

The I-Milieu:
Its Implications for Culture and Thinking (I)

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Abstract

Besides Buber's I-Thou and I-It, there exists the I-Milieu relation in our life-world. I and Milieu are distinct, not disjunctive, and they should not be confused. The I cannot exist without its Milieu that functions as common sense, culture, my breathing, my health, and my body, aware unawares, indirective.

In the I-Milieu, proof appears as persuasive, relativism as vitally unique and related, and poetry sings musically in Chinese characters and calligraphy, telling history. All these show themselves in names and words, involving thinking, and religions. All this is illustrative, not exhaustive, to show how taking note of I-Milieu is indispensable, revolutionizing, vitalizing, and expanding our life and life's outlook.

Key Terms: Milieu, I, culture, common sense, music and poetry, my body, indirective, relativism, religion, involving thinking, naming.

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§ What the I-Milieu is

Our life-world is made of crisscrossing relations. Martin Buber's well-known insight tells us that this world has two relations, I-Thou and I-It. I deal with matters in I-It relation, while I stand consciously related to persons in I-Thou relation. Now, "relations" themselves inter-relate, while implying disparity without separation. So we have three ideas here, disparity, no-separation, and relation.

Disparity lets each idea and item exist in its own right, each in its own distinctness, by virtue of difference from all others. I differ from It, from Thou; I, It, and Thou mutually differ, and the I of I-It differs from the I of I-Thou. At the same time, all of them are *not separated* one from the other, for difference here implicates no disjunction but interdependence for each to exist as distinctly itself and no other. Interdependence means all these items *inter-relate* to inter-influence to inter-change, change one another, and inter-compose.

Here what is crucial is to avert another danger, not to con-fuse such interrelations and blurs away the distinctions. Confusion in this sense is lethal.¹

¹ Confusion can be uncertainty that can catalyze novel creativity. Such confusion differs from what is called con-fusion, indiscriminate fusing-

Distinction is neither separation nor confusion. Thus *relation* is distinction in interdependent inter-composition, and, to repeat, neither disjunction nor blurring.

Now, in addition to the above two relations, I-It and I-Thou, and their complex interrelations, there exists a third relation, I-Milieu. My relations to trees and animals, to skies and weather, to city and neighborhood, these relations cannot be explained by I-It or I-Thou,² for there is nothing to deal *with* as It, nor can I stand consciously related *to* them as Thou. They are not I-It, not I-Thou; they surround me, they are I-Milieu.

This I-Milieu relation is peculiar; it is that *in* which I am what I am and who I am. Milieu involves me yet Milieu is not I, and this Milieu-“in” I cannot pin *down* or point *to*. This I-Milieu relation has [1] similar features as the other two relations, [2] can interrelate and even blend with the other two, and [3] at the same time has entirely distinct features of its own.

[1] As I-It and I-Thou are distinct, not separate or confused, so I-Milieu cannot be unfelt, nor can it be controlled (as It) or addressed to (as Thou) as I wish. As I-It and I-Thou mutually influence and inter-change, so I and my Milieu inter-influence and inter-change, i.e., interchange to change each other. Even the almighty Christian God who creates and sustains me, described

together of what should be disparate. Mr. Jeffrey Dahmer the cannibalistic homosexual tragically illustrates this latter fatal confusion to destroy disparity, to destroy everyone including himself. See Kuang-ming Wu, *On Chinese Body Thinking: A Cultural Hermeneutic*, Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 1997, pp. 148, 172-173.

² Martin Buber tried to explain our relation with trees and habitat in Postscript to *I and Thou* and in Sydney and Beatrice Rome, eds., *Philosophical Interrogations (1964)*, NY: Harper Torchbook, 1970, pp. 17-20; he was vague and equivocating, thus negatively showed I-Milieu as a relation *distinct* from I-It and I-Thou.

as That in Which I am and move,³ can be saddened by me to repent because of me.

[2] I-It and I-Thou can each interrelate with I-Milieu and even blend with I-Milieu. I-It relation can serve as my relation with my Milieu, as my computer I live with, my house I live in, my neighborhood I am used to. The I-Thou relation between baby and mother serves the vital Milieu to the mother and to the baby, so much so that the baby deprived of his mother can hardly survive, and the mother deprived of her baby goes insane. Culture is a mixture of I-Thou and I-It; culture shock is a familiar tragedy among those in foreign land.

