of interaction and trading entities in persistent exchange using a model that elaborates on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). Economic exchange is an equivalent exchange with no imbalance between trading entities. In other words, there is no opportunity for persistence. However, the seller considers the consumer's act of selecting a specific product from the myriad choices on the market to be the source of the provision of reward. From the response to this conferral, an incidental social exchange is triggered, and unspecified obligations of return alternate between the transacting entities. A social bond of trust and mutual attachment can be formed by sustaining a voluntary, non-coercive exchange relationship between entities. Consumers who repeatedly purchase within this relationship are not simply engaging in self-interested homo-economicus, but may be subjects with sympathy as described by Sen (1977) since they consider the welfare of the seller their own well-being.

Keywords: Incidental Social Exchange, Intrinsic Rewards, Sympathy, Homo-Economicus

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1. Introduction

A. Smith (1896) argued that repeated business transactions form the basis of virtues, such as probity within society. These virtues, Smith states, arise from the self-interest of the transacting entities. The self-interest of transacting entities is the starting point for commercial transactions, but because of the sanction of reputation, there is a moral formation in society to keep promises and engage in honest exchanges. If the transaction is a one-time exchange with a different party, the party who cheats will benefit. However, if you are frequently dishonest in your dealings within society, you will suffer losses due to reputation issues. "A dealer is afraid of losing his character and is scrupulous in observing every engagement" (ibid., pp.253-254).

What is stated here can be understood as a schema of the formation of utilitarianism ethics. This comprises the functions of social reputational sanctions in maximizing the utility of the entire body of trading entities despite repeated selfishly motivated transactions. What emerges from the discussion of this aspect by Smith is the self-interested, rational homo-economicus envisioned by mainstream economics.

Incidentally, marketing is significantly concerned with creating a repetition of exchange, the premise of this discussion. Establishing sustainable transactions is a marketing goal. The reason for this is that if a one-time transaction ends without multiple purchases being achieved, the business will not be profitable. As discussed below, relationship marketing research reveals that the factors positively affecting transaction persistence are trust in the reliability and integrity of the counterparty and their commitment.

Ethical factors are involved in both Smith's argument and the marketing analysis of sustainable purchasing, but they are positioned differently. In Smith's argument, reputational sanctions are in place when making repeated transactions between trading entities, leading to a virtuous result. However, in B-to-C general consumer goods transactions in modern competitive markets, consumers have freedom of choice. In the absence of reputational sanctions or the power to subdue the other party, as described below, trust and other relationships are formed and sustained transactions occur. From this viewpoint, rational homo-economicus and relationship marketing, which are assumed by mainstream economics to have been initiated by Smith, seem to differ in nature and the environment in which they are placed.

This study elaborates on the theory of social exchange to provide a theoretical examination of a model that explains the mechanisms of interaction occurring in the sustained trade of common contemporary consumer goods. Through this, we will also examine the kinds of subjects the sellers and buyers who practice sustainable transactions and the ideal ethics of subjects in marketing.

2. Mediating variables in relationship marketing

1) Sustaining exchanges without coercion

Levitt (1983) noted the difficulty in establishing lasting business relationships when stating, "The sale, then, merely consummates the courtship, at which point the marriage begins. How good the marriage is depends on how well the seller manages the relationship." Since then, relationship marketing research has focused on sustained relationships between sellers and buyers. Morgan and Hunt (1994), who have been highly cited at the beginning of their research, define relationship marketing as, "Relationship marketing refers to all marketing

activities directed toward establishing, developing, and maintaining successful relational exchanges." The object of the relationship set up in their study is broad, encompassing not only the company and its customers but also employees and the government. This included both marketing and all corporate activities in general.

However, Morgan and Hunt limit the scope of what a relationship can be and state that it is not power or the ability to impose conditions on others responsible for the success or failure of a lasting relationship. It is noteworthy to point out that the study in question dismisses the intervention of power.

The power to conduct one's own will in social relations to the exclusion of the resistance of others (Weber, 1922) has become a major concept in the analysis of distribution channels and business relationships within firms. Discussing inter-enterprise transactions, such as those between prime contractors and suppliers, as well as the understanding of employee-company relationships, involves an analysis of how power is procured and exercised to coerce and condition the behavior of trading partners (Stern, 1989).

However, the business relationship between firms and consumers in a competitive environment for general consumer goods presents a different picture from that of business-to-business transactions. Sellers desire sustainable business relationships to increase revenues, but it is fundamentally difficult to force buyers to make purchases. Consumers are always free to choose the products they want to buy from the options available in mass retailers' stores and internet shopping malls, and there is no sanction for buying any product available.

Unlike business-to-business transactions, the market for consumer goods guarantees maximum freedom of choice for buyers. The original concept of marketing, that the products a company tries to sell are determined by the consumer (Levitt, 1960), presupposes the freedom of consumer choice, where there is no coercion of power.

If it is possible to sustain a successful business relationship in such a free competitive market, without external forces, then there must be some internal factors that sustain the relationship, including on the part of the buyer. Relationship marketing research also covers the sustained business relationships of consumer goods purchases. The consumer goods market must identify which internal factors that sustain the transaction while maintaining the free-will-based exchange relationship. Morgan and Hunt argue that the factors are "commitment" and "trust."

2) Implications of the KMV model

The (Key Mediating Variable) (KMV) model presented by Morgan and Hunt positions commitment and trust as mediating factors between antecedents and outcomes in the persistence of good business relationships. The five variables are antecedent conditions, which include communication and shared values, that exist among transacting entities. These variables lead to five outcomes, including amenability and cooperation via mediating factors.

In the KMV model, commitment is defined as "an exchange partner believing that an ongoing relationship with another is so important as to warrant maximum efforts at maintaining it...." On trust, they state, "We conceptualize trust as existing when one party has confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity." This confidence relates to the qualities of consistency, responsibility, kindness, and benevolence of the counterparty.

A comparison of the KMV model and a model that directly links the various conditions to each outcome for business-to-business transactions shows that the KMV model with mediating variables is a better fit. Regarding the influence relationship between mediating variables, based on social exchange theory and other theories, the model is structured as follows: the more confident a person is in his/her trust relationship with the other person, the more important he/she believes it is to maintain a lasting relationship with the other person. This is because trust influences commitment.

Morgan and Hunt's research examined various studies on all relationships of corporate activities, testing two mediating variables. However, the study does not clarify the effects of factors such as trust aroused in the subjects of the transaction during the exchange process. We will begin our review with an overview of social exchange theory, which is the foundational theory of most relationship marketing research.

3. Review of social exchange theory
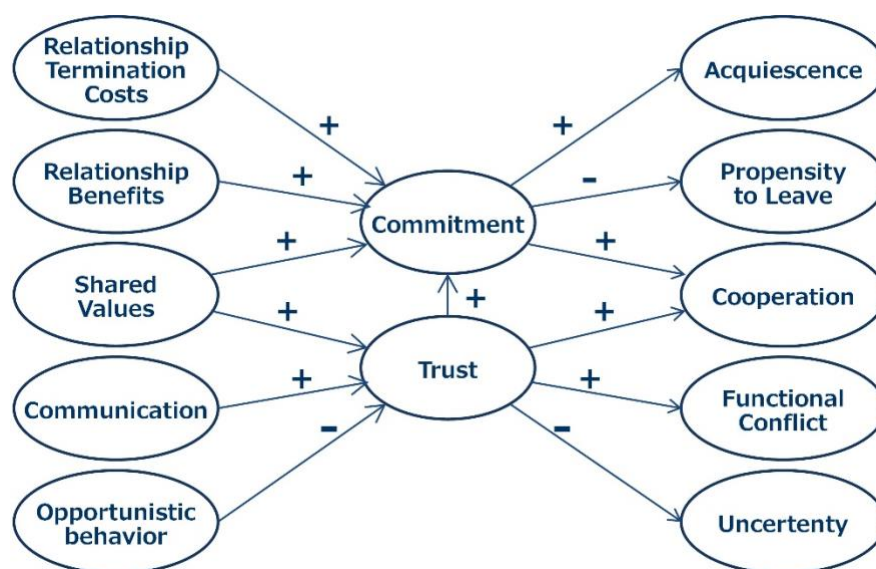
Figure1 Model (Morgan & Hunt, Figure2, 1994)

1) Characteristics and classification of social exchange

Our social lives enable us to engage in various interactions with others. Exchanging money and commodities in the marketplace is typical of such interactions. The payment of money for goods is an economic exchange. In addition to economic transactions, people engage in interactions that could be called exchanges. Buying lunch for a colleague who gave you some job-related advice, thanking people back for the kindness they have shown you on your travels, and other such non-monetary interactions are captured in the concept of "social exchange."

Social exchange theory was developed by Homans, Blau, and others and was influenced by anthropological exchange studies in various ways. In contrast to Homans (1961), who based social exchange on psychological responses, Blau attempted to explain social relations such as norms, power, and social bonds through the concept of exchange.

In "Exchange and Power in Social Life (Blau, 1964), Blau distinguishes the aims of his theory from Homans et al. by stating that the problem is of deriving the social processes that govern the complex structures of communities and societies from the simpler processes that pervade the daily intercourse among individuals and their interpersonal relations (ibid., p.2). Below, we will organize Blau's theory of social exchange in terms of unspecified obligations and the categories of rewards exchanged.

On the difference between an economic and a social exchange, Blau states, "The basic and most crucial distinction is that social exchange entails unspecified obligations" (ibid., p.83). In an economic transaction, the obligation to pay $150 for a commodity priced at $150 is explicitly stated, and an equivalent exchange is made through mutual agreement. Contracts regarding deadlines and interests are also exchanged and mandated by legal norms.

In social exchange, there is an obligation to give back, just as with economic transactions. In a society where business relationships are limited, if no response is made to a favor given or a party to which one is invited, one may be excluded from social relationships. The obligation to reciprocate the provision of compensation is common in economic exchanges. However, social exchanges do not have any specified obligations. There is no stipulation as to the compensation that will be given in return, nor is there an agreed time limit. Even if the giver expects a return gift, the recipient cannot specify the content or deadline, and coercion has no function in the exchange. Thus, in social exchange, the obligation to reciprocate a favor is not explicit or specified.

Recompense for trade during social exchanges can be divided into two categories. Gifts and other physical goods and useful services such as advice are classified as "extrinsic rewards." There are also exchanges for rewards not limited to material goods or tangible services. The gratitude, respect, love, and social acceptance exchanged during such exchanges are classified as "intrinsic rewards" (ibid., p.88).

Concerning intrinsic rewards, those that arise from psychological effects, it is important to be mindful of the following. People can give them without expecting anything in return. An example of this is a parent-child relationship. In doing so, the entity that provides the service also experiences inner gain, such as a feeling of gratification. If this is viewed in terms of the concept of exchange, all volitional acts could be classified as exchanges.

To exclude self-fulfilling acts from the exchange concept, Blau stipulates that rewards are "spontaneous reactions" (ibid., p89) from others that result from the subject's actions. The scope of social exchange is restricted. "social exchange as here conceived is limited to actions that are contingent on rewarding reactions from others and that cease when these expected reactions are not forthcoming" (ibid., p.5).

The actions of the recipient entity are positioned asFigure2 according to this provision. The scope of (a), in which a reward for a spontaneous reaction by the other party is expected following action, is the intrinsic reward of social exchange. Unconditional affection with no expectation of return (b) and self-gratifying acts performed without another person (c) are not exchanges.
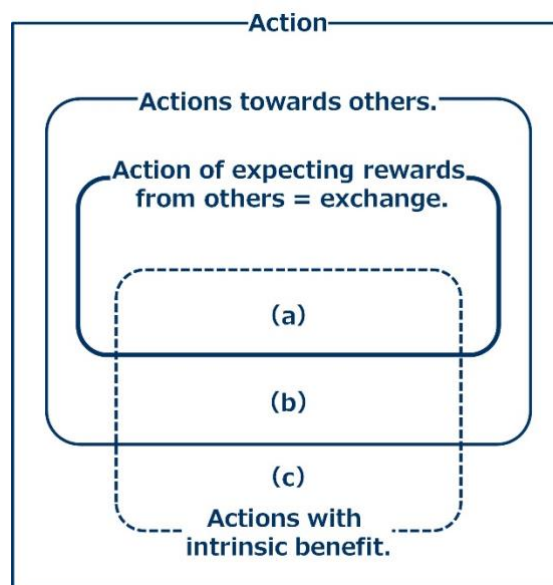
Figure2. Classification of actions by the reactions and rewards of others

2) The tendency for persistence in social exchange

Next, we examine the actions by which social exchanges are repeated. In economic transactions, consumers lean toward commodities out of various physiological and social desires, sellers seek money, and commodities and money are exchanged. The social exchange also results from our inclination to seek both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards from others (ibid., p.92). If either entity makes some kind of offer with the expectation of a reward from the other, and if the other successfully returns the offer, an exchange is established.

However, economic exchange has no imbalance once the exchange of commodities and money has been completed. In principle, the relationship between the two ends there. However, social exchanges tend to be repeated exchanges, as in primitive societies and modern-day greeting cards and social networking sites. Blau describes multiple factors that sustain social exchange. Three factors are presented here.

"The gradual expansion of mutual service" (ibid., p.94) in social exchange is the first factor that sustains an exchange. The obligation to reciprocate social exchanges is not specified. The person making the initial donation lacks trust in the recipient and risks not receiving a return. Thus, the donation only entails a small "contribution." If they get the expected return from the other party, the reward will accumulate gradually. Multiple exchanges occur because trust is built only through repeated exchanges of increasing rewards.

Second, social exchange tends to persist because the value of the reward is defined by the donor. Goods traded during an economic exchange, for example, cans of Campbell's soup, have the same benefits regardless of the supermarket from which you buy them. The value of the same unit of money is strictly equal no matter from which consumer it is obtained. However, in social exchange, the value of the reward varies depending on the party to whom it is given. This is evident when the reward exchanged is love (ibid., p.76). Social exchange is an iterative exchange with a specific subject because of the limited number of entities that can offer valuable rewards.
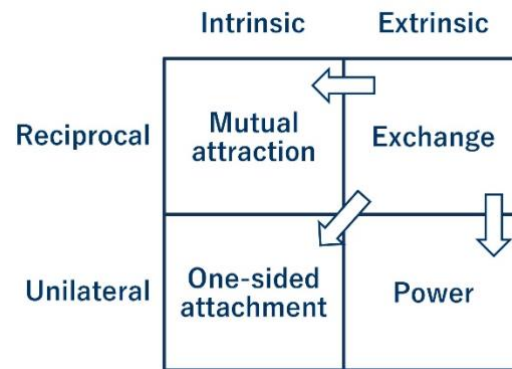
Figure3. Four types of social cohesion (modified by the author from ibid., p313)

The third factor that sustains social exchange is sought in the bonds of attachment that are formed between the entities engaged in the exchange. Blau presents four typologies of social cohesion, as shown in Figure3. A relationship of "exchange" with a mutually balanced provision of external rewards between subjects is a fundamental form of social exchange.

If there is an imbalance on the part of one party to the exchange that prevents the other party from fulfilling its obligation to reciprocate the external reward obtained, debt is owed to the donor. Here, the donor is forced to submit to the desires of the donor, resulting in a type of asymmetrical "power" relationship. If the value of the intrinsic reward offered is not recognized by the other party and an imbalance of offerings occurs, the relationship becomes one of "one-sided attachment." If both parties provide intrinsic rewards to each other and if the exchange of these rewards is balanced by both parties safely recognizing the value of each other's rewards, they will achieve a social bond with "mutual attachment."

Regarding mutual attachment bonding, the exchange subjects often become committed to the partner relationship and cease further exploration (ibid., p.101). Once the social relationship of mutual attachment bonding, in which the relationship itself becomes self-objective, is established, the exchange will continue.

In economic exchange, the relationship between the exchange parties is completed in a single transaction. In contrast, social exchange is sustained by multiple factors: the tendency toward gradual expansion, the contingent nature of reward value, and the social cohesion of mutual attachment.

4. Incidental social exchange

1) Social exchange that accompanies the economic exchange

Social exchange theory sees economic exchange and social exchange as distinct. Expanding on this, this paper proposes a perspective of "incidental social exchange to economic exchange." Even in contemporary market societies, social exchange is practiced in conjunction with economic exchange. In financial and capital markets, where money itself is traded, the influence of social exchange factors may be negligible or minimal. However, it could be argued that social exchange is fundamentally associated with transactions in labor and commodity markets.

In the labor market between companies and employees, economic transactions of wages and labor power and social exchanges actively occur to establish business activities. As made clear by management and industrial sociology (Barnard, 1938, Imai et al., 1982), extrinsic rewards such as benefits, unpaid overtime, and mutual support among employees are exchanged within firms, as are intrinsic rewards such as mutual care, organizational love, and commendation.

Additionally, in B-to-B transactions between businesses in the commodity market, both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards such as sincerity, gratitude, and hospitality are exchanged. These cannot be reduced simply to economic exchanges. In relationship marketing research, the importance of the social exchange factor in sustained transactions between businesses has been examined in the case of tire dealers and manufacturers by Morgan and Hunt (1994) and the case of web production companies and ordering companies by Kubota (2012).

In business-to-business transactions and the labor market between firms and employees, the scope of exchange entities is limited, and social sanctions function when failing to uphold obligations to reciprocate. As a result, the environment is conducive to social exchanges incidental to economic transactions. It also exercises the power of the prime contractor or employer to impose coercive conditions on the conduct of its suppliers and employees with whom it does business. The power at play there is generated by the provision of unbalanced social exchange rewards by one side.

So what about transactions of general consumer goods? The closest thing to a pure form of economic exchange in a B-to-C transaction would be a vending machine transaction. In other transactions of general consumer goods, social exchanges between businesses and customers are a natural part of the business and can even be a major element of business operations.

Sellers looking to increase their revenues desire lasting business relationships. However, multiple sellers compete in the marketplace, and consumers, as modern individuals, have the freedom to choose their products. Thus, neither sanctions nor power is effective. Individual sellers with goods of inferior marketability (Menger, 1871) relative to the money held by the buyer are placed in a relatively weak position. Because of its fragility, social exchange is practiced as a marketing activity with the expectation of securing sustainable transactions. Even in today's highly rationalized and efficient business climate, social exchange is still incidental to economic transactions.

All McDonald's stores in Japan display a "0 yen smile" menu along with the prices of hamburgers and other items. The chain's employees describe this reward, which is offered to customers without the expectation of compensation, not as a "fake smile," but as an expression of "thanking the customer for coming." In other words, it is a spontaneous reaction (Mitate, 2007).

Since its establishment in Japan in 1973, Seven-Eleven has operated its business based on four basic principles: product assortment, freshness management, cleanliness, and friendly service (Yahagi, 2019). Among them, "six major customer service terms," including " Welcome" and "Please come again," form the foundation of friendly service, and all store employees must recite them at the beginning of their workday. In this way, the chain demonstrates "care" as a seller and gains "psychological closeness" with its customers (Yamakawa, 2013).

Even in the marketing activities of these rational businesses that offer general consumer goods, an accompanying social exchange is practiced that offers rewards such as hospitality, appreciation, and consideration.

2) The establishment and persistence of incidental social exchange

This section examines the cyclical mechanisms of the interaction between the formation and perpetuation of incidental social exchanges in consumer goods transactions. The seller of the product extends a warm "welcome" to the consumer before purchase. Even after the exchange is concluded, the customer is seen off to the storefront and thanked for his or her visit and purchase.

Although the consumer has no motivation to conduct repeated transactions, this is something the seller desires. The seller's hospitality, expression of gratitude, and other actions, as directly manifested in the words "please come again," anticipate repeat purchases that may result in future gains. Simultaneously, the expression of gratitude is a spontaneous reaction by the seller to the buyer's action and is a return that provides an intrinsic reward. The economic exchange is a balanced exchange that occurs and there is no reason for the seller to feel indebted. So why say "thank you?" It is to encourage which of the buyer's actions does the seller provide voluntary counter-benefits for?

The buyer's "commodity selection" precedes the economic transaction. Eventually, the buyer will choose one of the market options, and the transaction will be an equivalent exchange. However, the buyer of the product is not subject to power or coercion but instead chooses this product over others. The buyer's selection of the commodity is seen by the seller as the provision of a benefit offered in conjunction with the economic exchange, the extrinsic reward of the social exchange. In a monopoly market with no freedom of choice or a fully planned economy, the buyer's choice of goods would not constitute a benefit to the seller. The mechanism of incidental social exchange operates because buyers select certain goods in a free competitive environment.

This provision should be reciprocated. The seller of the goods provides an intrinsic reward of appreciation to the consumer as a counter benefit. The counterparty, on the other hand, must repay the seller for the reward provided. However, social exchange is an "unspecified obligation," and consumers are still free to choose other products on their next shopping opportunity, which may allow for higher benefits to be gained. Nevertheless, if the seller's marketing activities lead the buyer to abandon their freedom of choice and once more reward the seller by choosing their product as a spontaneous reaction, a repeated purchasing relationship is set in motion.