Conversely, I-Milieu can be treated as I-It, i.e., objectified and studied or transcended in religious conversion, although doing so tends to devalue the integrity of I-Milieu, which after all cannot be *treated* without vanishing into thin air.⁴ I-Milieu can also be appreciated by poets and lovers as I-Thou and relished, and awareness of a tragic unbearable I-Milieu can lead to relocation, taking new jobs, and often serves as catalyst to revolution, cultural and/or political.

[3] At the same time, I-Milieu has some distinctive features all its own. I-Milieu cannot be directly dealt *with* as I deal with It, nor can I-Milieu be talked *to* as I talk to Thou. The above interchanges of I-It and I-Thou with I-Milieu can happen only after I-Milieu is objectified as It or Thou. Milieu is what *surrounds* me, and as such cannot be treated as the other facing me, whether as It or as Thou.

³ Acts 17: 28.

⁴ As Emperor Hun Tun died drilled holes. See Kuang-ming Wu, “‘Emperor Hundun 渾沌’: A Cultural Hermeneutic,” *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy*, September 2007, pp. 263-279.

Still, as that in which I am and move, my Milieu decisively influences me, even shapes me into what I am, as much as I in turn shape my Milieu, albeit often unawares. Since Mr. and Mrs. Jones moved into this neighborhood, this neighborhood is no longer the same, as a dot put in painting changes the whole Gestalt of the painting. So we understand why immigrants are carefully screened and regulated.

Yet still, unlike I-It and I-Thou, those within the Milieu cannot explicitly philosophize about the whole mutuality of I-and-Milieu. Milieu is Mr. Hun Tun who dies when drilled holes; Milieu my haunts vanish when watched straight in the face. The fact remains, however, that I myself vanish when deprived of my Milieu as that in which I *am*; culture shock is my shocking ontological upheaval, shaking my foundation.⁵

Now let us go a step further. It was mentioned above that I-Milieu can be treated as I-It or appreciated as I-Thou. The fact is this: I-Milieu shapes I-Thou and I-It as it is shaped by them, and then my Milieu, originally unnamable, appears in several nameable forms. Tao named ceases to be Tao, but Tao can be nicknamed to appear obliquely (as Lao Tzu effected), and those nicknames become ciphers to adumbrate Tao (as manifested in the *Tao Te Ching*).

One of Tao's manifestations is I-Milieu, ciphered by nameable forms. They are all so familiar and yet so difficult to define. As Milieu is unnamable, so these nameable forms are indescribable. These nameable indescribable forms describe or typify our life-

⁵ See Kuang-ming Wu, *On Metaphoring: A Cultural Hermeneutic*, Leiden: Brill, 2001, pp. 510-513, and "Realism (Fajia 法家), Human Akrasia, and the Milieu for Ultimate Virtue," *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy*, Winter 2002, pp. 21-44.

world that is our indispensable Milieu of life. *What* are those names, forms?

What comes naturally to mind are our natural habitat of climate and weather; “weather” is the natural rounds of seasons that influence our sentiment as well as the way we dress and move around. By “climate” we mean the constant overall weather and soil, smells and colors of fauna and flora, and so on; they shape our views and customary ways of behavior, namely, our culture.⁶

And then we come upon a cluster of notions, culture, human world, and history. “Culture” is the very way and style of living exhibited spontaneously in our life, the morphology of our taking things that shows what we are.⁷ “Human world” is our life-world, the world of people; politics, journalism, commerce, and literature thrive here.

“History” is the human world stretched out in time, our human world in time-depths and trends, public and personal. All of us live on with our respective life-stories that show us, who also show ourselves by telling such stories, and even our concoctions, by the way we concoct, show ourselves. We show ourselves by the way we tell and hear stories, and all this is history.

⁶ Watsuji Tetsuro 和辻哲郎 in *風土:人間學的考察* (東京岩波書店, 昭和三十三年, Geoffrey Bownas, tr., *A Climate—A Philosophical Study*, 1956) takes 風土 as 「ある土地の氣候, 氣象, 地質, 地味, 地形, 景觀などの總稱」, and lists three types of such 風土 (モンスーン, 沙漠, 牧場) that shape three types of world cultures, Asiatic, Arabic, and Greek.

⁷ Kuang-ming Wu, *On the “Logic” of Togetherness: A Cultural Hermeneutic*, Leiden: Brill, 1998, pp. 27-87. T. S. Eliot, *Notes towards the Definition of Culture*, London: Faber and Faber, 1948.

Finally, we note an interesting notion of “境, realm, horizon.” Wang Kuo-wei 王國維 casually tossed out a scintillating insight, that we have the self-ed realm 有我之境 and the self-less realm 無我之境. In the self-ed realm I look 觀 at things; in the self-less realm things look at things. Here “look 觀” is a situated discernment and engagement.⁸ This insight unwittingly describes the dynamics of all the above Milieu-forms.

These Milieu-forms mutually manifest and shape, and are inter-shaped. Such a bewildering complexity makes up the I-Milieu dynamics, in whose making we participate, to again shape ourselves as we are shaped by our Milieu. The modes of our shaping and being shaped are I-Thou and I-It, inter-mixed, inter-penetrating, and inter-penetrated.

Subjectivity, intersubjectivity, and inter-controls are all at one here, and they are called our I-Milieu relations. The I-Milieu is a life-verb, an inter-verb of our living, in dimensions of space and of time, contemporaneous and historical, spatial and multi-leveled, multifariously inter-level-ed.

Naturally three questions arise. How does I-Milieu influence thinking? Is this influence itself “thinking”? How do Milieus compare? We will just consider the first question; our answer to it will obliquely answer the other two questions. Since all above Milieu-forms crisscross and overlap to shade into one another, for convenience, “milieu” can be called “culture,” always bearing in mind that by “culture” we mean the I-Milieu relation. Our queries then become how culture and thinking interrelate.

§ Thinking and Culture

⁸ 王國維, *人間詞話*, 臺北市三民書局, 民 91, PP. 3-7. “詞話” in China connotes literary criticism.

The I-Milieu relation enables us to see “thinking” in a surprisingly novel light. Two examples can be given, the extra-philosophical as philosophical, and valid proof as enwrapped in persuasion. Both notions are heretical in Western philosophy, but I-Milieu enables us to see them as legitimate parts of “philosophizing” truly so called, as also practiced in non-Western China for millennia. Let us consider the extra-philosophical, then persuasion.

The “Extra-Philosophical” as Philosophical

Nothing can be outside philosophy⁹; reason is in the heart of the matter as well as in a person, in the contingency of fact happening “without rhyme or reason.” Philosophy is life-philosophy that performs the going of life-reason. There is thus so much more in the heaven and earth, more than our philosophizing now can even dream of; heaven and earth are

⁹ Frederick Copleston begins his book on comparative philosophy (*Philosophies and Cultures*, Oxford University Press, 1980) with a chapter on “relations between western philosophy and some extra-philosophical factors,” that is to say, “examples of the historical conditioning of philosophical thought by extra-philosophical factors will be taken principally from western philosophy.”⁹

His tacit invidious assumption here is that what is valid in Western philosophy is also valid in all other philosophies and is applicable to them all, that there exist “extra-philosophical factors” in all philosophies, i.e., historical factors of economic, political, social, religious, scientific, and psychological conditions (p. 5).

Such an assumption betrays the spirit of comparative study of world philosophies. Naturally, we would say that “extra-philosophical factors in Western philosophy” are just that, appropriate in the West alone, and that “extra-philosophical” here is actually no “extra-“ at all but quite relevant to philosophy, i.e., “extra-philosophical” is quite philosophical.

more philosophical than all our human philosophies put together.¹⁰

Understanding how Hitler proposed reasons for attacking the Jews (in all his propagandas), by probing the economic, political, and psychological conditions at the time, is needed in order to see how Hitler swerved into wrong doing, and understand his route toward falsehood—and this route is philosophically relevant. Let us now cite philosophical examples.

Plato was shaped by Pythagoras and his geometry; without understanding Pythagoras, we would not be able to understand Plato. The Newtonian worldview structured Kant's transcendental frame. The economic conditions of factory workers in nineteenth century England shaped Marx's philosophy. The West's logical positivistic analysis took natural science and its verificational methods as its paradigm and standard of validity. Geometry, economy, and science are thus no longer "extra-philosophical" in Plato, Kant, Marx, and logical analysis.