Even from the seller's perspective, if the buyer is not just cherry-picking, but is a repeat customer who has made a re-selection of goods, that behavior should be rewarded. The obligation to reciprocate arises, and the seller again offers more smiles and friendliness. Thus, the exchange is repeated (Figure4).
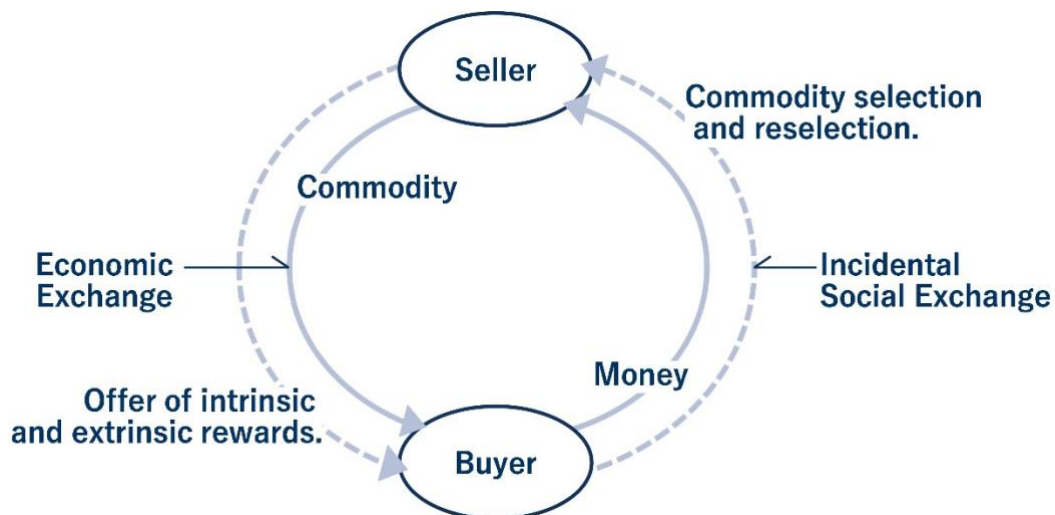
Figure4. Incidental social exchange Model

The sequence of interactions in an incidental social exchange forms mutual trust. "By discharging their obligations for services rendered... individuals demonstrate their trustworthiness, and the gradual expansion of mutual service is accompanied by a parallel growth of mutual trust. Hence, processes of social exchange, …generate trust in social relations through their recurrent and gradually expanding character" (Blau, 1964, p94).

As transactions cycle through the incidental social exchange that accompanies economic exchange, "The expanding exchange of benefits of various sorts between individuals makes them increasingly interdependent, establishes mutual trust, and fortifies their social bond" (ibid., p107). The customer may eventually become a trusted business partner of the product provider, and/or the customer may become a valued customer of the business. Therefore, a social bond of mutual attachment (Figure 2) may be established between the entities that engage in the economic exchange that accompanies the social exchange, meaning that the relationship may endure.

3) The ethics of the entities involved in sustainable exchanges

If the economic exchange is repeated with the incidental social exchange, the buyer sees the expression of gratitude by the seller as a gain for him or her, or an intrinsic reward.

For the buyer to view the expressed gratitude as a reward, observation of the external action is not sufficient. Rather, empathy for the other party is necessary. It must be ascertained by understanding the inner feelings of the other party as to the extent the seller's expression of gratitude is truly a spontaneous reaction and not just empty words. The buyer is making an "imaginary change of situation" (Smith, 1759, I.i.4.6), placing him or herself in the seller's internal position.

Gratitude research depicts gratitude as being an emotion evoked by the assumed intentions and costs of the giver and benefits gained by the beneficiary (Tesser et al., 1968). In other words, the seller's expression of appreciation for the buyer choosing their product is an expression of the buyer's inner feeling that the buyer has deliberately chosen the product over other options and that the seller is happy to benefit from their product being chosen. The buyer, who sees that

expression of gratitude as a reward, empathizes with the seller of the goods and sees the benefit and happiness of others as their gains.

According to A. Sen (1977), "When a person's sense of well-being is psychologically dependent on someone else's welfare, it is a case of sympathy." A buyer's repeated purchase of a product in response to the seller's appreciation is rooted in Sen's definition of "sympathy." Simultaneously, Sen acknowledges, "For many studies of consumer behavior and interpretations... sympathy may not be extremely important…" However, the externality of concern for the gain of others, which cannot be reduced to self-interest, is manifested in a very common consumer behavior: the continued purchasing of products.

The seller of the commodity is the entity that sees the economic exchange, which is nothing more than an equivalent exchange, as a provision of benefit by the other party and provides the return of an intrinsic reward in the form of a spontaneous reaction. Customers who repeatedly purchase a product are not selfish, rational economic agents but actors who empathize with the other party's inner self and view the welfare of others as their well-being. The sustainable transaction of the interaction of social exchange incidental to the economic exchange of general consumer goods is a process of moral participation that does not depend on power or sanctions. Instead, it requires empathy for the inner feelings of the entities involved in the transaction.

5. Conclusions and future directions

1) Conclusion

Based on the theory of social exchange, this study theoretically examines the mechanisms of interaction occurring in sustained business relationships targeted by relationship marketing of general consumer goods and the ethics of sellers and buyers that enter these relationships.

Sellers and buyers make equivalent exchanges through mutual agreement. Economic exchanges of money and commodities are completed in a single transaction. However, the seller sees the buyer's act of choosing a particular product among the myriad choices in the competitive market as offering a reward. The seller, who may expect to gain from repeated transactions, offer intrinsic rewards in return, such as appreciation to the buyer as a counter benefit to choosing their product.

In the market for general consumer goods, social sanctions and coercive power do not have any effect, and buyers have the freedom of product choice. However, the provision of a reward from the seller's side creates an unspecified obligation of social exchange for the buyer. Buyers relinquish their freedom of choice and repeatedly purchase the same seller's product rather than a myriad of other options that may be more beneficial. Over time, a relationship of trust and mutual attachment is formed between the entities involved in the transaction. We present a circular model of "incidental social exchange, an interaction relationship where rewards are provided alternately and transactions are repeated.

Additionally, consumers who make repeated purchases can be deemed subjects who possess what Sen refers to as "sympathy." Unlike selfish and rational economic agents, these people perceive the welfare of the seller as their well-being.

2) Factors in product evaluation and their application to ethical consumption

This paper does not examine the factors that contribute to consumers' evaluations of product benefits. The extent to which satisfaction with a product leads to repeat purchases is debated, but it is believed to be at least one of the major contributing factors (Kumar, et al., 2013). It is necessary to theoretically examine and verify through research how commodity evaluation affects incidental social exchange and how empathy and attachment function as mediating factors.

The framework for the incidental social exchange model, in which the choice of goods is based on empathy for the inner feelings of the seller that are expressed, can be applied more actively to ethical consumption. Consumers who empathize with the seller's commitment and actions in using their business to do good will make proactive product choices. It also allows for high added value in products. Corporate activities that bring about such effects are called Social Marketing or Cause-Related Marketing (Brønn et al., 2001), and are being actively expanded. Research should also be conducted on the mechanisms of interaction in ethical consumption and social marketing.

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What Does it Mean to Give Faithfully in the COVID-19 Pandemic and Polarized America?: A Case Study of Liberal Mennonites

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Abstract

This presentation aims to examine the ways in which American liberal Mennonites collectively and individually allocate their financial resources to reflect their faith. Based on their religious interpretation, Mennonite congregations have encouraged their members to offer funds for peace promotion and support for the poor and socially disadvantaged. However, it is sometimes challenging to figure out the best way to do so with their limited resources. Recent situations, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and economic and political polarizations, created diverse occasions to reflect on how they could demonstrate their religious commitments through their offerings. Based on interviews and observations between 2020 and 2022, this study discusses how Mennonite congregations and their members individually and collectively deal with the many, and sometimes competing, needs and desires to give. With uncertainty brought on by the pandemic, congregations initially provided emergency assistance to those who were in need. Additionally, many congregants extended their contributions to aid such efforts. As the situation gradually returned to the pre-pandemic period, congregations began working to reinforce their religious communities and adjust the new spending priorities. While several members were willing to support such initiatives, their offering practices were not necessarily easily adjusted. Incorporating recent studies on religious giving, this presentation suggests that religious giving can provide an important window through which we can explore how believers imagine and reimagine their faith communities.

Keywords: Offering, Pandemic, Christianity

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Introduction

The global spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) has ushered many changes and challenges for communities, including the religious community. By examining financial offerings, this study investigated how American liberal Mennonite congregations and their members responded to changing situations. The study is based on on-line interviews and observations of two churches and their members in Virginia, United States, from 2020 to 2022. During this period, the congregations provided multiple and diverse church-related activities. Although there were some limitations in executing in-person visits and data collection, online tools were a good alternative and provided important opportunities for conducting this study.

Mennonites

The Mennonites are a Christian group, and their roots can be traced to the Anabaptist movement, which occurred during the Protestant Reformation era. In 16th century Europe, a group of believers opposed the practices of infant baptism and the close relationships between the Church and secular governments. These believers and those who followed them were called Anabaptists. Early Anabaptists were not accepted well by secular governments and religious authorities at the time and faced severe persecution. To find safe places, many people relocated to various parts of Europe. Some eventually migrated to North America. Although their religious practices varied, the Mennonites, as well as the Amish and Hutterites, grew out of these movements (Kraybill & Hostetter, 2001; Redekop, 1989).

As a religious group, the Mennonites share many basic tenets with other Protestant groups, such as belief in Jesus and his teachings. Mennonites are also known for their emphasis on believers' communities. Assisting members with the help of mutual aid is often strongly encouraged, although how this is practiced varies. Historically, the Mennonites have been strong supporters of peace movements (Redekop, 1989).

At present, there is considerable diversity among the Mennonites, and broadly speaking, they can be divided into three subgroups: Old Order, Conservative, and Liberal. They differ in their views on the application of religious teachings to many daily activities. For example, Old Order groups generally restrict the use of electricity and cars. They also have strict rules regarding clothing. Conservative groups have maintained some of these rules. Liberal groups have few or no such regulations (Naka, 2008, 2011). Despite these differences, these groups usually value their historical roots and religious emphasis on believers' communities and peace positions. This study is based on interviews and observations of liberal Mennonite congregations.

COVID-19 and Social Contexts in the United States

The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has caused many restrictions and changes in the United States. Although in-depth discussions of these challenges are beyond the scope of this study, this section briefly highlights some major events that discuss the social contexts relevant to this case study. In the state of Virginia, where this study was conducted, the first confirmed COVID-19 case was reported on March 7, 2020 (Virginia Department of Health, n.d.). By March 11, 2020, the COVID-19 outbreak became evident, and the World Health Organization declared it a public health emergency (World Health Organization, n.d.).

To contain the spread of the virus, many religious organizations, including liberal Mennonite churches, have taken preventive measures. The congregations in this study offered alternative worship opportunities. They offered YouTube and/or live-stream Sunday worship services. During the early phase of the pandemic (Spring and Summer 2020), only a few pastoral members and church leaders gathered in the sanctuary and created these worship videos. Subsequently, short video clips of church members were incorporated so that viewers could understand how others were doing during the pandemic. Congregations have also explored online meetings and alternative forms of gathering to maintain congregational networks and church activities. Although such transitions were not easy for those who were unfamiliar with technology, pastors and other staff members provided technical support.

These online activities offered alternative ways to connect with those who ordinarily did not participate in worship or other church activities. They included individuals who were completely new to Mennonite congregations, as well as others who previously attended these congregations but were now relocated. Some new attenders said that they found YouTube worship services, which were interesting and started to partake in them regularly. Pastors and church leaders noticed this trend and conducted online meetings to introduce themselves and their congregations to newcomers. The congregations in this study gained new members in this manner, although they also lost members who died during COVID-19.

Simultaneously, the US society faced numerous challenges. Some people lost their jobs or income directly or indirectly because of the pandemic. This created a sense of uncertainty and raised questions about how best to respond to dynamic situations. Religious congregations, including many Mennonite churches, were also concerned with those who were economically and emotionally affected by the pandemic. As discussed briefly, the congregations in this study explored how they could support others in the community and within their congregations.

The response to the spread of COVID-19 has also brought divergent perspectives. Some people were willing to adopt face masks and maintain social and physical distance. Some were also willing to receive COVID-19 vaccinations and struggled to protect themselves and others from the virus. Still others have not implemented these measures. These different responses were often intertwined with religious and political positions. To make the situation even more stressful, the pandemic coincided with a transition of political leadership in the US. While the pandemic was not the only major issue affecting political leadership transitions, responses to it frequently intertwined candidates' political positions. Ultimately, a presidential transition was witnessed, but societal divisions were not resolved.

Mennonite congregations were not immune to these tensions and conflicts. Many church members expressed feelings of unease. They respected other points of view, but it was not necessarily easy to find a way to express their position of peace and religious teaching in a shifting context (Naka, 2023).

Religious Giving

Many religious traditions encourage believers to offer economic and other resources to support their activities. Some religions prioritize their own religious members; however, many Christian groups do not necessarily restrict their charitable contributions and activities to those who share their faith (McCleary, 2007). Historically, as well as today, Mennonite

congregations have also provided support for others, such as aid in disaster recovery, education, and food insecurity (Kraybill & Hostetter, 2001; Redekop, 1989).

Previous studies among Christian groups generally indicate that believers consider financial contributions as an important way to express their religious commitment. These studies suggest that, for believers, monetary giving does not only mean expressing support for their congregations and missions, but also provides ways to become part of wider communities of Christian believers (Bialecki, 2008; Harding, 1992, Naka, 2011; Zaloom, 2016).

These studies also suggest divergent views on the actual practice of giving. Some studies (Bialecki, 2008; Harding, 1992) indicate that the emotional and spiritual aspects of providing financial resources are of paramount importance to believers. The act of "giving up" helps believers deepen their religious understanding because it resembles Jesus's ultimate death and sacrifice. Extravagant and spontaneous financial giving can also symbolize a strong dedication to God. However, other studies (Naka, 2011; Zaloom, 2016) suggest different religious emphasis of financial giving. Careful allocation of money, for example, can have religious significance, as it can suggest careful stewardship of God's creation. These studies indicate that the act of giving has religious significance, but there are divergent ways how believers find religious significance in their financial giving.

To examine further, this study explored how members and congregations make decisions regarding charity by incorporating insights from recent anthropological discussions on morality. The topic of morality has long been studied in anthropology and other fields. The focus of these earlier studies was on the rules and regulations of society. In contrast, recent studies such as Mattingly (2014) and Kleinman (2007), suggest the importance of examining how people make moral decisions in dynamic and challenging situations, where ordinary regulations and expectations are no longer appropriate. This study explores how congregations make decisions while managing diverse, and sometimes competing, needs and desires. Further, COVID-19 and other social situations in the US have created many challenges for members and congregations. The inability to worship as in the pre-pandemic period, for example, led them to explore other ways of expressing their religious commitments. By examining congregational and individual members, this study explored how the Mennonites responded to new situations.

Research Setting

This study is based on interviews and observations of two liberal Mennonite congregations and members in Virginia, United States. The congregations examined were relatively large among liberal Mennonites, with over 300 members. This study refers to them as Church A and B for convenience. Both churches are well established. Church A has existed slightly longer. Each church has three pastors (male and female, full-time and part-time), along with several salaried church staff members. There are also Mennonite and other nearby educational institutions. The congregations welcome people with diverse racial, cultural, religious, and economic backgrounds, but the majority of members are white and have grown up in Mennonite families.

Congregational Discussions on Giving

Offering time is important for both congregations. The offering time is included in each Sunday worship service, even when there are no in-person services available. These

congregations provided several options on how to give prior to the pandemic. In addition to putting money or checks into the offering plates or boxes, members can choose to send checks by mail and set up bank withdrawals. They also accept online giving through their website. These arrangements are not unusual among liberal Mennonites or other Christian churches in the US.

Both congregations made efforts to communicate the church's finances to their members. As in other liberal Mennonite congregations (Naka, 2011), the amount of money offered to congregations is announced in church bulletins. Some money offerings are used for general purposes, while others are used for specific purposes, such as local and overseas missions. In both congregations, the financial committees provided additional financial information, such as up-to-date spending and income information, to members through church newsletters and meetings.

In fall, both congregations send special letters to encourage members to consider their financial contributions for the next financial year. The letters ask members to return a form in which they enter their expected financial contributions for the following year (hereafter "the annual promise form"). These forms give both congregations a general idea about their contributions to the church for the following year. This is important because members' contributions constitute a large proportion of the church income. In both congregations, the fiscal year cycle starts in January and ends in December. In January, both congregations hold budget meetings and let members know the state of the church's finances and plans for the new year.

My analysis indicates that the budgetary situations of both congregations differed between the early phase of the pandemic (March 2020–December 2021) and the later phase (January 2022 to December 2022). As the COVID-19 situation became rampant in March 2020, neither church foresaw the pandemic situation when they planned their 2020 budget. The rapid changes due to the pandemic have led both churches and their members to wonder how they could survive financially. For example, one finance committee member in Church A said that in fall of 2021 the committee initially worried that the members' offering amounts might decline significantly due to the pandemic.

Indeed, the pandemic has brought considerable changes to church operations. Both congregations rent space in their buildings, and rental fees usually generate income. Additionally, both congregations have affiliated childcare centers, garnering income to congregations. However, the pandemic has affected these incomes because their activities have been restricted.

The pandemic has brought about changes in some members' offering practices. Although both congregations had already introduced non-in-person offering methods, such as online giving, some members preferred in-person offerings. Due to the pandemic church access was restricted, and it caused difficulties for members to contribute in their preferred way.

Furthermore, congregations faced unexpected expenses to accommodate the pandemic. For example, Church B offered only an in-person Sunday service before the pandemic began. Unable to conduct in-person worship, pastors quickly moved their services online. In both congregations, this required additional skills and equipment, such as video cameras, tripods, and microphones. They also needed to establish online videoconference accounts. This was

especially important for maintaining good communication among members and church communities as well.

Despite these challenges, neither congregation faced a significant shortfall at the end of fiscal year 2020 (December 2020). For example, Church A not only made ends meet but also received more contributions than expected. Church A received fewer annual promise letters submitted in fall 2019, and fewer offerings were promised by these letters. However, the congregations received more money from those who returned the annual promise letters. The church also received more money than usual from those who did not return the promised letters in fall 2019.

Furthermore, both congregations undertook additional projects to assist the local communities financially. For example, Church B ordinarily provides fellow members with funds to assist their lives. In response to the pandemic, Church B received money to assist with this program in 2020. As the money collected exceeded the members' requests, the congregation decided to offer one-time financial assistance to those in need beyond their church members.

However, as the pandemic continued, the financial contribution to congregations slowed. Although neither congregation encountered a significant decrease in members' financial contributions, they did not receive the expected amount of money. For example, toward the end of 2022, which was also the end of the fiscal year, both congregations announced that they had not received the expected proportion of the offering to meet their budgets. Starting in November, congregational newsletters and bulletins repeatedly announced how much they received so far and how much more money (by amount and percentage) was required to match the expected yearly offering goals. The tone of these requests was gentle, and the pastors and other church leaders mentioned that their congregations tended to receive more financial offerings in December. Although both congregations were able to collect enough money to cover their expenses, these calls for offerings were not seen in the two fiscal years prior to 2022.

Financial reports also suggested slightly smaller contributions from members. For example, in the financial meeting in January 2023, Church A noted that it received fewer returned annual promise forms and fewer promised contributions. These declines are likely not big enough to cause immediate financial strain to the congregations because church incomes for the rentals are recovering as the pandemic situation improves. This situation is similar in Church B. In contrast to quick responses to the pandemic, these situations suggest somewhat slower financial support from members.

When this trend continues, it may become a concern, especially because additional long-term budgetary adjustments may be necessary to fully adapt to the post-pandemic social environment. For example, although both congregations gained new members during the pandemic, they also lost long-term members. Because these members tend to be constant financial contributors to congregations, their departures may have long-lasting impacts. The needs and expectations of new and existing church members may have been affected or transformed by the pandemic. Online connections have created new dimensions; however, maintaining both in-person and online activities can be challenging. Church B continued to video-stream its worship services and other online activities. As they did not engage in these activities before, they needed to add audio-visual equipment for long-term use. Both congregations had to reconfigure ways to strengthen their church communities after the

pandemic. New outreach activities may require additional financial assistance. With these changes, both congregations may face financial challenges. However, recent trends in overall financial contributions suggest that members' contributions may not adapt quickly to new situations as they did during the early phase of the pandemic.

Members Giving Practices

Interviews were conducted to explore the members' views about their offerings. These interviews were conducted between February and April 2022. The interviewees volunteered and were sometimes referred to by other members. This method was selected partly because of its practicality. Due to the pandemic, there were limited opportunities to call the interviewees. Those who participated were more willing to discuss their offering practices and be active in congregations. Their views provide important clues for understanding the offering decisions of those who tend to play active roles in congregations.

Overall, 17 individuals (7 men and 10 women) participated in the interviews. Their ages ranged from the 40s to the 70s. Most of the participants had a bachelor's degree or higher. Financially, they were stable, although some admitted that they experienced financial struggles in the past. Professionally, some were retired, some worked independently, and others worked in organizations and companies. Most of them grew up in Mennonite families.

While their exact ways of deciding how much and where to give varied, the interviews suggest several characteristics of how participants made their contributions. First, members routinely provided their offerings. This does not mean that they give it every Sunday. Some give monthly and others in other cycles. According to Herzog and Price (2016), who studied charitable commitments among Americans, routine giving is atypical. Charitable contributions are often made through spontaneous responses. Bialecki (2008) also emphasized the importance of impulsive and emotional giving for congregants. Of course, these styles do not necessarily exclude routine-giving practices. However, this difference in offering styles is interesting and may be a good topic for further research.

The interviews also indicated that the members gave based on their own methods of deciding how much to give. Using these methods, members plan their offerings in advance. The idea of setting aside resources for the church and other institutions was familiar to many members because there are Bible passages that mention tithing (such as Leviticus 27:28–32, Genesis 14:18–20). In fact, all members mentioned that the idea of tithing could be a good guideline for believers. However, their actual decision making was more complicated. This is because although the word "tithe" means one-tenth, Biblical passages and interpretations do not necessarily emphasize offering to be ten percent. Indeed, in both congregations, while the practice of the first fruit offering (giving priority to setting aside earnings for the church and God) was highly encouraged, specific amounts or proportions were not emphasized. It is up to the members to decide how much and where to give based on their faith.

The interview suggested that the members allocate some percentage of their income to give. For example, Jennifer, in her 60s, said that her donations were based on her annual income. While she did not specify the percentage, she provided a proportion of her income. Similarly, Margaret, who is in her 40s, made decisions based on monthly earnings. As these examples suggest, these methods were described like a formula, which enabled members to decide their giving without deep thinking.

According to the interviews, each member gradually developed their own method of giving. Margaret gave financial offerings even when she was in school and early twenties, but her giving was not planned systematically. She said that she started to give routinely only after she started working full-time. She then gradually began to use her current method of giving, as described above. Similarly, others mentioned that they started to practice proportional current-giving after working full-time. Other events, such as marriage, illness, and job loss, were also mentioned as being considered while making offering decisions. For example, Lucy, who was in her 70s and retired, said that she had faced financial difficulties years ago and gave less at that time.