In general, we can say this. Anything that shapes philosophy, if not amenable to philosophizing, is philosophically relevant; philosophy thinks everything; so everything is amenable to philosophy, if not shapes philosophy. Thus all extra-philosophical factors are philosophical.

Now, what is amenable to philosophy is Milieu to enable thinking; culture enables thinking. So, Hegel was correct when

¹⁰ Copleston does admit all non-western philosophies as philosophy (p. 3), but then "extra-philosophical" turns out shaky, which is counted philosophical in non-western philosophies, and that for a good reason. To cut "truth" and "validity," treated as "philosophical," from these conditioning factors, treated as "extra-philosophical," would cut off philosophical understanding and judgment from the actual world.

he said that a philosophy is its own time expressed in thought,¹¹ and so different cultures manifest different philosophies. As locale and climate differs, thinking comes to differ.¹² Do we complain that different cultures are too different to understand? Copleston says we are all human (p. 133), so we can more or less understand other cultures and their philosophies; this sentiment assumes human thinking to be *alike*, with different emphases.

The fact is, however, that understanding assumes *difference*. We understand to accept differences to inter-enrich; from this fact it does not follow that one sort of understanding can dominate all differences understood, that one-track understanding can be generalized to cover all.

In any case, “differences” here include different sorts of thinking in different Milieus, cultural, psychological, and historical. Now, we must note. Locale-climate-Milieu includes persuasiveness. Proof and validity is enwrapped in different persuasion-Milieus. We must explore this fascinating theme.

Valid Proof as Enwrapped in Persuasion-Milieu

It is idle to claim that an argument is valid if it is valid, no matter how it is executed; therefore the rhetorical show of argument has nothing to do with validity.¹³ The “therefore” here

¹¹ Copleston quoted it in p. 134, and twisted it into a different proposition, that any philosophy is historically conditioned, and therefore there cannot be a perennial philosophy ready to hand down to posterity.

¹² This is what Watsuji's volume studies, how climate relates to philosophy, op. cit. A Japanese saying, 「處變れば品 (shina) 變る」 (“Each country has its own customs.” 齋藤和英大辭典, 東京名著普及會, 昭和 54 年, p. 1010) implicates 「處變れば思惟 (shi-i) 變る」, for 思惟 (thinking) is one of 品 (things).

¹³ Copleston (p. 120) attributes my failure to agree with your valid logical demonstration to my failure to understand it or my unwillingness to

smacks of a non sequitur. It sounds like someone saying, “If a gadget works, it works, no matter how efficiently or inefficiently it works; therefore efficiency has nothing to do with the working of a gadget.”

As gadgetry-technology is attended with levels of effectiveness and degrees of efficiency, the “same” logical validity in one argument or another is enwrapped in different poetic levels of persuasiveness, attended with different rhetorical degrees of forcefulness, on how *aptly* the validity of argumentation strikes the hearer and how *fitting* the argument was marshaled, that is, how *congenial* it goes into the heart of the matter and the soul of the hearer.

The key here is *how* validity is argued, and how it appeals. Appeal is part and parcel of argument, and in this sense the rational is part of the rhetorical. Argument and its validity are not self-sealed but depend on their receptive end. Validity is an inter-verb that goes both ways, integrity of the argument and its *effective* spread to the rational receiver. “As beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so validity is in the mind of the hearer” is no longer as subjective and arbitrary as it used to sound.

Validity is enwrapped in this how-Milieu that has levels; validity is alive in this thickness of persuasion, which makes validity. Depriving it and validity ceases to strike the rational hearer as valid at all. This validity *thickness*, analogous to multi-valued validity in “fuzzy logic,” is what cut-and-dried logic misses.

understand you. He assumes that once logical proof is valid, it is valid irrespective of being agreed to or not, and that all validity are created equal. His naiveté is appalling.

Mind you, moreover. The same argument can be marshaled in different ways. The same point can be driven from different angles. The point is to hit it right, milieu-right, right for *this* Milieu. Fitting congeniality comes from culturally felt at-homeness of welcoming camaraderie with the argument. Milieu is what tells and persuades.

Persuasiveness is what politics and commerce especially aim at, but this Milieu of congeniality is where all human experiences that tell belong, including poetry and argumentation. Persuasion behind and around validity is king; persuasion is Milieu-fitting; therefore Milieu is king.

Let us put it another way. As a scale is Milieu for maximum and minimum, so rhetoric is Milieu for the poetic power of rational validity in an argument. Rhetoric is that in which validity and argument lives and moves—to exist. A scale makes sense to maximum and minimum; poetic persuasiveness is sensitive rhetoric that convinces the hearer of the validity of an argument.

Validity is dead, *de trop*, when devoid of the rhetoric, as grass no longer dotted with morning dews, no longer waving in the fresh dawn, and no longer able to interest people. Fish out of water dies, validity out of rhetoric-Milieu is a skeletal gadget in the closet, idling, useless.

“If argument is invalid, it is invalid no matter how much we dress it up with rhetoric.” This statement reminds us of “If this body of water has no fish, there is no fish no matter how much we stir up the water.” It is true but uninteresting; more crucially, we must make validity persuasive, when validity exists, as we must keep the water fitting and invigorating for the fish in it to thrive in it. Without validity rhetoric is useless; without rhetoric validity is dead fish uncared for, salt lost biting zing, only fit to throw out, again, useless.

Can rhetoric produce validity? Well, rhetoric can *help* produce argument-and-validity by suggesting a route to it, as in “Practice makes perfect,” “Li is T’i, 禮 is 體; rites embodies life,” or “Calm water runs deep, so make haste, make waste.” Rhetoric is a voice crying in a rugged rational wilderness to prepare a way for argument and validity, and when the rational route is induced, empowers it. Rhetoric can do so because it is a congenial word-web, a greenhouse Milieu for argumentation, an argument *in ovo* ready to logically develop into validity, and then to empower it.

Or rather, the case here is stronger: Rhetoric-Milieu *shapes* validity in this way or that. Medieval divinity-Milieu shaped “validity” theologically, as modern science-Milieu shapes “validity” as objective, impersonal, and verificational. We must then be alerted, poetically sensitized, to the winds of Milieu now swaying over our confident “validity”—and keep our validity sane, human, and cosmically resonant. If Milieu is king, Milieu-adjusting is poetic queen behind the king to keep us all on track.

After all, if rhetoric is word-web, logic is one sort of refined word-web, storytelling is another sort, poetry is yet another, and arguments of all sorts are performances of such refinements. Poets and storytellers are those most sensitive to word-webs that cipher Milieu.

We need poets and storytellers to feel, discern, and adjust Milieu for us to live persuasively. T. S. Eliot is more correct than he perhaps realized when he claimed being a poet as a qualification to talk about the European culture, and to urge implementing concrete ways toward the unity of European culture.¹⁴

¹⁴ T. S. Eliot, *Notes towards the Definition of Culture*, London: Faber and Faber, 1948, Appendix.

It is time to take stock. All this amounts to saying that persuasion is the logical Milieu in which proof moves and has its being.¹⁵ Valid proof itself must inevitably carry its intrinsic persuasiveness. Failure to persuade, shorn of irrelevances Copleston produced (inability and/or unwillingness to understand), is quite serious, cutting into the validity of the proof.

We must say, then, that proof and persuasion are two sides of the same coin of valid rational *performance*. “Tao walks it and forms” says Chuang Tzu (2/33). Proof is truth walking itself out; persuasion is truth-performance walking out to the hearer. The walking, the performance, is Milieu in the making, culture forming itself. If a proof fails to convince a willing hearer, intelligent, careful, and conscientious, the proof must be refashioned, and the fashioning-convincing activity is culture at work.

Another notion of Copleston’s, “perennial philosophy,” is appropriate here; “perennial” and “expressive of a specific culture” are not mutually opposed as he thinks they do. What he envisaged (p. 138) as “perennial philosophy” betrays itself as a proposal of 1980 when the book is published, when he identified “perennial” as “deductive,” “necessarily true,” and “analytically true,” saying (p. 138),

[The] question arises whether it would not be possible to develop a perennially true philosophical system, consisting simply of necessarily true propositions. Presumably, the answer is ‘yes’, provided, of course, that [we] could . . . arrange the propositions in such a way that they formed a system, . . . that from one ultimate necessarily true proposition

¹⁵ We can see, then, that Copleston has vilified “persuasion.”

the others followed deductively in a certain order. . . . Even if, however, such a system . . . were actually developed, it seems that it would exemplify a rather narrow . . . philosophy. Rightly or wrongly, people expect . . . more than the enunciation of analytically true propositions . . . ; its relation to reality would be . . . controversial..