The interviews also indicated that members gave to diverse organizations in addition to their churches. For example, Donald, who is in his 60s, said that he gave five percent to the church and an additional five percent to other charitable institutions. In Donald's view, the latter contribution was a part of his religious offerings. Jennifer also divided her contribution between her congregation and other institutions. She said that in the past, the deacon of her congregation requested that she direct all her contributions to the church. However, she decided not to and included other organizations, albeit giving priority to her congregation.

Members' comments suggest that the annual promise form plays an important role in their planning. Donald, for example, said that his employment position allowed him to earn his annual salary. He and his wife planned to give the following year when they received the annual promise form in fall. With the form, each offering requires less time and decision making.

Thus, the interviews suggest that members routinely provided information based on their religious beliefs. Members had their own ways of deciding how much to give, and the offering amounts and recipients varied. These methods of deciding how much to give help members offer routinely, without constantly wondering about how much to give. Simultaneously, their comments about offering methods also provide important insight into why congregations seem to have a rather difficult time making long-term transitions after the pandemic. As members usually make offering plans in advance, it takes longer to change routine offerings.

Of course, members' offering practices allow for adjustments. For example, Luke, who was in his 70s and retired, had occasional income from his consulting jobs. He uses this income to make additional contributions to the church and other institutions. Margaret also stated that her giving increased in 2020. She said that she did so because, despite the economic hardships of many others, she had a job, and her income was not affected by the pandemic. These additional offerings are important in responding to urgent and unexpected needs. They provided sufficient support to both congregations during the early phase of the pandemic.

However, these offerings were not the same as those based on the members' ordinary methods of giving. Incorporating a regular offering requires time and consideration. For example, Donald's comments suggested that changing his practice requires discernment. As mentioned earlier, Donald is a routine donor for congregations and other charity organizations. However, he expressed his strong reservation to respond to telephone and letter solicitations by charity organizations. He said that he would like to know the institutions and activities well before making donations and that he was not going to make quick changes in his offering by one-time or occasional request.

Other interviewers also suggested that they tend to take more time and consider it before providing routine financial support. Some members said that they investigated the expenses and outcomes of their organizations. Many mentioned that they checked whether the organizations had a good reputation and were trustworthy. Some members said that they used charity rating websites (such as charity watches) to read the organizations' annual and financial reports. Others relied on personal networks and their experiences with organizations. Reliable, long-term relationships were also important for individuals. Lucy, who volunteered at an organization that assisted those who had recently finished their prison term, said that while she received requests for financial assistance from those she met, she was reluctant to do so. She explained that such giving was difficult for her because she did not know how her money would be used.

These donations differ from offering to the congregations. Interviewees mentioned that they trusted the budgetary plans of their congregations. The interviewees received financial updates from their congregations. Lucy described how she gave to the church, sometimes with the feeling of letting go. As Bialecki (2008) claims, giving the church this way is an important religious experience for some believers. Nevertheless, these interview comments suggested how slow it could be to modify their system of offerings in terms of how they decide the amount and designations of their money.

Additionally, the interview comments suggested that changes in how to offer at church sometimes indirectly affected their contribution. As mentioned earlier, congregations provide multiple offering methods such as automatic deposits from banks. However, the pandemic led some members to use different offering options. Luke is an example. He said that he preferred to check the offering plate during Sunday worship services. He believed that giving could have a more demonstrative effect. He said that he would like his grandchildren to see him give, just like he did when he was young. Since the pandemic, he and his wife started using the bank deposit option. It was more convenient and helped him not forget to give. Similar comments appeared in other interviews. The members mentioned that arranging automatic deposits for congregations helped them donate their money routinely. This is convenient, particularly because donors plan their donations in advance. However, this shift has certain drawbacks. It provides less visible occasions for members to see others' commitments. Furthermore, because adjusting the donation amount requires additional actions, such as calling banks, making changes in their offering can be slower and take longer than placing cheques on the plates.

Thus, the interview comments from church members suggest a few characteristics of the congregants' offering practices. Members tend to have their own methods of deciding how much to give. They preplanned their annual or monthly contributions. These arrangements helped them routinely provide financial contributions, although they also allowed members to respond to occasional urgent and unexpected situations. The interview comments also suggest that members usually took time to adjust where and to what extent they would give their money. They would like to give their money to places they could trust with their money. Given these tendencies, it takes time to make long-term changes to their offerings.

Conclusion

This study examined the financial contributions of two liberal Mennonite congregations and their members. Despite the challenges brought about by the pandemic, the congregations continued their church activities and provided spiritual services to their members and the

surrounding communities. Financial discussions by congregations suggested that while these churches received sufficient financial support from their members in the early pandemic stage, the congregations and members required more time to make long-term adjustments.

Interview comments by church members provide important insights into the reasons for such differences in financial support between the earlier and later stages of the pandemic. The members tend to rely on their own methods of allocating financial resources. With this system, members provided routine and steady financial contributions to churches and other organizations. Depending on their method, most members allowed room to make additional contributions. This helped them and their congregations respond to the initial phase of the pandemic. However, because of their offering methods, long-term changes in their offerings require time and effort. Most of them decided their annual and monthly contributions in advance, and reallocation of their financial resources to contribute did not occur quickly. In addition, the members' comments indicated that they preferred to contribute to what they considered trustworthy organizations and people. The members' decision processes for choosing appropriate recipients varied, but deciding where to give took time and thought. These situations made it more difficult for members to quickly change their offering practices.

Based on their religious interpretations, members and congregations consider financial offerings important. Unlike earlier studies that focused on the emotional factors of extravagant giving (Bialecki, 2008; Harding, 1992), careful and routine giving is emphasized among liberal Mennonites. Simultaneously, as in recent studies on morality, other factors, such as more diversified giving options, intricately affect financial offerings. A close examination of how offering decisions are made can provide important insights into how religious beliefs affect, and are affected by, people's practices.

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On the Identification and Suppression of Hate Speech in Online Contexts

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Abstract

This paper focuses the issue of identifying indirect hate speech on digital platforms. In previous studies, the authors have addressed automated flagging and suppression of hate speech in YouTube material. We found that such operations are characterized both by problems pertaining to the vagueness of the hate speech concept, as well as a problem compounding tendency of content creators towards circumventing identification and suppression efforts by mainly making use of indirect and tacit references. The indirect references chiefly function through various means of indicating levels of meaning above the immediate sentence, or the immediate signification, often by referring commonly held worldviews or ideological structures. This implies that automated suppression that relies on the flagging of keywords faces certain structural reliability issues in relation to these indirect communications, and important ethical and rights-related problems are also embedded here. For this reason, this paper will explore methods for the reliable identification of indirect hate speech. We will explore two methods: speech act theory and Grice's theory of incorporated cooperativity, and ascertain whether they separately or in combination can provide a framework for the reliable identification of indirect acts of hate speech. The paper also indirectly emphasizes the importance of worldviews, and the critical analysis of faith and worldviews, in regard to addressing contemporary political issues.

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Introduction

In contemporary practice within the digital environment, coherent and generally accepted definitions of hate speech for moderation and suppression, are generally lacking. Moreover, the definitions and templates in use are vague and to some extent arbitrary – something which invites a whole host of problems, especially when it comes to automatic moderation and censorship (Brown & Beall, 2008).

The Potential of Useful Definitions

In practice, however, hate speech or similar forms of disruptive discourses are not particularly difficult to define in principle. In the Roman Empire, for example, to publicly address someone in contravention of good morals was punishable by law. Similar sorts of injunctions against insults and defamations have been commonplace throughout the world's legal systems, and the very notion of speech acts so disruptive that they need to be suppressed is relatively straightforward (Sorial, 2015).

In other words, there are many ways we could in principle establish a coherent and non-vague definition of something like hate speech. One obvious approach is to establish a set of explicit moral principles that allow us to define which speech acts are to be prohibited. Another rather blunt way to go about this, is to simply from a consensus establish a set list of prohibited and clearly delineated speech acts, such as set of ideas which you are forbidden to express in public.

Three Ways of Ethical Foundationalism

But if we go with the first option, i.e. if we begin with a set of moral principles (which I here term ethical foundationalism), there are then basically three ways we can move forward and apply any moral principles to actual speech, three ways in which we can focus and ethically judge the character of the speech act, which all have somewhat different consequences in practice (Hietanen & Eddebo, 2022).

First of all, one can focus the consequences of the speech act and/or the ideas involved, formally speaking. If I make an utterance to someone, the effect in context is what renders the speech act permissible or not (according to one's chosen set of normative ethics).

Secondly, we can focus the teleology of the speech act, as exemplified in Aristotelian metaphysics and ethics. Given this perspective, it's the intentionality and tendency of the complete speech act that's in focus. The way in which the act is directed to certain ends, irrespectively of any actual consequences. So if one addresses a person with a slur, what renders the speech act impermissible or not is the intention in addition to the actual character of what is being said, and the way it will tend to impact (its teleology) upon a certain audience in a particular communicative setting. But since we here focus the teleology, i.e. the inherent tendency of the total act, it doesn't matter if we don't get any negative results. It is hate speech if it was intended as such, and/or if the speech act had the inherent tendency of hate speech, if it was the kind of statement that would have been received as hate speech, even if nobody hears the tree fall in the forest, so to speak.

Third, we have the purely formal approach. Here, the essential character of the ideas expressed or of the speech act performed is in focus. So what is then the difference in relation

to the other two positions? On this model, it is strictly the meaning of the ideas expressed that counts. It doesn't matter what effects the expressions have in practice, or what the inherent tendencies of the ideas or speech acts are – what's in focus is the objective assertion as such. If the meaning of what is being said is immoral or impermissible, it gets designated as hate speech.

This is similar to the notion of formal heresy of Catholic Christianity or the notion of *shirk* within Islam.

Nonetheless, in the context of our contemporary global digital framework that has a decidedly secularized character, and which spans a vast number of cultures, traditions and worldviews, there is a debilitating key issue with these approaches towards a comprehensive definition of hate speech based in the application of moral principles.

The Problem of No Common Moral Basis

The first significant problem is that such a definitional approach lacks a real foundation to build on. In contemporary secular society, there is no real agreement on what good morals are.

There is no common tradition able to supply unambiguous foundations of ethics to guide the automated mass censorship and moderation taking place on the digital platforms throughout the world. While many groups have strongly held values that in principle could play such a normative role, representatives of other traditions will not always agree – and the very notion of rigid, non-negotiable values often conflict with the overall ethical modus operandi of secular society (MacIntyre, 1988, 1990).

Still, to find common ground is not an insuperable obstacle, at least not between different religious traditions. There for instance seems to be plenty of room for a general agreement between, say, Catholics, Daoists, Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists, as to what constitutes good morals for interpersonal communication, and it is not inconceivable that we could establish an ongoing interreligious dialogue to support the moderation of communications in the digital sphere.

The Daost emphasis on harmony and balance is perfectly compatible with the Catholic principles of inherent human dignity as well as the Muslim's principle of the essential unity of the good of all creation inherent in the notion of tawhid; when one suffers, we all suffer.

Yet due to its vagueness and ambiguity, secular morals by themselves do not seem to be able to provide a lasting foundation for this sort of applied ethics, which possibly is one of the key reasons as to why the hate speech injunctions so far have been incoherent and arbitrary.

The emergence of a normative structure for global digital communications might for that reason possibly catalyze or at least motivate a return of religion to the public sphere. That said, the opposite tendency is arguably more probable – that an arbitrary set of secular ethics will become normative through these systems of social and narrative control, and that this process will tend to push aside the values and worldviews of religious traditions, not least the non-Western ones.

Problems of Automated Suppression

Apart from these basic problems of the anchoring of the values undergirding a coherent suppression of hate speech, actual moderation is beset by significant practical difficulties. One such difficulty boils down to the fact that people for the most part are pretty good at strategizing around these prohibitions and automated injunctions. Basic keyword filters are more or less worthless, and even more advanced algorithms trained by internet users to recognize and flag instances of hate speech are relatively easy to circumvent – for instance by the use of indirect speech or communication though evolving code words and symbols (Eddebo, Johansson, Hietanen, 2023).

So is an image of Pepe, the green frog of the American Alt-Right movement, stating "it's ok to be white" – is this an instance of hate speech? Of course not. And to suppress something like that would mean the end of liberal democracy as we know it. One can imagine what would happen to freedom of speech and the press if dominant platforms for communication began normalizing the suppression of content due to vague associations with politically undesirable ideas.

Nonetheless, through the contingent established associations of this particular cartoon and the slogan, its dissemination does indirectly support such discourses that, taken as a whole, fulfill the same function as immediate hate speech. This is still a problem.

Basic Principles for Capturing Indirect, Nested and Tacit Hate Speech via Algorithm

The ensuing question is then whether there could be more precise ways to automatically filter these complex and indirect acts of communication to minimize arbitrariness. Ways to mimic the complex awareness of indirect signification that human observers possess.

A human observer is immediately aware of complex discursive associations that sometimes latch onto otherwise innocuous content, which in itself does not motivate suppression - but sometimes can warrant caution with regard to the interpretation of the content matter and associated material. Could an AI in a similar sense be used to flag certain discursive clusters as warranting caution, and successfully identify potentially disruptive acts of communication of an indirect character? Could algorithms flag acts of communication that operate at a higher level of abstraction; through tacit associations, implied symbolic signaling or the like?

The short answer is yes, in theory. In practice, we are approaching this capacity, for instance through the recent rollout of the latest version of ChatGPT and similar forms of technology, which enable complex associations through absolutely massive layers of data. Given this background, there seem to be several models or theoretical frameworks that could profitably be used to enable an AI to accurately flag multi-layered discursive clusters.

Grice's model of cooperativity in dialogue is one example. His generic principles of cooperativity could simply be employed in a negative sense, i.e. to identify communication that's maximally uncooperative, and establishing this pattern as a proxy for discursive clusters that are potentially disruptive (Grandy, 1989).

The problem is that you need a comprehensive surveillance of the complete environment of communication. You need to collect the relevant set of discourses that populate the context, and you need some form of assessment of the communicative history of all of the agents

involved in the communicative situation to really be able to classify intended cooperativity. This is probably technically feasible at this moment in time, and the set of potential negative consequences is obviously immense.

One could also go with Searle's speech act theory, focusing communicative events that function as complex performative utterances. Searle's basic model is three-partite; we have the act of saying something and how that act is framed in a specific context; we have what you're more specifically doing in saying something, such as making a request or expressing gratitude, and we have the whole spectrum of implicit or explicit ways in which the speaker is trying to affect the audience (Tsohatzidis, 2007). So one in effect combines an analysis of formal content with rhetoric and performativity theory. To identify discursive clusters using a model such as Searle's could quite likely be done with some level of accuracy, but again, you need massive levels of data collection and a thorough surveillance of the agents involved and their respective communicative histories.

Conclusions

Notwithstanding these problems, it seems plausible structures of narrative control akin to the above-mentioned will be established unless the entire digital sphere collapses or something similarly catastrophic.

But one might ask if we couldn't perhaps get out ahead of this problem and nip it in the bud. If we couldn't scramble and rapidly foster the use of these technological approaches in some other way than outright or indirect censorship, if there are conceivable alternatives to flagging certain complexes of communicative acts as potentially disruptive, with all that this implies in terms of policy, the institutionalization of immense systems of control, and the indirect infringement of established rights? Is there something else we can do instead?

Back in the 90s, a group of researchers led by Hans & Laila Dybkjær attempted to employ Grice's theory of incorporated cooperativity towards something like this very end. The key idea was to establish a type of machine learning geared to expound upon the meta-communicative situation through strategically "asking the human user for clarification" (Bernsen Dybkjær & Dybkjær, 1996).

One way to employ this sort of AI in relation to moderation would be to introduce it as a party in digital communications online, in the sense of a Twitter or Facebook bot that enters into a group discussion and asks pointed questions of the purveyors of potentially disruptive discourses. So when your game loses the match, for instance, and you log on to your Facebook group to point out that the referees are morons, then this AI white knight uncannily reminiscent of a human user comes in and exclaims that: "X CAN POSSIBLY PERCEIVE THIS STATEMENT AS DEMEANING."

There might be many more options apart from this sort of strategy, but this sort of limited nudging approach seems possibly worse than mere censorship and surveillance; this is rather the explicit combination of mass surveillance with targeted and automated social engineering.

These seem to the options at hand. We have the potential end results of social engineering or outright censorship through mass surveillance to choose between in terms of automated hate speech suppression online.

And then we're suddenly also right back at the first problem once again. Because however we cut this, we're going to have to face the question of whose values and worldviews the automated hate speech suppression will reproduce.

In any event, I would argue that this entrenchment of values should be made very explicit. We should know exactly that the algorithms will tend to foster values ABC and worldviews XYZ. The entire process is much more likely, however, to be painted out as a neutral endeavor supporting vague, malleable and general conceptual constructs such as "human rights", while it in practice, and quite tacitly, will reproduce the values and worldviews that facilitate the bottom line of the corporate entities involved.

And not least for this reason, there's a sense in which this discussion and the institutional insufficiencies it reveals shows the continuing relevance of organized religion, even in connection to cutting-edge technological themes. In this particular situation, its relevance becomes clear in relation to fostering and guiding critical reflection around values and worldviews, and religion's potential to moderate undue excesses.

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Examining Dialogic Opportunities in Higher Education:
Lessons Learned From Dialogue Courses for Jewish Students

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Abstract

An academic student dialogue is a facilitated discussion that provides an opportunity for students in higher education to share perspectives and experiences, while at the same time challenging participants to understand why they hold certain views and attitudes. Because dialogues for secular and religious Jewish students in Israel aim to understand and discuss different viewpoints among these groups, curricular goals are tailored to fit this specific course content. A content analysis was undertaken on final papers of 96 undergraduate students as part of their obligations for academic credit in the dialogue course in which they participated. The papers included a description of student experiences during the dialogue. This article explores research findings that highlight the importance of structuring dialogue experiences that challenge students' moral thinking, trigger an engagement in self-discovery and enhance inter-group understandings. Future directions include investigating changes to students' identity as a consequence of specific types of dialogic interactions.

Keywords: Religious-Secular, Intergroup Dialogue, Higher Education, Jewish, Students, Israel

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Introduction

An academic student dialogue is a process which allows participants with differing viewpoints to gain a deeper understanding of their own and others' perspectives on a topic or issue (Shamoa-Nir, 2017b). Intergroup dialogues are structured conversations between members of different cultures, ethnicities or religions through a collaborative communication process that engages people in self-other exchanges (Dessel & Rogge, 2008; Nagda et al., 2009). The literature points to two sets of processes within the intergroup dialogues: the psychological processes that occur within individuals (Dovidio et al., 2004), and the communication processes that occur among these individuals (Nagda, 2006).

Intergroup dialogues that were implemented in international, community and academic settings and research indicate positive results in these settings (Dessel et al., 2006). In particular, studies have indicated that a discourse on intergroup religious conflict functions as an opportunity for a meaningful process on both a personal and a social level (Shamoa-Nir, 2017a; Shamoa-Nir, 2022). As a complement to this line of research, this paper explores the dialogic experiences process from dialogue courses focusing on secular-religious dialogues conducted in a higher-education environment. Through analysis of these experiences, a framework will be generated to identify significant elements of dialogue, particularly those that create a classroom space that encourages students' self-exploration and social learning processes in dialogic interaction.

A multi-cultural Israeli college was chosen in which Israeli-Jews and Israeli-Arabs mixed daily throughout the campus community. This includes in-classes and extra-mural activities (Shamoa-Nir, 2014). Student of the college were offered the opportunity to engage in an extended, structured course of dialogues aimed at exploring questions of Jewish identity over the course of a semester (Shamoa-Nir & Hellinger, 2015). At the end of the semester students were asked to submit a written piece that focused on their experiences during the dialogue.

The dialogue course investigated in this study takes place over one semester, 13 sessions of four academic hours each. Each group comprised between 18-23 students and included Jewish students: religious, traditional and secular. The course comprised workshops in the following subjects: (a) The first encounters were devoted to getting to know one another and included discussions of the following issues: stereotypes, tolerance and pluralism, and relations with the 'other.' At the end of these encounters, the students participated in a weekend seminar for all the dialogue groups, including group activities for the entire program, and comprising lectures, workshops and consolidation activities moderated by the students; (b) The middle portion of the course was devoted to discussion on Jewish-Israeli identity and relationships between religion and state, Judaism and democracy. In this portion, in addition to class encounters, participants participated in seminars of introduction to ultra-Orthodox Jews and a symposium on moral contents of secular Jewish identity; (c) The third portion of the semester comprised workshops on significant personal, general and social issues (which were not necessarily related to religion), morality and ethics, relationships and marriage, gender and education.

Considering this context, this research study sought to explore the perceptions of Israeli-Jews in a culturally diverse context. With this in mind, the following research questions were examined: (1) how did participants express their learning during dialogues? (2) whether and how participants integrated new perceptions into their personal perspectives?

Methodology

Participants

Ninety-six undergraduate students participated in the research, fifty-one of whom were women and forty-five were men, and all ninety-four were born in Israel. Forty-three defined themselves as secular, thirty-three as religious and twenty as traditional. The distinction between the religious affiliations of the participants was based on their self-definition. Therefore, and in accordance with definitions in Israel, the participants identified themselves as belonging to one of these three groups: secular, traditional or religious. In general, religious and secular affiliations are not limited to Israeli society; however, the traditional affiliation requires an explanation. Traditional Jews see themselves as practicing Jews who do not keep all the laws of Judaism. Typically, traditional Jews maintain traditional Jewish laws and customs that are considered symbolic and significant from motives of solidarity with the Jewish people.

All students gave their consent to participate in the research, and all demographic information was deleted from the papers. The papers were written personally, and were submitted at the end of the course. A content analysis was undertaken on final papers as part of their obligations for academic credit. The papers included a description of student experiences during the dialogue.

Coding strategy

The coding process followed qualitative analysis procedures delineated by Bryman (2004). First, analysis was conducted on an initial set of 9 papers (3 secular, 3 religious and 3 traditional), which were closely studied for themes by the author and a former facilitator. After discussing which themes to pursue (Interrater agreement 95%) a coding scheme for the major themes and subthemes was developed. The coding scheme was used to analyze all the papers, while marking the presence or absence of relevant themes in each paper. After all coding was completed, two undergraduate research assistants' students did a separate blind coding that was compared with the author's codes. The coding results had high reliability (Interrater agreement ranged from 87% to 98%). The analysis reported in this research was based on the author coding.

Results

A large majority of participants felt that a dialogue course is "a good thing" (participant 32) and "really gives an opportunity to properly share our experiences and values" (participant 14), reflecting the broad tendency of students to engage morality and religion as important issues in life. However, some (15%) viewed it as an academic experience that does not make a special contribution to their lives. In addition, more than half of the participants noted difficulty in speaking openly about themselves during the dialogue meetings. As participant 7 wrote: "I would say that it was not easy to share private ideas for most people in the dialogue." Nearly half of the participants were clear in their belief that higher-education institutions should stay out of politics, while 20% said they should express their views on day-to-day social and political questions.

At the same time, most participants pointed to several factors that enabled them to pursue the challenging discourse and promoted self-discovery in the dialogue. These subthemes are presented in table 1. Within these subthemes, it seems that dialogue course participants

interacted in dialogue with each other, accepting parts of the other's ideas or dispositions as part of the group process which enables self-discovery.

Coding Scheme			
Subtheme	Theme Content	Example	Interrater agreement
Practicing the ability to listen to opposing views	Participants refer to the positive benefit of dealing with opposing views	"I think it's wonderful to be able to discuss personal issues with other participants, and be able to state your point of view, and have people agree or disagree with you."	97%
Religious sub-groups discussions	Participants explain how discussions in small groups for participants religious sub-groups contributed to self-discovery in the dialogue	"In small various groups [religious sub-groups] we had more opportunities to detail our arguments, and then that enabled us to continue the conversation having a real understanding of each other's opinions."	95%
Facilitator role in self-discovery	Participants describe facilitation style and behaviors that contributed to self-exploration during the workshops	"A lot of times in several meetings, you could say something and your idea is very shallow, however the facilitator engages you because you have to go deeper."	89%
Participants' support	Participants explain how communication and mutual support between the group members contributed to the dialogue	"I think it's wonderful to be able to discuss personal issues with other participants, and be able to state your point of view, and have people agree or disagree with you."	90%

Table 1: Coding scheme for factors that enabled self-discovery in the dialogue

Discussion and Conclusion

This study explored experiences of participants in facilitated dialogues between religious and secular Jewish students in Israel. The findings indicate that this challenging discourse provided an opportunity for participants to share their attitudes regarding Jewish beliefs and in particular, to speak from their own perspectives. It is important to note that the investigated dialogue did not aim to promote a certain Jewish perspective but rather helped participants understand varying viewpoints. Hence, findings showed that the discourse was a sharing process which allowed different attitudes and viewpoints to be held side-by-side. Moreover, the introspective process was promoted by experienced facilitators that encouraged discussions and critical thinking about participants' perspectives.

This examination of religious discourse through a framework of dialogic interaction highlights three issues involving the knowledge and dispositions of both participants and facilitators. First, dialogue meetings include structured collaborative group activities, consequently promoting familiarity and trust between participants. This provides opportunities for students to establish positive relationships and connections as well as opportunities for students to develop and practice strategies that foster emotional regulation.

Second, the dialogue process promotes reflection and provides a means to encourage inclusive practices of communication between participants. Interactive tasks allow students to be more actively engaged in the learning experience in particular, in structured small group or breakout room discussions. Third, the findings indicate that identity processes in a multicultural context occur during dialogue meetings.

The study main limitation is the relatively small sample size of college students. However, the papers produced findings with great depth which can contribute to our understanding of how an individual explores his/her identity within daily experience. Moreover, the findings may contribute to the development and design of programs that will help individuals better engage within societies with ethno-religious diversity. Nonetheless, a study with a larger sample is recommended in order to advance our understanding of identity formation among college students.

Taken together, dialogues pose personal and moral questions, prompt introspection and encourage self-reflection. The current research findings indicate that dialogues can be seen both as a worldview and as a tool for action in the following manner: dialogue reflects a moral approach regarding relationships between people and social systems, and by applying this approach, dialogic interactions are established as a preferred pattern of action in relationships between people and groups, in community and educational organizations, and in the business world.

Acknowledgements

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Exploring the Social Space of Filipino Catholics in Japan: [De]Ghettoization

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Abstract

Filipinos go to Japan for economic reasons but as they migrate for work, they bring along with them their ethnoreligious identity and heritage. Situated as "guests" in the Church of Japan, Filipino Catholics' (FCs) ecclesial presence is marked by narratives of seclusion, marginality, and negotiation. Data are drawn from qualitative field research on selected church communities in the Archdiocese of Tokyo in Japan, namely, Koiwa, Matsudo, Akabane, and Kasai. In an attempt to explore and nuance these contested spaces, I would make use of Loic Wacquant's theorization of urban ghettos and Pierre Bourdieu's ideation of "field". To illustrate this, the paper proposes a 'diamond-quadrant' (DQ) plane that may serve as a heuristic device for analytical purposes. Results from this study suggest that the early years of FCs' negotiation (1979-the 1990s) locate the players in the right plane of contested space defined by exclusionary tendencies of swording and shielding. In the mid-2000s, there has since been a major shift of negotiation to the left plane that is characterized by inclusionary attempts of fishnet and graftage. Despite this shift, it is still a negotiated space. The vision of full integration remains an ideal objective that if unmasked of its ambiguity and hegemonic nuances may be a welcome solution to the problems that affect the Church of Japan as a whole.

Keywords: Ghetto, Migration, Religion

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Introduction

Filipinos who go to Japan for work and employment bring along their rich religious identity as Catholic Christians. Once in Japan, it is expected that they start looking for the nearest church/chapel where they can attend mass and participate in religious devotions, practices, and ceremonies. In their entire life as Filipino Catholics in a foreign country with merely 0.3% of the entire population affiliated with Catholic Christianity, theirs is not only a story of belonging to religion as an act of finding a refuge amidst the trend of non-religiosity but a story of struggle, negotiation, and contestation.

In this paper, it is argued that aside from the socio-spatial seclusion that Filipino Catholics experience in the secular (public and private) space within Japanese society, such tension is somehow extended and reproduced in the sacred (ecclesial/religious) space of the Japanese Catholic parishes/churches. Not only is the church/religion a place of refuge for discriminated migrants as many sociologists and migration experts have articulated (Dolan, 1972; Zhou, 1992; Warner and Wittner, 1998, Gibb and Rothenberg, 2000), but the sacred space has also become a locale of marginality and hostility. LeMay's (2013) field research has touched upon the Filipinas' contested space at home and workplace but has missed extending it to sacred space. Whereas marginality in the secular space is generally based on an ethnoreligious category, that is, as being both a Filipino and Catholic, the sacred space is contested by an ethnocultural category, especially when Filipinos bring their culturally-nuanced religious expressions and ethos to a Japanese parish/church at the cost of disturbing religio-cultural traditions of the host group. Although subtle and obscured, this ethnocultural tension within the ecclesial space (re)produces marginality against the Filipino Catholics since their presence is deemed an intrusion into the pre-owned sacred (ecclesial/religious) space of the dominant ethnic group. The contested local space is a challenge that beckons Asian Christianity, "In the face of complex diversities, Asian Christianity must heed both the migrants' complaint that 'they are treated as 'guests' in the Church of Tokyo and the Japanese Catholics' plea that they too no longer feel at home in church" (Francisco, 2014, p. 575). While mentioned in general terms and missing in further elaboration, this paper attempts to investigate and explore this socio-spatial contestation between two ethnoreligious groups - the Japanese Catholics and the Filipino Catholics - who are co-existing in Japan. In critically analyzing this contested sacred space, although as a micro-narrative to the Asian region, the paper hopes to contribute to the predicament of Asian Christianity, which too is socio-spatially situated in a region that is characterized by multiculturalism, multi-ethnicity, and multi-religiosity as well as affected by global trends on migration and secular urbanism among others.

Using the analytical framework on socio-spatial seclusion of urban ghettos provided by Loic Wacquant, this paper will diachronically explore the historicity of Filipino Catholics in Japan and its corresponding nuances to reveal traces and cues of marginality as well as explicit and implicit social control mechanisms employed by the superordinate upon the subordinate. Moreover, it is also of huge interest to look at how the subjugated ethnic group negotiates and strategically resists this constraint. That in the light of Wacquant's thesis on urban ghettos, this paper articulates these existing mechanisms of control and hostility in hope of finding whether Filipinos' socio-spatial configuration has already reached the ghetto/anti-ghetto stage, even momentarily, or has simply demonstrated a push or pull mobility over the extent of their existence within a highly contested space.

The Filipino Catholics in Japan and their historicized negotiation

Filipinos' entry into the Japanese socio-spatial space started as early as the 1900s when Filipinos have been regular fixtures in the socio-spatial space of Japanese society with reputable admiration from the host in terms of their musical talent and boxing skills (Suzuki, 2008b). They were often invited to perform and on both the musical stage and the boxing arena, the Filipinos had been regarded as great entertainers. But all of these changed in the late 70s when boxing lost its popularity and female entertainers began to crowd the night scenes in Japan's urban settlements. The entry of the female entertainers in 1979, the so-called Japayuki Year One, is where this paper begins its attempt to historicize Filipinos' entry into negotiated sacred space with the Japanese.

The Japayuki phenomenon is believed to be pre-conditioned by the great economic progress of postwar Japan. Owing to a more liberalized overseas travel granted by their government, many Japanese men during the mid-60s traveled to Manila as tourists and had established intimate contacts with many Filipinas who were then working in sex industries (Eviota, 1992). As Japan's economy expanded in this era, many Japanese men started to earn more money to spend in hostess bars but many Japanese girls from these same bars left to apply for corporate jobs in the cities. In response, the government allowed more entertainer visas for Filipinas to work in these establishments, differentiated as snack bars (sunakku), pubs (pabu), cabarets (kyabare), and clubs (kurabu) (Faier, 2009). Moreover, Piper contends that "Japanese immigration laws were deliberately weakened to allow such women in on special visas so Japanese men would no longer have to go abroad on sex tours to Southeast Asia..." (Piper, 2000, p. 27). As bar hostesses, Suzuki (2008a) observes that their primary function is not necessarily "sex work" (coitus) but to facilitate social intercourse through frivolous conversations. Due to increasing demand, soon, illegal recruitment and underground activity led to undocumented Filipinas working in prostitution and left an adverse effect on the image of Filipina entertainers that were usually associated with sex jobs (Faier, 2009). As their number grew until the early years of the 2000s, tighter measures of control had also been enforced by the host society.

Gendered and racialized, these Filipinas were left marginalized and constrained in both societal and spatial existence. Japanese society generally looks at certain races and nationalities as uniquely qualified for certain kinds of labor and Filipino (illegal) sex workers were considered at the bottom of the so-called "racialized hierarchy" (Shipper, 2008).

In an attempt to counter such anomic existence, they sought religion as a way to impose a new meaningful order upon reality (Berger, 1967). Religion acts as a kind of refuge for "displaced" migrants in a foreign nation (Komai, 2001). Williams (1988) even argues that migrants are on all accounts more religious in a foreign country than in their place of origin. But since their illegal status in Japan left them vulnerable as outsiders, they avoided public gatherings as they can be an easy target for raids and arrests while fully aware too of the need to build closer relationships with their co-ethnics. In their search for a space where they could get together and be 'Filipina', they went to religion to express their longings and reconnect with their cultural cosmologies.

As early as 1960, the Catholic Bishops Conference of Japan (CBCJ) has since acknowledged the presence and needs of Catholic migrants when it created the Commission on Migration which since then has taken several forms and adaptations. Currently, all migrants' concerns

are handled by the Catholic Commission of Japan for Migrants, Refugees, and People on the Move.

In the Archdiocese of Tokyo, the Catholic Tokyo International Center (CTIC) was created in 1990 specifically to cater to the needs of foreign Catholics. In its early years, CTIC's operation had been merely focused on providing legal and social assistance (immigration concerns, marital counseling, and more) to many migrant workers, especially Filipinos. Only in the early years of the 2000s, CTIC has since included a more pastoral approach in its apostolate to the migrants like the provision of seminars on liturgical, eucharistic, catechetical, and choir ministries.

In that same year too, the Franciscan Philippine Center (FPC) was established with Fr. Ely Adel, OFM, a Filipino Franciscan priest, as its director. Although coinciding with the archdiocesan-created CTIC, FPC is more exclusive to Filipino Catholics' concerns as well as more pastoral in its programs. Fr. Adel was tireless in his desire to serve the Filipino Catholics even outside the Tokyo area; saying masses as far as Saitama, Yokohama, and Chiba areas and providing catechetical and formation programs to many of them. Many of today's Filipino church-based communities owe their early years of formation to the zealous pastoral dedication of this priest.

Before Filipinos were able to establish their church-based communities, they started in the mid-'90s with house-to-house evangelization where a small group of Filipinas would bring along with them the statue of the Virgin Mary and would regularly visit several households, usually those with Filipinas who was then married to Japanese nationals. Once inside the house, they sang sacred songs, prayed the rosary, read the Bible, and shared life/faith experiences which were often filled with painful stories of loneliness and isolation on foreign soil. Feeling the need to have a more permanent place to gather and meet socio-spiritual needs, Fr. Adel encouraged these Filipinas to ask their respective (Japanese) parish priests if they could be accommodated for English/Tagalog mass in their parishes. While not everyone was successful, many Japanese parish priests had been open to allowing these Filipinos to have a mass of their own. Mullins (2011, p. 171) reiterates this inability of Japanese priests to pastorally care for foreigners due to the language barrier and that "only by inviting an outside priest can some of the smaller churches provide an occasional non-Japanese mass for the immigrants."

Towards the late 90s, the FPC had some internal problems and along with the departure of Fr. Adel back to the Philippines, its office was transferred from Roppongi to Kiyose and changed its name to Philippine Pastoral Center (PPC) by the year 2000. With CTIC's restructuring to include increased involvement in pastoral ministry to foreign Catholics during that same year, PPC's operations became mere duplication of the archdiocesan office. Soon PPC redefined its pastoral projects to solely focusing on organizing pilgrimages and home evangelization ministries but due to a lack of resources and absence of priestly guidance, it soon found itself without an office. And as many of its core leaders were also at the helm of guiding their own respective Filipino church-based communities in their nascent stages, PPC's structural vacuum was inevitable and by 2010, it changed its name to Home Evangelization Ministry (HEM). Without a permanent address, HEM core members meet occasionally in some members' houses, in restaurants, or any other public space especially when organizing pilgrimages for some parish-based Filipino Catholics.

As Filipino church-based communities and transparochial groups (El Shaddai, Couples for Christ (CFC), and Alliance of Two Hearts among others) started to emerge in the late 90s to early 2000s, CTIC organized the Gathering of Filipino Groups and Communities (GFGC) in 2003 "as a way of uniting different Filipino groups present in parishes within the Archdiocese of Tokyo". Just a few years ago, however, the archdiocese strengthened its call for full integration of foreigners in the church and discouraged transparochialism by asking individuals and groups to register in their respective parishes. Heeding this call, the GFGC began encouraging Filipino transparochial groups to realign themselves to a certain parish for if not GFGC would not welcome them anymore. Around two years ago, GFGC proposed to change its name to Gathering of Filipino Catholic Communities (GFCC); dropping the Filipino groups in response to the archdiocesan policy of integration. Although not yet approved as of writing, the name GFGC is still currently used but with an already obvious absence of these transparochial groups in their general assemblies and gatherings as of late.

In the early years of the 2000s, a Filipino priest assigned in the Chiba area had been regularly saying mass to four Filipino communities located in the parishes of Matsudo, Ichikawa, Koiwa, and Toyoshiki. In his desire to strengthen the network and linkage of these four communities under his pastor-ship and in the process build a better support system and engagement as an inter-community association, he formed the MICHIKOTO United in 2005. Having its own set of officers and board members from the four communities, MICHIKOTO United organizes annual social events and cultural gatherings (dinner for a cause, bowling tournament, bus tours, pilgrimages, and Filipino Community day among others), aside from its usual spiritual and religious activities.

As Filipino Catholics continue to gain a more stable and recognized presence in many churches in the archdiocese, many of the active members however are old. It also does not help that many of the bicultural children of these Filipinas have become more Japanese than Filipinos; not only in language and cultural behavior but also in terms of religious orientation. Tighter immigration laws since 2005 did not help replenish the community with young blood.

A diachronic sketch of the Filipino Catholics in the Archdiocese of Tokyo enables this paper to locate in a kind of timeline the evolution of these communities and how the social space of ecclesia hides more than what it reveals. It can be said that most of today's Filipino church-based communities owe their foundation to the collective initiative of Fr. Adel and the core members of FPC as well as the openness of most Japanese parish priests and the welcoming environment provided by the archdiocesan center. Born out of difficult negotiation, even their socio-spatial existence in today's sacred space still bears tensions. In the next section, this paper will zero in on these contested discourses and how the Filipino Catholic communities, more than a product of history, are also active agents in the negotiated sacred space.

Traces and Cues of De/Ghettoization in Wacquant's analytical frame

In 1997, the Archbishop of Tokyo Cardinal Peter Seiichi Shirayanagi raise two important issues facing the Church then: the "guest-identity" of Filipino Catholics in Japan as well as the vision of full integration of foreigners in the Church. The first implies the current situation; the second is its desired objective... and within this gap is a negotiated space. In Wacquant's frame, the continuous treatment of Filipino Catholics as "guests" with controlled movement, confined activity, and stigmatized identity inside the sacred space are attributes of a "ghettoizing" tendency. On the contrary, it can be construed that the initiative of the archdiocesan center to accept them as full members of the Church with empowered status,

greater access to parish resources, and recognized presence features towards "deghettoization". In this section, this paper attempts to analyze these movements and configurations so that a clearer articulation of these negotiated discourses may bring about more tangible solutions for the current problems facing the Church of Japan.

As for a clearer understanding of the meaning and nuances associated with this "guest-identity" attribute, this paper attempts to explain it in light of Wacquant's four criteria of an urban ghetto: stigma, constraint, spatial confinement, and institutional encasement. The stigma that these Filipino Catholics have experienced is multifaceted. In terms of race, they are considered a foreigner in the lower hierarchy. In terms of work and employment, they are found in those socially regarded as demeaning jobs. In terms of religion, they are considered a minority. Japan's long history of insulation from foreign influence and its myth of cultural homogeneity, as embedded in its Nihonjinron (Japanese national and cultural identity) ethos, has classified foreigners into a racialized hierarchy with Filipinos at the bottom. In terms of employment, one cannot forget the historical stigma experience by Japayukis (Yoder, 2011). Besides, Filipinos have been usually employed in less-attractive jobs defined by the 3K characteristics of kitsui (difficult), kiken (dangerous), and kitanai (dirty). The constraint employed upon Filipinos in Japan is in the areas of culture and religion. In sacred space, Zarate observes, "Even if they [Filipinos] are Catholics and have the right to use the church and its facilities, they are just given time to use them under certain conditions" (Zarate, 2008, p. 27). For Faier (2009), Filipinos are looked upon as completely different from the Japanese. On spatial confinement, one of the most obvious expressions of this is found in the way Sunday masses are scheduled. Filipinos' Sunday gathering is strictly separated from the Japanese gathering in order not to disturb or infringe on the host's space. In many parishes, the morning Sunday gathering is allocated for the host while the "guests" are allowed to have their religious ceremony in the afternoon when the entire Japanese community is already finished with their own. Filipino Catholics are also institutionally encased. Fourth, in terms of institutional encasement, Filipino Catholics are pushed into the periphery of secular and even sacred spaces and have since thrived and have gained a sense of autonomy; organizing themselves into parallel structures "with a distinct and duplicative set of institutions enabling the group thus cloistered to reproduce itself within its assigned perimeter" (Wacquant, 2012, p. 24]. In its early years, there was strong social control (sword) imposed upon by the host unto them as a kind of external closure. Through this, Filipinos have learned to further strengthen their communal ties and collectivism through internal bonding (shield). Filipino Catholics elected their leaders, organized spiritual and cultural events within the sacred space, coordinated with Filipino priests for their masses and spiritual activities, and even raise their funds and resources. Soon enough, this newfound stability of Filipino communities caused tension with the Japanese Catholics as the latter considered the Filipinos to be "a parish within a parish," suspected of separating from the church and setting out a new ethnic church (Mateo, 2003; Makoto, 2016).

This duality of external hostility and internal affinity is considered an exclusionary strategy used by both parties in their pursuit to be separated and distinct from each of them. But this did not last long. Soon, the Archdiocese center recognized the increasing number of foreigners in the Church vis-a-vis the dwindling and aging Japanese Catholic population. At this point, the shielding resource of the Filipino Catholics became more powerful than the swording capacity of the host. The host has since become more compliant for the cause of integration but long years of isolation from the outside and a more stable communal bond that has since been formed within these Filipino communities have made any integrative attempt still replete with caution and calculation, at least on the part of the subordinate. Filipino

Catholics for a time have enjoyed this "protective device insofar as it relieves its members from constant contact with the dominant..." (Wacquant, 2012, p. 25). But with a low supply of new Filipino migrants after the 2005 immigration law revision that could have infused new membership to churches and at the same time the obvious need of introducing their bicultural Nihongo-speaking children to religion, Filipino Catholics have acknowledged the urgency of integration with the Church of Japan and the futility of remaining isolated from it. Since the mid-2000s, the Church of Japan and lately the Filipino communities have moved from exclusionary space of ghettoizing strategies to the inclusionary space of deghettoizing tendencies. While it remains a vision until now, there have been improvements and developments, although highly negotiated and still contested.

As for the vision of integration, it is observed that post-2005 social and ecclesial conditions that include the low supply of new and long-term Filipino immigrants, aging demographics, and non-religiosity of the youth have urged the Church of Japan to desegregate and become more inclusive. The Church has begun discussing measures to admit and integrate foreigners. For many years, the Church was moving toward two societies - one Japanese, one Filipino - separate and unequal. It can be said that recent developments have shifted the arena of negotiation from the right side of the DQ plane that features exclusionary tendencies to the left side of it which is defined by inclusionary strategies. The superordinate group (top) is employing the "fishnet" method while the subordinate (below) is utilizing a "graftage" method.