In our opinion, it is as it should be. The culturally-historically particular is what is trans-culturally universal, as “Romeo and Juliet” handled by Shakespeare in his days has been viscerally touching to readers and drama-goers throughout the world ever since. History is perennial; it is perennially contemporary.¹⁶

Now, both points above are related. “Proof as persuasion” and “perennial as culture-expressive” express the identical point that truth is, and is to be, incorrigibly concrete, historical, Milieu-cultural, in order to be perennially valid and persuasive. Nothing exists in a vacuum; everything specific and concrete is, as it is, universally enlightening, thanks to our poetic and philosophical discernment at this specific time and place, here and now.

At once, three rabbits present themselves for us to capture, one, concrete specificity that seems sheer relativism, two, historical and cultural, general principles or patterns that clamp up relativism from going into random pieces, and three, how the two are interrelated. We shall notice that the third rabbit is caught twice, once in considering relativism as human freedom, and second time in considering general principles as haunting Milieu within concrete freedom. Relativism is considered, followed by Milieu.

¹⁶ Copleston (p. 134) is bewitched by the word “conditioned” in “historically conditioned,” taking the phrase in an unjustifiably *restrictive* sense.

§ Relativism, Historical and Cultural

If relativism thrives differences, then differences are enabled in their Milieu that is neither difference nor identity but embraces both, as a scale is neither maximum nor minimum but embraces both and gives sense to both. Milieu thus gives life to relativism as relativism manifests the vitality of freedom essential to living. So considering relativism gives us clues to its Milieu.

Recognizing “extra-philosophical factors” conditioning philosophies, Copleston comes to be haunted by two challenges: Where are then the perennial principles? How can we get out of historical relativism? His whole book tries hard to meet them. We on our part consider the perennial as being realized while experiencing concrete particulars termed “relativism.”¹⁷ Our position can be clarified by spotting Copleston’s blind spots.

He tries so hard to “resolve” the problems, yet in vain.¹⁸ He takes the perennial to oppose the free and transient, and takes “historical relativism” as a prime culprit. He does not know that free “anything goes” is all right, indeed necessary, if oneself is set in order and spread to others, that Augustine’s “Love God and do as you like” means “anything goes” freely under the divine Milieu, that we see eternity here now (as Zen says) as we

¹⁷ In a Christian context, we can say that it is through sinful Baal-love and Hosea’s tragic love for unfaithful Gomer that the divine insistent love is revealed. For us, there is no other way.

¹⁸ He has four tactics; none bites into the point. He denies extreme cases on both sides, affirms what everyone obviously agrees as true, twists a striking or well-known quip into a similar-sounding but different statement he prefers and demolishes it, cites obvious faults on the opposing side—and thinks he has proved *his* case. In short, he tends to be choppy and filled with non-sequiturs.

are authentic and truthful, that history ciphers retrospective wisdom and so historical relativism is actually our salvation.

Copleston does not know that culture-expressive or time-expressive is not historically conditioned as historically confined, but rather free to express the concrete here-now. He does not know that difference is not chaos, that applicability to posterity does not always mean one uniform, much less dominant, principle that deductively governs, that actuality is always diversity in unity, unity in diversity, where diversity means free to be oneself and unity means intelligible to people wherever, whenever.

I am free when I am of myself, self-so, at home as human.¹⁹ Here in this natural self-fact, even self-authenticated authenticity and self-legislative autonomy sounds foreign. Nothing is more joyous than being oneself, casually, spontaneously, so much so that I do not even feel joy. I am full, all myself as a kid. Here I need to care for no one else, here anything goes. Each “I” is different, each moment is unique, yet I can understand your “I,” her yesterday, all in *my* way. Vibrant relativism is here without confinement, without uniformity.

Whitehead said, “There are no whole truths; all truths are half-truth. It is trying to treat them as whole truths that plays the devil.”²⁰ The whole paragraph is worth quoting.

A visual metaphor was supplied by Mrs. Whitehead: “His thinking is a prism. It must be seen not from one side alone but from all sides, then from underneath and overhead. So

¹⁹ 自由是自然, 自宅, 宅心仁厚, says China, translated here.