Within the fishnet realm, the Japanese Church is viewed as casting its net as far and wide in hope of integrating as many foreign Catholics as possible. As early as the 90s, the archdiocese gradually built structures (like CTIC) to cater to their needs which more often than not were related to employment and immigration concerns, especially since there had been a lot of illegal Filipino workers back then. When migration concerns soon stabilized, CTIC realigned its focus on the pastoral needs of the emerging Filipino Catholic communities by providing them with formation seminars on liturgical service, catechesis, and lay ministries. In a message by Archbishop Okada of Tokyo in 2008, he shares, "Half of the members of Catholic churches are now foreign nationals. We presume the number of migrants will continue to increase. It is time for us to receive migrants more positively..." (Archdiocese of Tokyo, 2009). However, these initiatives are from the policy-makers standpoint. The more obvious gap is found in its full exercise at the parish level where most foreign Catholics gather together. Bishop Koda of Tokyo identifies two major obstacles: the Japanese clergy's English language handicap that deters good communication with the foreigners and the spatiotemporal cleft manifested in the Sunday mass schedule with the Japanese mass in the morning and the foreign mass in the afternoon, which reinforces split between Japanese and foreign Catholics that prevents them to make contact and meet. On the part of the Japanese, there seems to be no problem with ethnolinguistic masses by Filipinos. While an English mass is more encouraged to cater to a more international audience, a Tagalog mass is generally not discouraged. Overall, there is a considerable improvement in the way Japanese Catholics have been relating to Filipino Catholics.

Inside the graftage realm, Filipino communities have gradually shifted from the comfort of the shield to a more inclusive direction of "inserting" themselves into the Church of Japan in such a way that these two ethnic groups will unite and continue their growth. While Filipino Catholics are slowly inching their way out of the "fence of seclusion", it still bears a lot of disorientation and confusion brought about by the historical baggage of marginality and hostility. For one, the full meaning of integration remains ambiguous to many of them. Does

it mean foregoing Tagalog masses? Does it include the dissolution of Filipino church-based communities? Would that prevent us from celebrating religio-cultural expressions? Even if most of these permanently-settled Filipinos can understand a Nihongo mass, they still feel more at ease and comfortable with a Tagalog mass. More than the issue of linguistic affinity, Tagalog mass offers them an overall atmosphere of festive celebration characterized by animated music, warmth, and solidarity, which sadly is absent in Japanese mass.

Although the topic of Tagalog mass remains a shielding strategy for most Filipino Catholics, the predicament of the aging Filipino Catholic population and the confused religious identity of their Japanese Filipino (JF) children have become a compelling motivation to adhere to and cooperate toward the integration process. The greying population may be expected given the lack of new permanent Filipino migrants but what is alarming is the absence of young members in the church who are expected to come from the sons and daughters of these married Filipino Catholics.

In light of the proposed DQ plane which can aid in locating the positions of certain players and their strategies of negotiation within a certain Bourdieusian field, this paper can determine the shifting trend of contestation. Brought about by factors within the sacred space and even outside it, both the Japanese Catholics and Filipino Catholics have significantly moved from the right plane of exclusion (sword/shield binary) to the left plane of inclusion (fishnet/graftage binary). Today's negotiated sacred space is tilted more toward the issue of inclusion. To what extent would the superordinate accommodate diversity? To what extent is the subordinate willing to accede? This paper can reveal traces and cues of this attempt to "deghettoize" by both sides. Still, a highly contested space that is dynamic and progressing, future research may delve into its success or failure but it is safe to conclude that at this stage both parties are more open to the idea of full integration, although it remains ambiguous and contentious.

Conclusion

For many years, Filipino Catholics in Japan have been struggling to express their religious heritage and cosmologies in a way that is openly Filipino. With a theoretical foundation from Wacquant's ideation on urban ghettos as well as Bourdieu's concept of the field, this paper can construct a DQ plane diagram that aids in reconstructing social postures in the historicized arena of negotiation. Through this heuristic device, the paper finds out that the early years of negotiation (the 80s-90s) locate the players in the right plane of contested space defined by exclusionary tendencies of swording and shielding. In the mid-200s, there has since been a major shift of negotiation to the left plane that is characterized by inclusionary attempts of fishnet and graftage.

Despite this shift, it is still a negotiated space. The vision of full integration remains an ideal objective that if unmasked of its ambiguity and hegemonic nuances may be a welcome solution to the problems that affect the Church of Japan as a whole. It is a process that will take commitment from both parties. While the initial steps have been undertaken, how these result in successful integration remains to be seen.

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Unboxing the Pandora's Box: The Educational Journey From Personal Stories to Inclusive Co-creation

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Abstract

Ethics may not be a core academic component in the University curriculum, although it is universally accepted to be an important aspect of education across different levels. In some institutions it can be incorporated into the common core, or as part of the general education programme, while in some institutions it may take the form of co-curricular activities. In 2021-2022 the presenter obtained research funding from the university to conduct a creative research project entitled *Pandora's Box*, to engage university students in a number of creative activities – including dramatic works, lyrics writing, personal story sharing – which aim to facilitate self-understanding and personal development. Among the research outputs is a multi-media learning kit entitled *Unboxing Pandoras*, which contains nine personal narratives represented both graphically and verbally. The learning kit was the result of the concerted efforts of the project participants and workshop facilitator, in identifying important aspects of personal growth, interviewing individual members of the community, and designing graphic representations of these personal stories which might have extended meanings for other members of the community. The learning kit was disseminated among educational and cultural organisations for educational purposes, and welcome feedback and comments. This paper is a report on the process of the learning kit's creation, with highlights on individual stories, and the educational journey that participants have undertaken in relation to its creation and dissemination. The journey has proved to be creative, meaningful, and thought-provoking for the university participants.

Keywords: Gendered Narratives, Deep Listening, Co-creative Communication, Mutual Learning, Ownership of Personal Stories

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Introduction

First of all, I will share some background information about the research project, its aims, the various components, and the creative and reflective journey that all participants have gone through during the year. I work in the School of Education and Languages of Hong Kong Metropolitan University, and the School is currently running three full-time teacher training undergraduate programmes, covering Early Childhood Education, as well as language education at the Primary and Secondary School levels. As we all know, a good teacher is not only competent in facilitating students' learning in terms of academic content, but also in supporting students' personal development in other ways, such as character formation, emotional well-being, and ethics education. It is therefore with this in mind that I applied for funding from the university to support a project that offers a creative learning experience to my students, to equip them with tools to reflect on their own situations as they interact with fellow participants, and moreover to reach out and connect with members of the community as they do so. It is hoped that through this reflective process, they are more in touch with their own thoughts, their interaction with other people, and how social and cultural environments are shaping these interactions and thoughts.

The project, entitled *Pandora's Box: A Multimedia Creative Project on the Gendered Self* was originally planned for full-time female undergraduate students mainly from the teacher-training programmes. The plan was to engage university students in three workshops each with an artistic focus: (i) playback theatre language, (ii) community music and creative writing, and (iii) installation art. After students had been introduced to these artistic expressions and taught to employ them for their own creative expression, they were encouraged to reach out to members of the community, collect their stories and help to share them in various forms. The story-writing and story-telling were remarkable journeys that students went through because they had to utilize the skills they had acquired during the workshops to connect with members of the community, listen to them, and to present their stories in an artistic language of their choice. At the end of the project, the stories were compiled into two main forms, the verbal narratives and the songs and lyrics. Due to the continued pandemic situation (it was the Summer of 2022), instead of hosting an exhibition at the university, a special learning kit was designed and produced containing the nine main stories. One thousand copies were produced and distributed to more than 40 local organizations including bookshops, NGOs which are involved in youth work, secondary schools and tertiary institutions. A couple of workshops were also conducted at selected NGOs to demonstrate how the learning kit could be used.

As stated in the title of this paper, the main focus of this sharing is the journeys of learning that female university students underwent in the course of this project. In order to talk about their learning journey, I would first give a brief description of the student recruitment process and their profile, then explain the design and rationale of the workshops they attended, before sharing the selected stories that the students gathered from members of the community.

Student Recruitment: Getting the Message Across to Students

Our original plan was to recruit a small group of female students (15-20) from the School of Education and Languages. We wanted to work with female students not because of discrimination, but because we would like to focus on gender experiences, and feel that an all-female setting may create a more secure and trusting emotional environment for the participants. I feel that schoolteachers need the skill of deep communication with students so

that they can be the students' support not only in academic learning, but also in character formation, building their confidence through self-understanding, and so on. Before they can nurture those qualities in their students, they themselves should be very aware of their own being, and be able to express themselves in multiple ways. I and my research partner made a number of class visits to explain our project and tell them about the workshops we had planned, as well as the playback theater performance that we had arranged on campus as a kind of introduction to the theatre language that they would learn in the workshops. But after two weeks of class visits, we were quite surprised to see only a couple of students actually came to ask about joining.

Seeing that our original target audience was not forthcoming, we decided to publicize the project to students of other schools – we liaised with professors of the School of Arts and Social Sciences and made a few visits to classes of creative writing and art and design, hoping that arts students would be more open to opportunities of learning different ways of artistic expression. We did get a number of students this way, but we were hoping to have around 15 students for a start. So we designed and printed some postcards to advertise our project, set up a booth at the lift lobby on the ground floor, and promoted our project by having mini one-on-one playback theatre sessions. With the facilitator holding her guitar, advertising the one-on-one experience, and the nice postcard, we finally managed to gather a group of 14 students, including both male and female students, with very mixed background and academic disciplines. We had modified our gender requirement to include those who feel they could identify with female feelings and thoughts, in order to help with the recruitment number. Although most of the group were conventional full-time undergraduate students, we also had a few mature students who were taking our distance-learning courses joining the group. The oldest participant was a 60-year old retired school teacher who had some experience conducting drama in his school.

From this recruitment exercise, I have a few observations about the students and how they responded to such a learning experience. The most obvious is the time commitment issue. Our original target audience was simply too occupied by school work/teaching practicum to engage in any form of extra-curricular activities, not to say one that extends over a period of months, involving rehearsal and a final performance. Time issue aside, the nature of the activity was also a concern with some potential participants. As gender is not a topic taught in their own disciplines, many of them were a little confused about what the learning experience would be like. When we opened up the activity to recruit male students who could identify with female feelings, we had to spend a lot of time explaining to them about gender qualities perception – they feared that being part of the activity will make them look like a sissy.

Another notable perception about drama and dramatic language is that most students felt that they were coming to learn how to act, whereas our training in Playback Theatre was mainly focusing on communication and connection – with oneself and with the team. This requires a great extent of honesty about oneself, and willingness to trust other members of the team. This kind of intimacy is not usually called for in the students' learning which takes place in the classroom. When I visited the group during their activities in the early phase of the project, I could see that not all of them were ready to present themselves to the rest of the group, especially in terms of sharing their own experiences which sometimes could be embarrassing and might even invite criticisms and judgement from others. I was happy to see that those who stayed with the group (because 5 of the students who signed up did not actually complete the programme) had accepted the challenge to face themselves and to work in honesty with the rest of the group, and with the audience (in the playback theatre session).

Despite the initial difficulty in recruiting students, and the subsequent challenges appearing at different stages of the activity (what with the pandemic and the suspension of face-to-face activities periodically), I believe this is the kind of learning experience and learning content that local students need and will benefit from.

Using the Language of Art: Connecting with Oneself and Reaching Out

The following is a brief summary of the content of the workshops and how they might contribute to our ultimate goal of facilitating students' self-understanding, building their confidence, and establishing the right values through connecting with more people and their life conditions in our society.

There were three workshops series. The first one was called "opening your body", an initiation to the understanding of the physical body, people's perception and hidden social rules about what is permissible and not permissible. This workshop was a preparatory experience for them to undergo the 30-hour core training in Playback Theatre language. After the participants were more familiar with the requirements of openness, honesty, inclusiveness, and trust, they were given the core training of basic level Playback Theatre language. This core training enabled the participants to practice deep listening, be sympathetic and respectful to other people's feelings, and use the standard Playback Theatre language to express those situations and feelings to an audience.

The second workshop series was installation art. An instructor was invited to share the basic concepts of installation art, and to work with students on their own design around the theme of gender. It was hoped that students could be encouraged to use installation art techniques to create their own pieces of work, to reflect on their personal experiences or thoughts relating to the theme of gender. The original plan was to have an open exhibition of their installation work, but because of the pandemic, subsequently, the group came up with the idea of presenting gender as "clothes", and designed different "costumes" for the body to wear to represent the nine personal narratives – that was the learning kit produced from the project.

The third workshop series was community music and lyrics writing. A facilitator was recruited to work with participants so that they learned how to transform ideas and feelings into music and lyrics of songs. Not all the participants successfully turned their interview stories into songs with lyrics, but the training was intended to show them how this artistic expression works and demonstrated to them through actual examples that personal stories can be told in multiple ways, including verbal and non-verbal methods. Subsequently three songs were written and the singing was recorded and put on the website of the project. In this paper, the stories behind these songs and lyrics will be shared to illustrate the kind of learning that participants had gone through.

Communicating Gender: Listening to and Composing Nine Personal Narratives

Using the techniques they have learned in the workshops, the HKMU participants interviewed nine members from the community, to learn about their life experiences and their emotional journey as they transversed through these positive and negative life encounters. In these communications, very intimate personal stories were shared, feelings flowed and were captured, and were ultimately translated into verbal and non-verbal languages and presented in the form of written stories, songs and lyrics. All of these stories are accessible on the project website: https://pandorasboxplaybac.wixsite.com/unboxing-pandoras under "Stories".

For each of the personal story, a picture was created to represent the protagonist of the story. The project team had chosen "if I wear you" to reflect the changeable nature of gender qualities: gender as costumes to be put on and taken off at will. Interestingly, the Chinese version of the heading reads [是她也是你和我], which actually means "it's her but it's also you and me". Together, the English and Chinese titles of this section convey the meaning of gender as costumes, and that applies to everyone including you and me. We are reminded that very often these costumes are what people see and what people respond to, although they may not be a true or complete picture of the person wearing the costume. Sometimes, unfortunately, people are not even paying attention, and simply interact from habits and conventions. The arranged interviews were to create an environment where deep and sympathetic listening could be practiced, giving the university participants a chance for more understanding and reflection when they interacted with community members.

The nine story-tellers from the community have very different backgrounds and stories:

1. Chun Chun [珍珍] is a 63-year old kidney patient who had to do hemodialysis every day, and who subsequently lost most of her sight after the long-awaited kidney transplant.
2. Violet [紫蘭] is a 35-year old woman who felt trapped, living in the same small room with her parents until she was 30 years old. She was verbally abused by her father.
3. Bei Bei [被被] is a 23-year old woman who left home as a teenager and suddenly appeared in front of her mother again with a new born baby.
4. Vicky GS03 is a (self-identified) 28-year old transgender person who lived through a difficult time in a secondary boys' school and who found a new life when online shopping became popular.
5. Sister Flower [花姐] is a 68-year old woman who returned to Hong Kong after spending her early years in Africa, and after having very different experiences during various stages of work and life.
6. Pai Big Star [派大星] is a 28-year old woman who had to shoulder her parents' debts, and who had been so desperate that she tried to commit suicide by overdose.
7. Ah Yu [阿宇] is a 36-year old mother who experienced the magical moments of being a mother.
8. Kristin is a 23-year old woman who was born in the Mainland but was forced to move to Hong Kong with the family when her younger sister was born.
9. Love [呀愛] is a 32-year old woman who was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 29.

The university participants were each paired up with one storyteller. They conducted the interview, asked questions that they felt could let them know the person better, and afterwards produced a narrative from what they learned of the person's story. A writing instructor worked with the participants to help them get the story into shape, and afterwards some of the stories were chosen as materials for writing the song and the lyrics. It should be noted that students came from different academic disciplines, and writing personal narratives was not part of their academic training. This learning experience focused on the skills of deep and sympathetic listening rather than skills of creative writing, although attention was drawn to the "authentic" representation of these personal stories. That was why besides the words,

pictures were also used, and a costume was designed to match with each of these personal experiences. In the following I will share three of these stories which had been turned into songs with lyrics.

Rebirth [重生]: Chun Chun's Story

The song title is Rebirth, or "live again" if directly translated from Chinese. The protagonist Chun Chun is a 63-year old kidney patient who had to do hemodialysis every day, and who subsequently lost most of her sight after kidney transplant. Looking back, her life was full of unexpected tragedies – her illness prevented her from following the typical path of most young women, getting married and having a family, it also prevented her from having a regular job and supporting herself. Life was lived not only with the discomfort of the illness, but also with regrets and sorrow because she felt useless among family members. Complications of her illness resulted in a major life-threatening situation when she was 44 years old. Finally she received kidney transplant, but the medication also caused her to lose most of her sight – and she became a visually impaired person.

The loss of physical sight was in fact the turning point of her life, despite the additional suffering and the seemingly more restrictive condition of not being able to see properly. She had to learn how to go about her daily life again – using her other senses to compensate for the loss of sight. She also joined a theatre group for members who are physically challenged, and started a very different life. From then on, her world was bigger, and she was able to "see" more because of her engagement with theatre and in turn with more people. In these interactions with different people, some of whom were also physically challenged, she had the chance to listen to more stories, to learn how other people grow through these stories. The last sentences of the written narrative go like this: "In these interactions, you learned how to understand and tolerate, how to be with different people. It is like a realization that the rainbow consists of not only seven colours, but even the green has different shades. Everyone is unique. Now you "see" with much more details, and with much more depth."
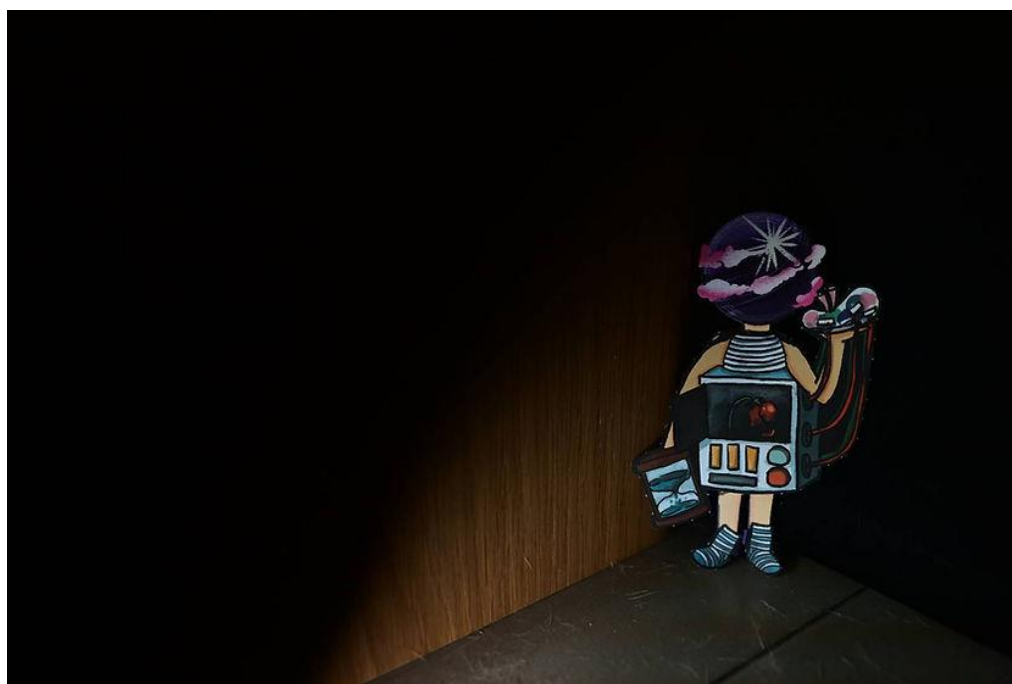

Figure 1: Chun Chun's costume.

Breakthrough [破繭]: Vicky's Story

Vicky is a (self-identified) 28-year old transgender person who lived through a difficult time in a secondary boys' school. The first time she had some freedom was during the early 1990s when she lived in the university's student residence. There she had the space to try out the female outfits secretly, just looking at herself in the mirror. Vicky discovered the mismatch between her physical body and her feelings about herself since secondary school, but she also understood that there was no way for her to express this identity openly either at home or at the school. One of the biggest taboos/fears in the boys' school was to be identified/perceived as a "transvestite", or simply being a "sissy". At home, the living space was so confined that it was impossible for her to have private space where she could hide and be herself amongst her family. Therefore, in order to live an easier life, she behaved in the way expected of a young man – dating girls, playing football and video games – despite knowing that this was not what she really wanted and that she was actually leading a false life.

The personal space at the university residence on the one hand satisfied her desire to "be herself" but on the other hand it became a private cocoon that separated her from the real world. She seemed to be existing in another planet during those moments of authenticity. The era of online shopping opened a completely new life for Vicky, for she no longer needed to face discriminating gazes when she shopped for herself, and the popularity of online dating also enabled her to connect with people who accepted her as she was. The conveniences enabled by the online world (even learning how to do make-up from YouTube) created new possibilities for her in terms of her identity, and in terms of meeting like-minded people. It was a breakthrough, or as suggested by the Chinese title of the song: "breaking through the cocoon", the new person Vicky emerged as new from the cocoon and welcomed the new life.
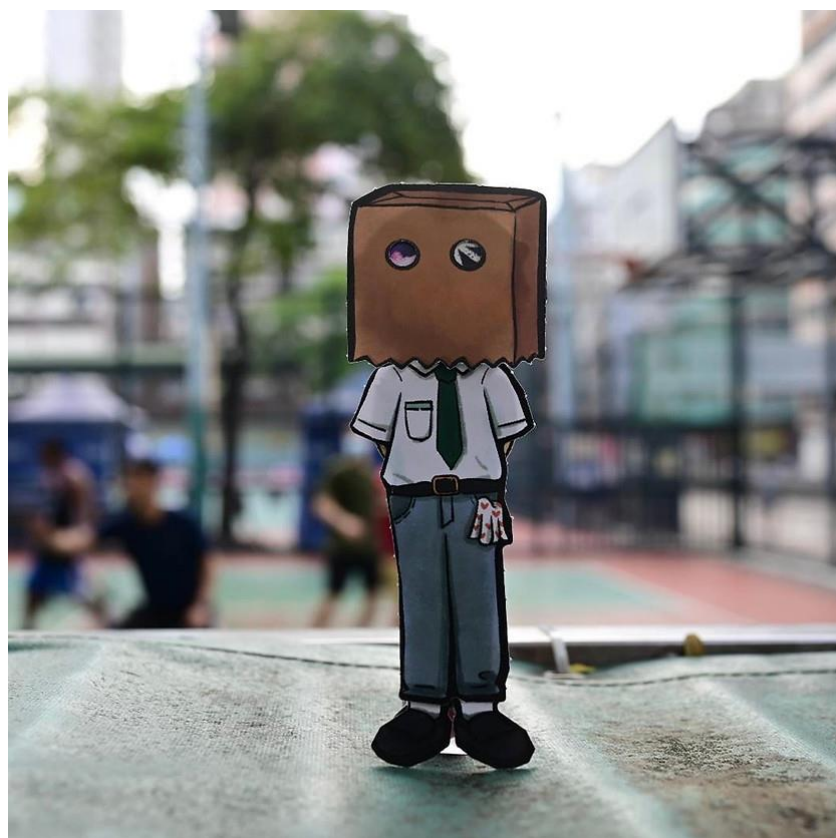

Figure 2: Vicky's costume.

Wild: Kristin's Story

Kristin is a 23-year old woman who was born in the Mainland but was forced to move to Hong Kong with her mother and her younger sister when she was young. In her story, she expressed the pain of not being able to understand why she was forced to give up her life in the Mainland, only to live in a very small flat in Hong Kong. The "sudden" appearance of the younger sister also took her by surprise and almost uprooted her identity – she had problems getting used to her new role, and her new relationship with her mother. Although five years had passed already since her arrival in Hong Kong, and she had tried to establish a relationship with the younger sister whose sudden appearance was somehow connected to her forced migration, she still could not get out of the memory of bitterness and incomprehension. Her mind was still full of burning questions about the sudden uproot, and as a result, the inability to get close to her mother again despite her previous reliance on her.

The lyrics of the song is full of questions by the narrator – the dominant emotion is incomprehension and frustration. It was the feelings of a young person who had relied on the adult for direction, orientation and support, but who felt betrayed when intimate communication was not forthcoming. The "new life" in Hong Kong that was imposed on the narrator had only resulted in repression of anger and strong emotions, and a desperate hope to re-establish a loving and supportive bonding with her family. This desire to establish the bonding did not appear to be fulfilled, as the song is essentially a monologue. The narrator is still asking questions and hoping for answers that have not shown themselves.

Figure 3: Kristin's costume.

Conclusion: Unboxing the Pandora's Box as a Journey of Understanding and Hope

Pandora's Box has always been the symbol of trouble – unexpected, messy and something to be avoided. In our multi-media creative project, we equipped Hong Kong university students with the languages of art, and put them in touch with a range of personal stories out there in

the community. Through this learning process, student participants of the project have acquired the technique of artistic expressions, and sympathetic deep listening when communicating with their fellow learners and community members. Their learning has led them into reflection of their own lives as their horizons are widened by contact with the personal stories of these nine community members. In a way similar to the original Pandora's Box, a range of painful experiences, negative emotions, and unrecoverable losses were unleashed in this artistic encounter, but as we unbox this group of gender experiences, what comes out is a series of intimate communications that can be used for building personal connections, or deployed for educational purposes. For the university participants, the Pandora's Box experience is a journey through the darker sides of our existence but also an empowering process that enables us to transform trouble into nutrients for further development.

Acknowledgements

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Western Diplomacy's Ineffective Iconoclasm: Conflict Resolution With China and the West's Forgotten Rhetorical Tools

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Abstract

The Alaskan talks of China and America point to the need for a new style of Western diplomacy. The limitations of a bland diplomacy, without pomp and spectacle, become apparent when faced with a party unwilling to display fealty to the current World Order. The renunciation of pageantry points towards a deeper issue of the disavowing of old cultural beliefs. The wager here is that conflicts can only be resolved in these seemingly outdated rituals of excess dependent on cultural symbolic relics. Despite Western diplomats' beliefs, they like others around the World, must rely on symbolic relics (fetish-idols) in patching together peace in times of intractable conflict. The failure of many programmes of peace (e.g. TRANSCEND, ARIA) can be partly blamed on a dismissal of the value of beliefs in idols, and the inherent value of idols to expose and work with antagonisms to enact positive change. This article relies on homologous theories in Burkean rhetoric, Durkheimian anthropology, Hegelian metaphysics, Ramsbotham's conflict resolution ideas and Lacanian psychoanalysis, to pave the way for an acceptance of the derided tools of the old for a fresh perspective on finding peace. Broadly, this is a rejection of a popular but vulgar postmodernism warned about by Kenneth Burke in 1945, with a more nuanced post-foundationalism of the transhistorical, transsubjective and the transsubstantive.

Keywords: Diplomacy, Rhetoric, Conflict Resolution, Nation-Thing, Psychoanalysis, Factish, China-USA, Alaska Talks

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Introduction

The Western diplomats perceive the 'undiplomatic', showboating Chinese outburst in Alaska in March 2021 (McCurry, 2021) as an outdated acting-out. In the acrimonious Anchorage Summit, China theatrically spoke beyond its allotted time. Western diplomats feel they possess the ideal know-how of good negotiation technique exemplified in a calm, clinical, undramatic disposition; they have removed the rhetorical distortions of Old-World thinking,[1] and found the universal, rational conditions for good argument. The conventional Peace Studies scholarship[2] similarly believes the way ahead is to 'overcome' conflict by seeking mutual agreements through deflationary criticism of any rhetoric, attitudes or posturing. The problem for these techniques of diplomats and peace negotiators is that in conflicts of truth-regimes, the sophistry cannot be overcome: it both dupes the naïve as well as the sophisticated master of hermeneutics. Yet when correctly understood, this apparent obstacle of posturing is not only not an obstacle but is a valuable productive force.

The Western[3] diplomat's stance against sophistic posturing is all the more perplexing given that The Diplomat, as the successor to a long line of sophists, has acted as history's sophist (Zizek, 2008, p.185; Burke, 1984, 'Dict. of Pivotal Terms'), out to prolong the rich, fantastical narrative history of Nations. Typically, the modern Western diplomat laments this unnecessary emotional flag-waving, yet the wager of this article is the dangerous fantasy is not the rhetorical sophistry insisted upon by China's diplomat obsessively speaking of love of China/nation, but the idea of a purified rational communication outside of the theatre of language. The science of oratory reveals the crucial role of language-games in reality construction[4]; the claim to speak plainly and honestly is the very moment of pure sophistry.

Western diplomats, despite typically leading off at conferences with a utilitarian view of democratic cosmopolitanism (Mathews, 2020, p.155), sneak in a hierarchical worldview with the West on top: the West arrives bearing what it understands the other will want... it expects the other to submit.[5] By taking on the role of universal rationality it becomes the disavowing universal Master.[6] The human rights and equality rhetoric preached by the Western diplomat disavows its hidden power (Kao, 2011, p.2). Kenneth Burke saw this in his analysis of human rights as powerful rhetorical motivations for acts,[7] as opposed to actual real things in themselves; the West's gift of cosmopolitanism arrives adulterated with sophistry.

The West seeks mastery now the old-style Masters (i.e. ideologies of nation, religion, race and hierarchy) have been dethroned in the West. The traditional Master was in the position of a 'subject-supposed-to-know'[8] but who, despite appearances of total authority, was all bluff.[9]

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[1] This is illustrated in the post-Second-Generation peacekeeping methods; see (Ramsbotham et al., 2011).

[2] The paradigmatic example is Galtung: (Galtung, 2004).

[3] The 'Westerner' should be understood as a stand-in for Latour's 'Modern', (Latour, 2010, p.2), a group who feel they have overcome the old fetishes of nation, religion and so on. For the notion of the fetish more generally see: (Pietz, 1993) and (Pietz, 1985).

[4] Reality is a noble/polite lie since, 'every truth has a structure of fiction' (Lacan, 1992, p 12).

[5] See Copjec in her reference to French colonialism: (Copjec, 2015, p.87).

[6] To take themselves as paradigmatic of their beliefs but also to disavow any superiority: a culturally conditioned claim of universality.

[7] See the situational contingencies of rights for Burke: (Wolin, 2001, p.164).

[8] That is, they are assumed to know simply from their position, not from any accounting of their actual knowledge. See Lacan's Seminar XI (Lacan et al., 2018).

[9] The Master relies on an 'authority [which] is always a deceit that only succeeds when we fall for the would-be master's bluff' (Mathews, 2020, p211).

The dethroned ignorant Master is now replaced by the 'Master-y of Knowledge': power disguised as a search for knowledge (i.e. expert-worship),[10] a power which resides in its claim to not be a bluff, to be a rejection of sophistry. The sophistry is doubled down on. The gift of expertise is tainted by hierarchical power assumptions after all.

As it stands, the Western diplomats are actors on a stage, but because of their efforts to undercut the symbolic efficacy of their own (role of diplomacy) position and the old Master (the Nation-State) they represent, they have renounced their own act, but act anyway; this is the very essence of a fetish (Mannoni, 2003). They disavow the fetishistic attachment to old ideas of Nation-States, creating a 'factish-object.'[11] The diplomat has perhaps not yet accepted that since all diplomacy is on the stage of the old-Masters of the Social Order of Nations, to act out diplomacy they must bluff loyalty to the old ideas. They seemingly cannot decide if they want to finally 'destroy' (deconstruct) the old-Masters or keep them running and prefer to (fetishistically) isolate technical trade/technology wars from these grander ideas.

A possible resolution to the deadlock within diplomatic sterility is to embrace the role of the Shaman figure, a figure who openly flaunts his charlatanism,[12] accepts the truth of trickery, recognises the new claims to universal rights and equality are necessarily enmeshed with the same hidden trickery as the old appeals[13]: the 'knower-that-all-authority-is deceit'. This figure, if embraced by diplomats and peacemakers in their way of thinking, provides a clearer menu of options for peace.

Literature Review

This article is multi-disciplinary in encompassing Conflict Resolution, German Idealism, anthropology,[14] rhetoric and psychoanalysis.[15] More specifically, this article is the psycho-philosophical anthropology of peace diplomacy and the means to peace in the era of the Modern Subject. Conflict Resolution as a discipline emerged as the Modern Subject felt 'alienated' from the need for wars over grand ideas (an awareness of the fetish). German Idealism arose from the alienation of the Subject from society,[16] with a discomfort in the rhetorical-idols of society. Psychoanalysis emerged as the Subject was alienated even from itself (Verhaeghe, 1999), aware of its own attachments to collective idols. Finally, Ramsbotham's Conflict Resolution agonistic dialogue model calls for parties to not ignore the alienating beliefs of intractable conflicts.[17]

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[10] Note a crucial distinction made apparent between science-worship and science's contingent construction of truth in the lab: (Latour et al., 2013). In rhetorical studies, see: (Thames, 1998, p.19).

[11] Taken from Latour's notion of 'factish': (Latour, 2010, Ch.1). The Western position falsely believes in a distinction that others naively believe in the Idols (possess fetishes), whilst the West is able to critically see through them.

[12] Borch-Jacobsen (disapprovingly) characterises the methodology of Lacanian psychoanalysis as a flaunting charlatanism: (Borch-Jacobsen, 1991).

[13] Latour usefully distinguishes the universalist ontological position as 'mononaturalism' and the particular as 'multinaturalist' (Latour, 2002). This should be contrasted with mere 'multiculturalism', a position Western diplomats celebrate, as it successfully hides the deeper ontological claims of their new idols.

[14] Durkheim (see (Rawls, 2004)) broadly initiates the study of 'excess', an alienating effect linked to fetishes, ultimately homologous to an accessing of Lacan's Real (Scubla, 2011).

[15] Particularly the Slovenian School of Lacanian psychoanalysis.

[16] For more on this post-foundationalism: (Marchart, 2007, Intro.).

[17] Ramsbotham's book (Ramsbotham, 2010, Ch.3) identifies that all the most common models for finding peace fail to take seriously the parties' beliefs and claims about a conflict, perceiving it as mere rancour.

Diplomatic Studies for a long time limited itself to discussions on history and protocol.[18] It took on new vigour as it questioned the diplomat's role as the alienation from ideologies of nationalism emerged. Its interest in 'relationism' (units made in the process of interaction) over 'substantialism' (isolated units acting autonomously) points the way towards the dialectical thinkers here. Most clearly, Der Derian, a third-generation member of the 'English School', by viewing diplomacy through mutual estrangement developed the immanently flawed Subject frame (Derian, 1987, p.114), in other words, the alienating impossibility of unicity.[19] In other fields, Hegel,[20] Lacan,[21] Kenneth Burke and Oliver Ramsbotham argue that reality is 'incompatibility-embodied', that it is antagonisms all the way down. This ontological wager ties back to the notion of 'relationism', of the constant and impossible need to rhetorically unify life, the ritualistic blending of collective belief and emotions into facts on the ground through the 'buoys' of rhetoric/fetish-idols. This contrasts sharply with most diplomacy literature which generally views diplomacy as negotiation, as a process using 'reason' and 'understanding' where, if given enough time, a harmonious, shared understanding of substantive parties can arise (Rieker & Thune, 2015, p.20).

The insight of the diplomat-as-Stranger in Der Derian (Derian, 1987) with its proto-Hegelian grasp of the need for recognition points to the actions of the State inscribing itself, making itself exist; it is the ritual which makes The Nation and its actions a fact. A diplomat invested in the Western ideal of scrubbing away the old rituals of pageantry and nationalism, endangers the efficacy of ascription as 'fact-making'. A concern for unicity is more noticeable in the Conflict Resolution literature using the rhetorical ideas of Burke. The focus there is on the strategies to prevent scapegoating mechanisms[22] or utilise self-mortification. Within these discussions is an awareness of the natural need for (impossible) unicity when the hierarchy and social order is threatened by heretical insider parties.

Worship of the Idols

The game of modern diplomacy is the soothing of inevitable storms, so signals are not misread, so catastrophe is avoided. This purifying of antagonisms until an ideal state of communication is reached seems a noble goal of modernism (e.g. Habermas' communicative model). The exaggerated promise of science-- scientism[23]-- was the West's first attempt at a solution to ambiguity and lack. This vision lives on in the stripped down, sterilized diplomatic meetings of today.

The Chinese-USA spat suggests, despite efforts at sterilizing, diplomacy is haunted by its past. In truth, language is always compromised by the 'ambiguity of immanence', the inevitable chronic uncertainty in a world without total knowledge.[24] Diplomats understand this as their role of protecting an idea/idol, the 'Nation-Thing' (Zizek, 1993, Ch.6), a spectral object created in the 'torture house of language'. The danger with the 'professionalization' of diplomacy is that it may have the opposite effect of that intended, leaving the antagonisms

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[18] See (Johnsson & Hall, 2005, Ch.1), which starts revealingly, 'The lack of theoretical interest in diplomacy [studies]…'. See also (Neumann, 2012) for a broad sweep on theory in Diplomacy Studies.

[19] 'Unicity' here is used in the (Lundberg, 2012, p.2) sense of a coherent totality.

[20] 'The Hegel of irretrievable antagonism' is exemplified by (McGowan, 2021).

[21] The Lacanian 'Symbolic Order' is an individual's reification of the symbolic fictions of which all individuals relate to know themselves and others; the delusions deposited keep everyday life sane.

[22] See, for example, (Ivie & Giner, 2007). Ivie *et al*'s psychoanalytic word of 'projecting' points to the overwhelming desire for a sense of unicity by 'eradicating' inconsistency within.

[23] Taking the promise of possible uncity through science leads to scientism (Burke, 1969, XXiii).

[24] This ambiguity 'arise[s] out of the nature of language and meaning' (Wolin, 2001, p.64) itself.

without ways to dissipate, as its stripping of stimulus undermines diplomats' agency in creating change; the diplomacy becomes a 'dialogue of the deaf.'[25]

The Protectors of the Idols

Diplomats are protectors and producers of the vulnerable Fantasy 'Nation-Thing'; their performance is as representatives of the attitude of their Nation-Thing (they perform its 'symbolic act'). With the rise of new threats, more than ever Western diplomats 'cling with a new intensity to [their new] idols, to [their] fetishes' (Latour, 2010, p.97). The diplomat is daily exposed to the possibility that the West's idols of human rights, modern science, individualism and the American Way were 'magic' (Burke, 1984, p.44ft), mere rationalizing bluff with rhetorical power.

The modern diplomat as vandals of old pageantry, set up a rational world of banal protocol (Shapin, 1994, p.410), but they did not 'free people of idolatry... but simply deprived them of a means to worship' (Latour, 2010, p.89). The Nation-Thing, if the anthropological claim of the importance of ritual is right, was starved of its (obscene) excess, of the play-element of performance: the very tools of sacred truth-regime construction.[26]

The ritually-created Cultus (Zondervan, 2005, p.69) of each country, the sacred-technic equipment for living, is ultimately a mystery even to that country. Every political move depends on motivations authorized by a nod to the constitutive power of the Cultus. The moves, according to Burke (Wess, 1996, p.31), are the rhetorical ploys which incite and seduce and induce. When embedded in the process, the subjects are engulfed by it, masking its changes and its artifice from them, generating a (failed) unicity (Lundberg, 2012, p.2) in its Fantasy ('We are One!').

The necessary concealment of a Nation's trauma is generated by a Fantasy.[27] Protection of the Fantasy is, in the obfuscatory, filler language of diplomacy, centred around a 'national interest' (the phlogiston of diplomacy). The Fantasy plays out with arguments between rival breakable orthodoxies until one takes control for a time by striking the right chord. In this, there is no ideal utopian Habermasian communication of rational individuals, but cultural animals, trapped into a conversation started generations ago, using ideas from the past which resonate in the present, which appeal today for reasons distinct from earlier conversants in the discussion (Burke, 1984c, p.110). This is the transhistorical, where there can never be an impartial observer umpiring.[28] This is why 'dirty' rhetorical tricks under a tranquil surface are so important: bridging devices,[29] laundering values with eulogistic coverings; the casuistic stretching of a court jester[30]; the 'corporate boasting' of enjoying identification with the

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[25] After the showboating in Anchorage, by contrast, experts (Tiezzi, 2021) claim America will be forced to change its behaviour.

[26] The passion of the ritual sets up the production of the Symbolic Order's shared belief as understood by Durkheim: (Rawls, 2004). The universal lie of the truth-regime is only revealed in the rare revelatory moments (Zizek, 2008, p.196).

[27] A Fantasy fills in the gaps of ideology with the impossible promise of unicity, of fully belonging.

[28] 'Every time there is a metalanguage, underneath lies a canaillerie [scoundrel], a dirty trick, a swindle, a cheat.' (Lacan, 2006).

[29] The transcending of a conflict with a symbolic merging device, typically a 'glitter word', such as 'freedom': (Burke, 1984, p.224).

[30] The (rhetorical) move of adjusting the principle to the particular case as if no rhetoric is involved; see (Burke, 1984, p.229).

group, and the relying on latent deviations.[31] These devices for hidden changes rely on what resonates to those engulfed in their Cultus.

In can be seen that a Hegel-Lacanian-Burkean view of diplomacy draws awareness[32] to the transhistorical (eternal rules for reality creation), the transsubjective (collective nature of beliefs)[33] and transsubstantive (the ambiguity of the meaning of the object), of difference and contingency. The diplomats are subjected to these meta-rules of reality, their vocabulary must reflect with this reality, must be selected from it and must be able to deflect from it. The magic of languages is their fertile field of tropes from the metaphors (Freud's 'condensations') to the metonymies (Freud's 'displacements').[34] This is a persuasive language which can only shine in the moment (Wess, 1996, p.119), but these rules for resonating to the audience (Lundberg, 2012, p.107) remain eternally the same, only the content changing.

What resonates is precisely the rhetoric/fetish-idols of that nation, these incite (Wess, 1996, p.31) action. Generally, China's diplomats rely on call-backs to the 'century of humiliation' to centre their persuasive techniques at home (Wu, 2014), and rely on Western guilt when seeking to persuade the West. At Alaska specifically, China relied on the inherent ambiguity of the other side's glittering idols to persuade: 'The United States has its United States-style democracy and China has Chinese-style democracy' (Anon, 2021). This simple sentence plays to the West's guilt found in its loyalty to multiculturalism (each nation has their own way) to prepare for an undermining by casuistic stretching of what is seen by the West as a factish-object (democracy), a universal truth; that is, relying on multiculturalism to derail the West's hidden/assumed mononaturalism (background 'Master-y'). China is not raising the conversation of whether there can only be one form of democracy, but smuggling it in through the rhetorical back door.

The West's Controlling Fetish

The very rules for the argument were raised at Alaska. These rules are the Regime of International Law. It is the Western Cultus universalized.[35] Custom determines the Law unless active steps are taken for a consensus to form against it. This favours the pioneers of the Law: the West. When put in the spotlight, judges 'discover' what-always-was by interpreting phrases from the past: acts of States to glue together a fresh-always-was[36] of the Law. A revolutionary iconoclast-- like China-- newly on the scene has to convince the West that the West have their own naïve (fetish) beliefs after all (Latour, 2010, p.84). In Alaska, the Chinese senior diplomat, in line with this, dismissed the Law as 'so-called 'rules-based' international order' (Tiezzi, 2021).

In this struggle, neither side believes their beliefs are anything but reality; these incommensurate views are the 'dueling fundamentalisms' (Lundberg, 2007) which cannot see their own rhetoric as rhetoric in their search for (a sophistic) unicity. The 'lies'/blindness of rhetoric should not be judged for their dissimulation but used to find a deeper truth in the

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[31] The acceptable routes of deviation that are otherwise not readily recognised; see (Burke, 1984, p.234).
[32] Distinct from debunking or historicism.
[33] Note this not the same as 'intersubjective'.
[34] See Burke's (Burke, 1984c) and Freud's (Marcus, 1999, p.75).
[35] A Latourian 'mononaturalist' assertion.
[36] '['ratio decidendi', (rationale for the decision is)] outlawed as heresy until the law when [the sect of lawmakers] are strong enough' (Burke, 1984, p.292).

foundationalist antagonism revealed in the need to 'lie'[37] as this will prove useful in resolving conflicts.

Naïve Iconoclasts

The West believes it has surpassed the old idols and found universalism. Indeed, the creation of today's plucky democracies was a period with the destruction of old idols of pure unquestionable legitimacy, such as Pharaohs and God-Emperors. Their new beliefs look universal on first blush. But even in the West there is no consensus[38] (Kao, 2011, p.26); and, even many Asians accept the West's ideas of rights. Underneath the glitter of claims of universality, the ideas are compromised.

Because of its attachment to its factish-objects and the genuine sense of the truth in these new idols, the West will view the Chinese 'Wolf Warrior' attacks on the 'universal' ideas as cynical power games and not true beliefs. But motive attribution is, after all, simply a reversal of their own understanding of the situation (Burke, 1984b, p.221); the skewed selection of motive-mongering depends on the misperception of the viewer, that is, reliance on its rhetorical-idols.

In the Alaskan talks, both sides played the game of soft debunking ('muckraking' in the 1930s language of Burke), a game which seeks victory by searching for 'eulogistic coverings' (Burke, 1984, p.168) of grand old ideas, the void of their foundations. The debunker, having ripped apart the history and myths of the other nation, necessarily smuggles back in their own normative values, as some fetish-object.[39] China denounces the glittering 'so-called-'rules-based'-international-order-object of the West, alluding to its own glittering object, only for the West to invert the rhetoric in response.

Why the keenness on destroying the fetish of the Other? The clear excuse for the Chinese diplomats is for their 'truth' they need to comply with the infallible Party (CCP) position. In contrast, the Western diplomats are, rather paradoxically, blinded by their insight. So keen on self-debunking ('a nation is just socially constructed!') they learn to just play along as representatives of the old pageantry of Nation. But whether a true believer or simply playing along, it still 'works', even offering them an enjoyable cynical distance as they participate (Johnston, 2004, p.264).

The more they tone things down, the more uncontrollable of an effect there is[40]; the diplomats, whatever pageantry they participate in, are part of a (Symbolic Order) social web which positions them as the Subjects-supposed-to-know, providing their words with 'magic' (efficacy). Even 'mere' meetings contain a symbolic weight revealed in the press breathlessly commenting on routine phone calls between leaders. The sterilizing institutional removal of excess does not remove the uncanny sacred element giving the event its excess. The

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[37] (Levine, 2014, Sec. 'Psychoanalysis', p.784): this points to the particular lie as a truth exposing the universal lie.

[38] 'The pervasive characterization of rights talk as Western further glosses over real differences…' (Kao, 2011, p.26).

[39] A fetish-object because the sophistry and rationalizations will be hidden in the rhetorical assertions of purist debunking techniques.

[40] A parallel can be seen with modern monarchies. The more they effect to be normal (no smoke and mirrors), the more mysterious. (Zizek, 2016, p.262)

misattributing to style (pageantry) is precisely a fetish; it is the not them but their structural position, their relations to others, which generates the sacredness and the efficacy.

Carving the New Icons

The diplomat plays the crucial game of carving idols. The game for life itself is in the rituals which create the sacred centre-- the Cultus-- of Society. Rites create beliefs of what matters,[41] what is sacred. These games constantly attempt to produce the social consensus of Truth, healing divisions, and generating belief representations (belief as vicariously produced). But the sacred excess of life (its heretical non-unicity) can never be successfully purged. The ritual of Diplomacy is a core part of the endless, failing unitizing efforts to create unicity.

The Western diplomat who purges the ritual pageantry and purifies diplomacy creates an unintended stasis in the Symbolic Order, preventing healing and change. How can a diplomat persuade the status quo figures that she really means it? How to mark a change at the Symbolic level? The 'ritual-value' (Lacan, 1982, p.40) of an act creates an extra meaning which becomes entrenched onto an object by the exuberant excess, such as the half hour soliloquy at the Alaskan summit.[42] They can express that they really mean to mean it. In contrast to the banality of modern diplomacy, the all-out pageantry of old-style diplomacy mimics the use-value of old ritual, in that it draws attention to itself thereby creating an effect, a clear signal, a fact.

The Western diplomat is still stuck with the modern dogma that beliefs should be discounted,[43] that harmony is only possible if subjective postures ('positions', mere reflexes) are put aside and the real, reasonable positions (read: objective, measurable) can be aired (Ramsbotham, 2010, p.45). But this ignores the value of an absurd, dramatic diplomatic action. The indignation, revealed in an excessive dramatic display at the diplomatic function creates the fact of a fused fact/value complex: The Fact of an outrage,[44] which demarcates a conflict as a conflict, as an event, as symbolically efficacious. This frames reality and creates the facts on the ground. In contrast, the traditional effort in the anti-rhetoric methodology of Peace Studies[45], of marking out the boundaries of what is mere attitude, belief, or emotion, and set against them what should 'really matter', was long ago captured by sophistic stratagems of PR displays of peace-seeking (Biletzki, 2007).

In conflict, the emotion and beliefs necessarily order the deceptively factual framing of the conflict. The emotions stir the parties to 'steelman' their positions and gain resonance from allies (Ramsbotham, 2010, p.181), adding to their truth. Dismissing it as mere bluster, is part of the overall conflict negotiations, and is not a distraction from finding peace, but is the very way to peace. Ideological posturing isn't the covering over of a true reality, but the 'becoming-true of a fake beginning' (Zizek, 2016, p.79), since the factual reality on the ground is nothing more than some old forgotten act of sophistry. The eulogistic covering and casuistry stretching are part of the forming of 'realness': the forming of a new (ideological)

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[41] A Durkheimian argument: (Rawls, 2004, p.116).

[42] Notably, the Chinese at Alaska 'created' the facts on the ground by showboating, consequently this event was memorialized with a Wikipedia entry. And, as noted earlier (Tiezzi, 2021), created change, i.e. was efficacious.

[43] This is revealed in the lack of conflict resolution strategies that take beliefs as anything but an obstacle (Ramsbotham, 2010, p. 66). Note the odd decision to make 'beliefs' a sub-category of mere 'attitudes' in Galtung's 'Conflict Triangle': (Galtung, 1975).

[44] The 'fact' of conflict is the indignation felt (Ramsbotham, 2010, p.126). That is, a fact of a conflict is beliefs, attitudes.

[45] See the TRANSCEND model: (Galtung, 2004).

consensus, using tools of linguistic eliding in the internal economy of belief in a seemingly intractable conflict. This sophistry-magic will creep in whatever the best intentions of Western diplomats.

Conclusion: Peace Through Excess

The best hope for intractable conflict is not simply sophistic covering over of differences (a reinforcing through convenient if unstable fetishes), but in finding hidden diversity (by uncovering the ambiguity hidden in false appearance of unicity). The aim is to 'purify' (interrogate the nature of the conflict's idols, as ambiguous, symbolic-guiding rhetorical constructs in specific contexts) until the ambiguity of reality stands visible; the key is to remove the malign violent element and leave just the (ineradicable) 'war of words' in a world of always-already antagonisms. This may mean even conflictual, emotional, antagonizing discourses may need promoting by peacemakers, such as when there are power asymmetries which damage the ability to dig for disunity.[46]

Ramsbotham calls this procedure 'Clausewitz-in-reverse' (Ramsbotham, 2010, p.211). Similarly, Hegel understood that the resolution to seemingly intractable conflict is not a (false, clinical) reconciliation. The fact-creating emotional tools of beliefs need centre stage. A soft-debunking (picking apart of unity) by encouraging real argument, under stress, done right, acts as a 'programme of socialization' (Wess, 1996, p.85), finding commonalities for potential unities by inducing a transparency of issues through, not despite, conflict. Calls for harmony (to overlook differences) would undermine this strategy. These tentative unities will themselves create deeper, more complex conflicts, which again must be truly exposed to 'resolve' them.

The answer then is not the commonsense Peace Studies view of slowly correcting until finally reaching the truth-in-itself of freedom and peace. Instead, it is to correct the view of 'peace equals harmony' with a hardnosed grasp of the chaotic lab of life; eulogised ideas of 'peace' can even be inconsistent and dangerous in the World.[47] At the broadest level, even the diplomat's 'mega'-narrative of the notion of the shared imaginary of the 'Nation-Thing' is inconsistent with the brute political reality (Machin, 2015) of divisions within nations. Without facing these realities, scapegoating and violence seem inevitable (Carter, 1996) as calls for peace are easily co-opted into pious calls to protect the harmony of culture.

Tactically, the key is to 'cut across' the typical 'kumbaya' soothing of the hothouse of language (and all too easily accepted in traditional methodologies) for finding peace. Burke uses the term 'perspective by incongruity' to point to this, to point to the need to see things awry.[48] Opposed to this move are Burke's 'pious', the deep believers; they have an organizing 'sense of what goes with what' (Burke, 1984b, p.76), desiring the group unicity which encourages a dichotomous fight (the out-group versus the in-group). They will resist attacks on their piety (Burke, 1984b, p.69) as the cultural sedimentation keeps them socially inert, and prepares them to resist direct attacks.

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[46] 'The enemies of the discourse of peace are not discourses of conflict' (Ramsbotham, 2010, p.218).

[47] As an example, eulogized 'human rights' could be seen by parties as not an ideal tool of peace but a Western Master's ploy, as their 'occupational psychosis' (an excessive emphasis on one way of doing things by a particular sect) of those in control of peace-seeking and a danger to the negotiating parties.

[48] Ramsbotham has the similar idea of 'Strategic Engagement of Discourses' (Ramsbotham, 2010, p.254).

Diplomats have the indirect tools of idolatry and sophistry to cut across and create new (albeit failing) unicities, and should have a savviness to 'heighten tension and reject purgation' (Thames, 2021), to find peace despite the pious. If they avowedly take on this Shaman role (the Master-Charlatan) by daring to actively pull apart and re-mold identities of the inter-party, intra-party and third-party groups, they will create a loud babble (Babel) of language to move away from old flat-footed peacemaking formulas, now easily evaded by the 'industrialised' (Biletzki, 2007) and complacent peace platitudes of the conflict parties, and seek deeper resonances among the parties no matter how impious the discussions.

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Group-Contextualized Identity Politics and the Trolley Dilemma: The Failure of Kotoamatsukami and the Silent Struggles of Itachi and Shisui Uchiha in the Preindustrial Animation Naruto Shippuden

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Abstract

The sequel anime Naruto: Shippuden (debuted 2007) continues to gain worldwide popularity since the early 2000s; it built upon the model of a fictional multinational configuration in a surreal, semi-modern world with a central focus on the Land of Fire or "Hidden Leaf Village", and included a rich context of characters, romantic, and political tragedies which are threaded into a bitter story of personal growth and revelation. This article explores the story of Itachi and Shisui Uchiha, two complex characters of the story who struggled severely with group politics and identity, but who brought significant philosophical messages to us the audience. We aim to provide an analysis on the tragic failure of Kotoamatsukami, a fictional jutsu (ninja technique) to control people's minds, and the silent struggles of the two in the preindustrial animation setting. We also propose a suggested analysis and solution to the parallel trolley dilemma as a conclusion.

Keywords: Naruto, Uchiha, Identity Politics, Preindustrial Animation, Trolley Dilemma

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Introduction

In the anime series of Naruto/Naruto Shippuden, the notion of identity is central and throughout the story. In this presentation two members of the Uchiha Clan are the main characters of discussion: being in a struggling position, Itachi and Shisui Uchiha are both part of their clan and part of the bigger village at the same time. In the story, they work for multiple departments in the Hidden Leaf Village, being simultaneously a family member of their own families and clan. The multiple roles they have make them struggle with their identities and, potentially, be confused and morally painful.

The character of Shisui Uchiha may not be very well known to the audience of Naruto's, but the audience must be familiar with the other one, Itachi Uchiha, and his little brother Sasuke Uchiha, who is one of the two protagonists in the entire Naruto anime. Here, in particular, the stories of Shisui's and Itachi's are on the darker side of the anime.

Figure 1: World map of Naruto's (fan-made)

The Hidden Leaf Village (with reference to Figure 1) or Konohagakure (木ノ葉隠れの里) is known as the "Land of Fire", in a preindustrial, fictional world. It was co-founded by the First Hokage (火影) Hashirama Senju and Madara Uchiha (the eldest ancestor of Uchihas), a rivalry of two greatest ninjas in history. The majority of the village is normal ninjas and people, led by the Hokage; "Uchiha" as a clan coexists with others in the village, both as an elite and as a slightly separated group. The Uchihas are normally very good ninjas.

A number of Uchiha's are "genius ninjas", such as Shisui Uchiha "the Teleporter" and Itachi Uchiha; a major part of a Uchiha's talent/power is determined by their overall ninja (jutsu) capabilities but also the usage of dōjutsu (瞳術) using their Sharingan (写輪眼); Sharingans allow the Uchihas to be very observant, making them at an advantage in combats. The world of the village is configured as two components, the ninjas, which is similar to the military, and the civilians; on top of them, there is a "committee" who is the stakeholder in charge of big decisions and as the owner of the land. Besides and more importantly, the Uchiha clan also plays the role of policing for the village. As police is sometimes feared by people when they are being too harsh.

Group Context of the Uchihas in the Village

There are several aspects of the group context of the Uchiha clan living in the village. First of all, there is "cultural politics": being perceived as the "elite clan" in the village, the Uchihas are faced with higher expectations on their performance than other ninjas. Second, there is a regional perspective; the village had ordered the Uchiha clan to live in a designated area in

the village, a "special area", quite separate from the rest of the village—this makes their identity politics more regional and more intense. Third, the Uchihas also take charge of the Konoha Military Police Force, as police are being feared at times when they are too strict on policing. "Human beings are entitled to and can hold many, and sometimes conflicting, viewpoints," remarked Diggins (2018).

Figure 2: Image of the Konoha Military Police Force (Narutopedia, Fandom)

As the village's leaders had ordered the Uchihas to live in a separate, designated area, they are no longer living with the rest of the village's civilians or ninjas—this creates a geographical segregation, with increased tension between the clan and the leaders of the village.

Kotoamatsukami: Stopping the Clan's Coup

"It's great to be a family. I can't help but feel that every time I see those two," once remarked Shisui Uchiha; he only works for the leaders but not the police force. However, the Uchiha Clan is secretly planning a coup—a military action to attach and take over the village, to gain their independence and power. This information is revealed by Shisui to the leaders of the village; as Shisui talked to the leaders and suggested to Lord Third to use his Sharingan/dōjutsu on the Uchiha clan, to stop their plan.

Figure 3: Itachi and his little brother Sasuke

"You'll forever be branded with the sin of using the jutsu against your own clan," said the Lord Third. It is indeed a serious decision as using that (visual) jutsu would mean that Shisui is openly against his own clan, and he would be in a dangerous and morally painful situation afterwards.

Figure 4: Shisui Uchiha suggesting his way of stopping the coup

After the agreement upon Shisui's plan, Shisui was about to use his Kotoamatsukami on his clan (to stop the coup), but Danzo came and stole one of his eyes.

Figure 5: Danzo attacking Shisui (image credited Naruto Shippuden E358)

After the fight with Danzo, Shisui managed to stay away from pursuers and came to meet Itachi. He said to Itachi, "It's too late to stop to coup (rebellion) by the Uchiha. If civil war breaks out at the Leaf Village, other nations are sure to attack, which means a full-scale war. I was going to try to stop the rebellion with my Kotoamatsukami, but.. Lord Danzo took my right eye… He doesn't trust me… I suspect he'll come after my left eye as well. So I want to give it to you before he has a chance."

Conclusion

What is a clan? And what is the village? To find out which one(s) you belong to is the hardest moral task faced by Shisui and Itachi Uchiha. Arguably, in Uchiha Clan's coup plan, the village is similar to an "at risk" or "victimized" population, where the coup is like the trolley in the trolley dilemma. Then the problem is converted to how to solve this trolley dilemma and, in this case, Shisui has chosen the best approach—to stop the train/trolley from running by using his magical jutsu—although the result was unsuccessful because of Danzo's interference.

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Transcending Time and Space: The Social Practice of Weixin Shengjiao in Facing Global Ethical Responsibility

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the attitudes of Weixin Shengjiao in Taiwan toward the issue of global ethical responsibility for social suffering, how Weixin Shengjiao learns the root causes of the current social suffering issues, and how Weixin Shengjiao undertakes the social practice of global ethical responsibility. The findings of the study indicate that Weixin Shengjiao's attitude toward the issue of social suffering stems not only from the imbalance between people and other people, people and objects, and people and nature caused by human factors in the phenomenal world but also from the suffering caused by the influence of the consciousness realm beyond time and space on the phenomenal realm. Weixin Shengjiao is dedicated to the advancement of Chinese cultural orthodoxy, I Ching Feng Shui, and the heart method. "Use I" to identify the cause of present social suffering issues, to further solve current social suffering issues through religious practices and religious education, and to fulfill Weixin Shengjiao's social practice of global ethical responsibilities. The contribution of this study includes Weixin Shengjiao's worldwide social anguish issues, which have covered Knitter's four faces of global suffering. Weixin Shengjiao's social practice encompasses a wide range of global care and has its origins in the resolution of disputes and sufferings dating back thousands of years. Its social practice of global ethical duty transcends various combinations of time and space.

Keywords: Global Ethical Responsibility, Social Suffering, Social Practice

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Introduction

Taiwan is the most religious area in the Chinese world. It pursues the beliefs of Chinese culture. About 49.3% of the traditional folk beliefs are a combination of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. More than 80% of the people have religious beliefs, and 14% are atheists. The main religious categories reach There are more than 22 kinds, and there is one temple or church per square kilometer on average, and the density of religious buildings is very high. Taiwan is a region with a relatively high degree of religious freedom under the Constitution's guarantee of people's freedom of religion. It has diverse religious beliefs and enjoys a good international reputation. In the past, Taiwan experienced changes in political structure, social changes, and the decline of traditional religions, which in turn created opportunities for the development of new religions in Taiwan. This environment of religious freedom has also promoted the development and exchanges of various religious groups, contributing to Taiwan's multiculturalism and social stability.

The term "new religion" first appeared in Japan after World War II. In Western society, it is often referred to as cult, with negative references in the context; but for academic circles, it is more often referred to as new religion or new religious The name of the movement marks the development of various emerging sects that are different from mainstream religions. With the development of the research field, the new religion is gradually accepted by all parts of the world, but it also creates tension with traditional religions or mainstream society. It is worth knowing about Taiwan's new religion's development in an environment of religious freedom.

The religious beliefs in Taiwan before 1945 appeared to be very stable. The vast majority of Han people believed in traditional Chinese folk beliefs, while the aborigines believed in their traditional religions. When the Kuomintang came to Taiwan in 1949, it moderately retained the autonomy of local religious activities and recognized those who helped to maintain the legitimacy of the regime. This move allowed traditional Chinese religious culture to continue to maintain a vibrant local environment. After the 1970s, the ruling structure of the Kuomintang began to loosen. The religious groups that were originally under surveillance gradually grew substantially, and new religious groups also emerged one after another. Traditional folk beliefs also developed from local to national. In the early 1980s, new religion or folk beliefs flourished. Martial law was lifted in Taiwan in 1987, religious policies were liberalized, and people's organizations were established freely one after another. The new religion openly developed religious activities, which appeared to be more active and capable of mobilization, resulting in the emergence of a large number of various new religious groups in Taiwan. Around the 1990s, in the process of modernization and globalization in Taiwan, the weakening of Western hegemony and the rise of local powers in various regions interacted with each other, which promoted the vigorous development of the new religion in contemporary Taiwan (Ting, 2014). With the rise of some new religions, it has also brought some controversies and problems. For example, some religions have been accused of fraud, abuse, and forced persuasion. These controversies have also attracted the attention of Taiwanese society and the government, making the supervision and management of emerging religions gradually stricter. In 1996, the Taiwan government adopted a religious anti-crime campaign, coupled with the media's negative coverage of the new religion, many religious groups were deeply affected, affecting the subsequent development of new religious groups.

However, religion is the best way to help people out of suffering. According to the global disaster-related database, the Spanish flu disaster caused the largest number of human deaths in the 20th century. The global death toll is estimated to be between 50 million and 100 million;

the second largest disaster was the Chinese mainland between 1959 and 1961. Famine, with a death toll of between 30 million and 45 million; the third place was the Great Soviet Famine in the 1930s, with a death toll of about 5 million to 8 million. The characteristic of disaster statistics since the 21st century is that plague and natural disasters once again dominate the ranking of large-scale accidental human deaths. As of now, the global death toll from COVID-19 has reached more than 6.86 million. In December 2022, World Health Oraganization, WHO published the number of excess deaths during the COVID-19 pandemic, showing that the number of excess deaths in 2020 and 2021 was 2.7 times higher than the official number of deaths, between 13.2 million and 16.6 million , the global impact of COVID-19 may far exceed the officially reported death toll (Msemburi, W. et al., 2022). As for the Haiti earthquake in 2010, the South Asian tsunami in 2004, the Myanmar typhoon in 2008, the Wenchuan earthquake in China, the Japanese tsunami and the Fukushima nuclear disaster in 2011, etc., there are frequent natural disasters. Faced with the above social suffering issues, what is the attitude of Taiwan's new religion? How does Taiwan's new religion perceive the root of the current social suffering issues? How does it undertake the social practice of global responsibility? These are issues worthy of research and attention.

Global Ethics Declaration and Social Suffering

The "Parliament of the World's Religions" (PoWR) inaugurated in 1893 devotes itself to cross-religion dialogues of the world. PoWR announced in 1993 meeting the "Global Ethics Declaration". This is due to the famous German Catholic theologian Hans Küng and the American Professor Leonard Swidler, Temple University. There were 6,500 people participating in the Parliament of World's Religions, who came from different religious belief groups in the world. Although these participants all held their own religious doctrines and beliefs, there were intractable differences of thought on many issues. But they do see that there can be no new global order without a new global ethic. The Global Ethic is a landmark declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religions stating the universal values and principles shared by the world's religious, spiritual, and cultural traditions. It awakens a sense of responsibility. "Global ethics" can only be a minimum "golden rule", which is the sense of responsibility that all people should have.

Paul F. Knitter is the most influential Catholic and famous religious scholar in the United States. Knitter agrees with Hans Küng's initiative. Knitter once mentioned that "suffering Other" and "religious Other" have deeply influenced his life and theological thought in the past few decades. Therefore, he believes that religious people must empathize with common suffering and global threats. For Knitter, "suffering" is not only the suffering of human beings, but also the suffering of the earth and ecology. Therefore, Knitter divides suffering into four aspects: (1) Suffering of the Body—Due to Poverty, (2) Suffering of the Earth—Due to Abuse, (3) Suffering of the Spirit-Victimization, (4) Suffering Due to Violence.

The issue of global social suffering raised by Knitter has existed since ancient times. For example, the 3,762 wars brought about by the Chinese nation in the past five thousand years have caused all kinds of suffering, casualties, lack of food, and homesickness. Plague events that have been recorded in Chinese history. The historical site of the destruction of the Shakya family of Shakyamuni Buddha. These historical social misery events are still repeated today. The sense of responsibility awakened by the Declaration of Global Ethics initiated by the Parliament of the World's Religions in 1993, for the emerging religions in the context of democratized religious freedom, how should they assume social responsibility for religious practice?

Global Ethical Responsibility: The Founding and Doctrine of the New Religion of the World "Taiwan Weixin Shengjiao"

According to Taiwan's Ministry of the Interior, all religious categories are either traditional religions or new religions that have existed for over fifty years. Notably, Taiwan Weixin Shengjiao was established only 41 years ago. How can the teachings, tenets, and practices of Taiwan Weixin Shengjiao achieve a symbiotic and harmonious relationship with contemporary reality in the face of rapid environmental changes, modern society, and the spread of higher education? The majority of Taiwanese studies on emerging religions are concerned with the description of religious doctrines, religious beliefs, religious organizations, religious rituals, the development experiences of religious groups, or the explanation of phenomena such as religious origins, the interaction between religion and society, and religious mobilization. Rarely are studies conducted on social suffering or social practices. The purpose of this study is to investigate the attitudes of Weixin Shengjiao in Taiwan toward the issue of global ethical responsibility for social suffering, how Weixin Shengjiao learns the root causes of the current social suffering issues, and how Weixin Shengjiao undertakes the social practice of global ethical responsibility.

The Wexin Shengjiao was founded by Grand Master Hunyuan Chanshi in 1982 and is headed by Immortal Master Guigu, Wangchan Laozu. Master Hunyuan Chanshi explains in the "Cultivation and Enlightenment Scripture of Hunyuan" that he wrote the sutras to preserve the history of his practice for future generations to realize the compassionate wishes of the first Taiwanese ancestor, Taiwan Zushi, and the blessings of the Buddhas. Furthermore, the Scripture advises future generations of Dharma-based practices for achieving enlightenment based on destiny and the power of aspirations, with the safety of all sentient beings as the guiding principle and world peace as the primary wish.

As a result, Wexin Shengjiao's doctrine is to "practice for the country; praying for the people." It promotes Chinese cultural orthodoxy, the I Ching Feng Shui, integrates Confucian, Buddhist, and Taoist concepts, and utilizes the I Ching Feng Shui and religious activities to develop Weixin Shengjiao 48 Great Wishes and The Great Dharma Wheel of World Peace. Master Hunyuan Chanshi uses the divination culture of the I Ching to alleviate the suffering of all sentient beings, guiding the devotees by the light of benefit and praying for the blessings of the people through religious activities to accomplish the primary goal of global peace.

The Religious Practice of Taiwan Weixin Shengjiao in Social Suffering

Weixin Shengjiao establishes a religion and administers an education for the promotion of Chinese culture orthodox I Ching Feng Shui, which encompasses altruistic causes such as religion, education and culture, propagation, publishing, and social services. Weixin Shengjiao has received the Religious Public Welfare Award from the Taiwan Ministry of the Interior on numerous occasions for outstanding religious groups. "To practice for the nation; to pray for the people" is the Taiwan Weixin Shengjiao doctrine. Its goal is to help people develop their talents and virtues, raise their aspirations, and bring peace to the world. The mission of Weixin Shengjiao is to ensure the safety and security of all living things. In response to the problem of social suffering, Weixin Shengjiao uses religious practices and rituals to settle disputes, end fights, and stop disasters and catastrophes. But, Each religion has its own system for describing and explaining suffering. What is the underlying cause of today's social suffering? I Ching Feng Shui and religion, according to Master Hunyuan Chanshi, the founding master of Weixin Shengjiao, are the paths to peace and the paths for present and future humans. The I Ching

comprehends cause and effect and can predict events 500 years in advance and 500 years in the future; feng shui is the home of the present that transforms danger into peace; and religious practice is spiritual advancement. Weixin Shengjiao employs the three treasures of the I Ching, Feng Shui, and religious practice in order to comprehend the root causes of social suffering and alleviate the suffering of all beings.

Weixin Shengjiao employs religious events, pujas, and chanting of scriptures to resolve the "Suffering of the Body" caused by poverty, such as hunger and disease.

> In 1994, I Ching University was founded to encourage people to learn I Ching. By studying the I Ching, believers can understand the cause and effect of everything, and avoid "Suffering of the Body" caused by wrong decisions.
>
> In 2003, a puja was held for the relief of dengue fever.
>
> In 2003, a puja called "Eternal Rest and Catastrophe Relief Ritual for Plague" was held to resolve the SARS pandemic.
>
> In 2005, the "Resolution of the Avian Influenza Pandemic Puja" was held, with 360,000 recitations of the Guigu Xian Shi Tiande Sutra.
>
> In 2014, the "Relieving the Ebola Virus Puja" was held.In 2020, a puja was held to resolve COVID-19 pneumonia, with a total of 4,800,000 recitations of the Heavenly Virtue Sutra of Immortal Master Guigu.

Weixin Shengjiao has resolved the "Suffering of the Earth—Due to Abuse" caused by the mismanagement of earth's resources and the destruction of the ecological environment through social service activities, pujas, and religious practice of chanting scriptures.

> In 1987, in Daxinganling, China, a puja was held to quell the Great Fire.
>
> In 1999, after the 921 earthquake, the I Ching Feng Shui Service Love Group was established to serve 123 elementary and middle schools.
>
> In 1999, it provided religious space for teachers and students to study near the epicenter of the 921 earthquake.
>
> In 1999, it commemorated the 921 earthquake with the "Seven Eternal Days Nembutsu Ceremony."
>
> In 2007, it held the "Ozone Layer Hole Patching Ceremony," during which 640,000 volumns of the Ghost Goddess Heavenly Virtue Sutra were recited.
>
> In 2010, in response to the worldwide sinkhole catastrophe, it held the "Ozone Layer Hole Patching Ceremony."
>
> In 2012, it hosted the "Disaster Relief Puja for Mount Fuji, Japan" and "Disaster Relief Puja for Yellowstone Park."

Weixin Seijiao uses religious practices such as pujas and scripture recitation to alleviate" Suffering of the Spirit-Victimization" caused by wrongs and unjust harms.

In 2016, it held a puja to help resolve the riots in Vietnam and to support the Vietnamese people.

In 2017, it organized a puja to alleviate the Sakyas' grievances in the altar city.

In 2022, it set up overtaking tablets for the souls of those who died in the war between Russia and Ukraine.

In 2022, it set up overtaking tablets for the spirits in the Monalu Road Anti-Japanese Uprising Monument in Wushe Mountain, Taiwan.

Weixin Shengjiao uses the religious practice of pujas and scripture reading to end "Suffering Due to Violence" caused by weapons and military conflicts.

In 1986, a puja was performed to end the Sino-Russian arms race.

In 2010, a puja was held to resolve the potential Yellow Sea military conflicts between Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and China.

In 2021, a puja was held for the protection of the nation, Taiwan's peace, and peace across the Taiwan Strait.

In 2023, a puja was held to welcome all the immortals and Buddhas to Taiwan for peace.

"To practice for the nation; to pray for the people" is the Taiwan Weixin Shengjiao doctrine. In order to achieve world peace, Weixin Shengjiao is making unremitting efforts with incredible power of religious practice.

Conclusion

Weixin Shengjiao is a religious movement that emerged in Taiwan in the mid-20th century, and its doctrine emphasizes the importance of religious practice and prayer for the benefit of society. The phrase "To practice for the nation; to pray for the people" encapsulates this idea, suggesting that by dedicating oneself to spiritual practice and offering prayers for the well-being of others, one can contribute to the greater good and help bring about peace in the world.

The findings of the study indicate that Weixin Shengjiao's attitude toward the issue of social suffering stems not only from the imbalance between people and other people, people and objects, and people and nature caused by human factors in the phenomenal world but also from the suffering caused by the influence of the consciousness realm beyond time and space on the phenomenal realm. Weixin Shengjiao is dedicated to the advancement of Chinese cultural orthodoxy, I Ching Feng Shui, and the heart method. "Use I" to identify the cause of present social suffering issues, to further solve current social suffering issues through religious practices and religious education, and to fulfill Weixin Shengjiao's social practice of global

ethical responsibilities. Weixin Shengjiao's doctrine reflects a deep commitment to spiritual values and a vision of using those values to serve others and promote peace in the world.

The contribution of this study includes Weixin Shengjiao's worldwide social anguish issues, which have covered Knitter's four faces of global suffering. Weixin Shengjiao's social practice encompasses a wide range of global care and has its origins in the resolution of disputes and sufferings dating back thousands of years. Its social practice of global ethical duty transcends various combinations of time and space.

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Lifelong Learning as a Key to the 21st Century: I Ching Education as an Example

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Abstract

Learning to adapt has become a vital learning capacity for everyone in the face of the problems of the twenty-first century, including rapid technology breakthroughs, an aging population, and fast industrial changes, as well as the influence of the COVID-19 post-epidemic era. The Education 2030 Framework for Action, proposed by UNESCO (2016) emphasizes the integration of life and learning and claims that the best way to respond to future changes is through continual learning and innovation. Additionally, *The book I-Ching*, also known as *The Book of Changes* in English, with "change" as its central theme, is the first Chinese classic to teach the world that "only proper adjustments can result in better survival." Therefore, this study focuses on the significance of lifelong learning based on I Ching which encompasses not only the development track of human civilization from ancient times, but also the basic learning ability and sustainable development of lifelong learning for humans today and in the future. Using I Ching University as an example, this research elaborates the essential concept of I Ching education and its connotation of lifelong learning which fully implements the UNESCO philosophy of lifelong learning. The results of this study are expected to open up cross-disciplinary academic research on the I Ching, revealing the cosmic mystery of why the I Ching has remained unshaken for thousands of years, in addition to serving as a reference for international organizations in developing lifelong learning theories and policies.

Keywords: Lifelong Learning, I Ching Education, Change

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Introduction

The 21st century is an exciting time for lifelong learning. With the proliferation of information and technology, learning opportunities have become more accessible and diverse than ever before. In the 21st century, learning is no longer limited to childhood or early adulthood. Instead, lifelong learning is becoming increasingly important for individuals to stay relevant in the workforce and adapt to new technologies and changing circumstances. People spend their whole life learning because lifelong learning is essential for personal and professional development, as well as for adapting to the ever-changing world around us. Lifelong learning is a key component of personal growth, career success, and social and cultural engagement, and can contribute to a fulfilling and meaningful life.

Lifelong learning has become a trend promoted by international organizations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the European Union (EU). UNESCO defines lifelong learning as "the continuous building of skills and knowledge throughout a person's lifetime, with the aim of empowering them to fully participate in their communities and the wider society." This definition emphasizes the idea that learning is not something that only takes place in formal educational settings but is a lifelong process that occurs in both formal and informal contexts, including work, family, and community environment. Non-formal learning refers to structured learning outside of traditional educational institutions, such as vocational training programs, community-based learning, and adult education programs. Informal learning, on the other hand, refers to the learning that occurs through everyday experiences and interactions, such as on-the-job learning, self-directed learning, and learning through hobbies and interests.

The UNESCO published "Learning: The Treasure Within" in 1996, emphasizing the importance of lifelong learning to the development of human society, and further proposing the four pillars of education: learning to live together; learning to know; learning to do; and learning to be. The fifth pillar of learning to change was added in 2003 with the publication of "Developing Treasures: Visions and Strategies 2002-2007". The Education 2030 Framework for Action, proposed by UNESCO (2016) emphasizes the integration of life and learning and claims that the best way to respond to future changes is through continual learning and innovation. Learning to adapt has become a vital learning capacity for everyone in the face of the problems of the twenty-first century, including rapid technology breakthroughs, an aging population, and fast industrial changes, as well as the influence of the COVID-19 post-epidemic era.

The impact of COVID-19 has resulted in widespread job loss and economic uncertainty, which has led many people to seek new job opportunities. In addition, the COVID-19 has had a significant impact on lifelong learning, as it has disrupted traditional learning methods and forced institutions to adapt to new forms of learning. People need to face on lifelong learning for reskilling and upskilling. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on lifelong learning, as it has disrupted traditional learning methods and forced institutions to adapt to new forms of learning. More importantly, people must learn to accept and adapt to the cognitive attitudes brought about by environmental changes. However, there is no core curriculum that teaches us to learn to change in formal education. People are always on the journey of life, learning, understanding and changing bit by bit. Therefore, lifelong learning is an inevitable path for the world in the 21st century. Learning the intangible mental intelligence in the face of

change may be far better than the learning of tangible knowledge and skills on lifelong learning.

I Ching and Lifelong Learning

The book I-Ching, also known as The I Ching in English, with "change" as its central theme, is the first Chinese classic to teach the world that "only proper adjustments can result in better survival." The I Ching, also known as the Book of Changes, is one of the oldest Chinese classics, invented by Fu Xi 7,500 years ago. It is a divination text that uses a set of hexagrams, consisting of six solid or broken lines. This is the main text of the I Ching, consisting of 64 hexagrams and their interpretations. I Ching offer insights into the world and human experience. I Ching has not only influenced Chinese philosophy, religion, and culture for over seven thousand years. As early as the 16th century, the western has a strong interest in Chinese culture.

The western I Ching studies are inseparable from the development of Sinology. Since the 16th century, the sinologists paid the intention and interest to translate and research I Ching by the Society of Jesus. AI, Kuei San (2014) pointed out that Richard Wilhelm (1873–1930) of Germany translated the main classics of Confucianism and Taoism in the pre-Qin period, discovered the special status and philosophical role of the "I Ching", and conducted in-depth research. In 1923, he completed the translation of the first German "I Ching", which was officially published in 1924 as the most accurate translation in the West. Wilhelm attaches great importance to the philosophy of life in "Zhou Yi Xi Ci", and believes that the concept of "poverty leads to change, change leads to success, and continuity leads to durability" is a very high concept in human civilization. He used the principles of the Eight Diagrams and the Sixty-Four Diagrams in the "I Ching" to explore the origin of the universe and various issues in human society, becoming the founder of the "Practical School" of divination and philosophy in the "I".

Wilhelm's translation of the "I Ching" is not only his dialogue with the commentary system of Chinese Confucianism since the Qing Dynasty, but also symbolizes the dialogue process between the Western world and Chinese thought and culture on the basis of its philosophy and religion. In 1950, Hellmut Wilhelm (1905-1990), the son of Richard Wilhelm, and Cary F. Baynes translated and published the English version of Wilhelm's I Ching, and in 1960, Baynes translated Hellmut Wilhelm's "Changes, Eight Lectures on the I Ching" into English. These two English translations gave a direct impetus to the rapid take-off of I Ching studies in the United States and to the development of the "practical" school of I Ching represented by Richard Wilhelm.

The flexibility and changes emphasized in I Ching (The Book of Changes) are closely related to the learning ability and adaptability in lifelong learning. Lifelong learning emphasizes a never-ending learning process, which requires constant adjustment and change of one's learning methods and strategies to adapt to the ever-changing social and economic environment. The concept of yin and yang and the theory of gossip in I Ching can also provide useful inspiration for lifelong learning. The concept of yin and yang emphasizes interdependence and balance, which is related to comprehensive development and multiple intelligences in lifelong learning. Bagua theory emphasizes the relationship between the whole and the part, which is related to the holistic learning and all-round development in lifelong learning. The philosophy and wisdom of I Ching can provide useful guidance and

enlightenment for lifelong learning, help people to adapt and cope with the changes and challenges of modern society, and realize the all-round development and growth of individuals.

In the I Ching, or Book of Changes, there are many hexagrams and lines that can provide guidance on how to approach natural disasters, plagues and so on. The hexagram suggests that the best approach in this situation is to remain flexible and adaptable. It advises us to approach the challenge with a calm and open mind, and to be willing to make changes and adjustments as necessary. In addition, the I Ching emphasizes the importance of seeking guidance from wise and experienced individuals, who can offer insight and perspective on how to navigate difficult times.

Therefore, this study focuses on the significance of lifelong learning based on I Ching which encompasses not only the development track of human civilization from ancient times, but also the basic learning ability and sustainable development of lifelong learning for humans today and in the future. Using I Ching University as an example, this research elaborates the essential concept of I Ching education and its connotation of lifelong learning which fully implements the UNESCO philosophy of lifelong learning.

I Ching Education: I Ching University and Lifelong Learning

Core Philosophy of I Ching University

Hunyuan Chanshi founded I Ching University in Taiwan in 1994. It primarily promotes the orthodox Chinese culture of I Ching Feng Shui and integrates Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism into one system. Hunyuan Chanshi, the founder of I Ching University, stated, "We must widely spread I Ching Chinese culture and orthodox I Ching Feng Shui. I Ching is spirituality, life, wisdom, and thought, Feng Shui is a pure land, a pure land on earth, and everyone's spirituality, wisdom, and life are integrated into one, which is orthodoxy." As a result, I Ching University is a learning institution that emphasizes I Ching education and promotes lifelong learning.

Hunyuan Chanshi indicated that the school emblem of I Ching University resembles a Taiji diagram. The "Qian Gua" on the sunny side is the sky. The "Hexagram Kun" on the negative side represents the earth, and it carries things with virtue, which represents the tangible things of the earth. Kun, the hexagram with a benevolent heart, represents our body and behavior. Continuous self-improvement, virtue, and carrying things are Qian and Kun, yang and yin, thought and behavior, the unity of knowledge and action, that is "Tao", the origin of the Tao, the philosophical foundation of Chinese culture, and the philosophy of the "I Ching."

Lifelong Learning at I Ching University

I Ching University's education includes I Ching, Feng Shui, and religion; lifelong learners enter different programs based on their location, education level, occupation, learning purpose, learning method, and learning development stage. Lifelong learning programs at I Ching University are divided into four categories: professional courses, teacher training courses, practical courses, and academic research. Professional courses are divided into eight stages lasting a total of 24 years. I Ching University welcomed its first students in 1994 and has been in operation for 30 years (since 2023), with approximately 20 lifelong learners remaining.

I Ching University has taken a comprehensive and self-sufficient approach to establishing an institution for lifelong learning. The curriculum of the university was based on Huanyuan Chanshi's teachings, which were then put together into 22,636 volumes of the Taoist Collection of Only the Heart. These included video recordings, edited texts, and published books and videos. In addition to having class sites in every county and city in Taiwan, I Ching University has established television stations and online learning, allowing students to study anywhere, at any time, for the rest of their lives. Online education provided by I Ching University. The University of I Ching has made programs to train teachers. These programs have trained more than 260 professional teachers and helped professional teachers in their first courses. I Ching University has set up a platform for academic research and exchange that allows professional educators to publish the results of their academic research and practice.

Characteristics of Lifelong Learners at I Ching University

I Ching University's lifelong learning students' range in age from 8 to over 90 years old, with an average age of 55. Their educational background includes primary, secondary, and high school, as well as university, master's, and doctoral degrees, with a focus on high and secondary vocational education. The learning location is in Taiwan, and for international students, in addition to Chinese language instruction, English and Spanish instruction are available.

Learning Effectiveness of I Ching University's Lifelong Education System

I Ching University's lifelong education system incorporates the United Nations' five pillars of learning. Because I Ching University's lifelong learning is mixed-age learning, it is also multigenerational learning, which helps learners promote "learning and getting along with others (learning to live together)"; I Ching is evolved from the concepts of heaven-earth and yin-yang, and the eight phenomena of nature. All things are born and restrained by the I Ching, Bagua and Five Elements, which can help learners realize the world (learning to know); In the practical course, learners can understand what is the unity of knowledge and action, and learn to do things (learning to do); Learners of I Ching learn to develop (learning to be) by observing the changes and evolution of the hexagrams and six lines; I Ching is the trajectory of life change. Learners can learn how to adapt to change, and create a harmonious and happy life from the simplicity, variability, and difficulty of the education of I Ching (learning to change).

I Ching Education, a lifelong education system organized by I Ching University, has been in operation since 1994. Can other Western societies replicate the self-sufficient mode of operation and learning effects? Is it acceptable in Western societies?

Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961), Wilhelm's close friend and renowned Swiss psychologist and I Ching enthusiast, encouraged his student Cary F. Baynes to translate the German version into English in the late 1920s. With Jung's great admiration for the I Ching, the English version quickly became the most common "standard" English version of the I Ching in the West today, and was translated into English, French, Spanish, Dutch, Italian, Danish, Swedish, Portuguese, and other languages, and reprinted throughout the world. The I Ching was originally translated by Wilhelm with the intention of introducing the Western world to this profoundly significant Chinese classic, while also emphasizing the I Ching's importance and value on a global and universal scale. Hellmut Wilhelm, Wei Lixian's son, has a family history of studying the I Ching. He argues that the seemingly mysterious classic of theI Ching attempts to teach individuals how to manage their own destiny rather than being subjected to mysterious wills.

As a result, he believed that this book could never be understood as a collection of myths or revelations, but rather as a natural and philosophical view on life and the world.

Conclusions

The results of this study are expected to open up cross-disciplinary academic research on the I Ching, revealing the cosmic mystery of why the I Ching has remained unshaken for thousands of years, in addition to serving as a reference for international organizations in developing lifelong learning theories and policies.

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