²⁰ Lucien Price, *Dialogues of Alfred North Whitehead* (1953), Boston: David R. Godine, 2001, p. 14.

seen, as one moves around it, the prism is full of changing lights and colours. To have seen it from one side only is not to have seen it.” One-sided seeing is what Whitehead called “half-truth”—“There are no whole truths; all truths are half-truths. It is trying to treat them as whole truths that plays the devil.” (The arithmetic quips to which this lends itself were all made long ago.)

That is the vitality of concrete relativism, alive. Copleston would of course say that Whitehead can evade self-contradiction—“Is his statement itself the whole truth?”—by subjecting his saying to an overall principle, that to say as Whitehead says is “not to say anything goes” (134). Copleston does not know that mathematical logician Whitehead was pointing precisely at intellectual “anything goes.”

All this describes that worst possible definition of relativism, “anything goes.” The phrase ciphers “our natural desire to be free as a bird.”²¹ Have we ever noticed how boring life would be to be governed by such an overall principle, true perennially? How boring is a consistent exception-less eternity! Variety unexpected is the spice of life, and it is vitality that is relativism alive. Relativism is life-essential.

It is not that we have no general patterns here, but once verbalized, made explicit before me, they turn into an oppressive It.²² The fact is that these general patterns hover and haunt us as

²¹ Copleston tries so hard to tame this freedom with a general principle, one general worldview, a definite set of patterns, or whatever.

²² Still, we humans need these patterns, as Copleston would be the first to tell us. So he strains to explicitly produce them while guarding them with thousands of qualifications. It is a pathetic sight (pp. 134-171).

our Milieu, forever resisting our effort at grasping them as “It” or a Thou, whatever it means in this context.

“It is Friday today”; is it a relative statement? Yes, but there is nothing relative about it. This is relativism alive under the Milieu of cultural climate. No wonder “God” our Milieu is invisible, non-intrusive, and “prophets” have to come as mediators to “forth-tell” him. Meanwhile, we on our part need him our Milieu, on pain of disintegrating into random pieces.

Differences indicate riches of diversity, situational conditions are an automobile mechanism for mobile freedom, and understanding by posterity contributes to the depths of implications of the situation just passed, far from indicating boring uniformity of general principles. To be relative is to be free, to be self-fit, self-fulfilled, and so “anything goes” ok, at home as birds in the air where there is nothing to stop them.

All this while, we ourselves must remain free, “anything goes” in our life. How free are we? We now cite five examples to show our life of free diversity in general ineffable unity: marital love, synchronicity, two meanings of logic, two reflections on history, and climates, all exhibiting a Janus-faced relation to freedom and destiny.

Example One: Marital love: Conventionally consummated or no, love makes a marital cocoon in which to bind itself as its home and move around in, both happily and tragically. Now, mind you. Happiness or tragedy is not what love-cocoon was originally planned for.

Love simply wanted to build its own nest, and the nest *comes to* yield joys and sorrows. This “comes to” later is the historical Milieu of love. This cocoon-home spins out countless literary

webs to endlessly fascinate readers. Here is one free life-theme with infinite variations. We love, and anything goes. Besides, spousal love extends self-love, and one self differs from all others. The same names of spouse and self have different senses.

Example Two: Synchronicity: Events happen, and they can take two ways of clustering—consecutive or at the same time. A consecutive cluster of events is causality. We are habituated to “event-c always preceding event-e” and call event-c “cause,” and event-e “effect.” This is our common sense, but there is another sort of events-cluster.

Jung found, via Chinese *Change Classic* 易經, another cluster of events happening. He found that psychic event-s can often happen together with physical event-h. He calls this phenomenon an acausal parallel connecting principle of “synchronicity.” Causality is found by observation; acausal synchronicity is found by participation.²³ The life-world is made of causality and synchronicity clustered together to form mind-boggling contingencies, “relativism.”

Example Three: Two meanings of logic: “Logic” usually means “counting” that is gathering and dividing. When counting divides, it usually conceptualizes to know, and “concept” is an idea pulled out of concrete particulars. When counting gathers, we undergo experience to understand with notions, and “notion” is noted within concrete actuality. Thus we have discerning

²³ C. G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, NY: Random House, 1989, pp. 373-377 (Appendix IV), 427 (Index on “synchronicity”), C. G. Jung, *Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle*, Princeton University Press, 1973, and Rosemary Ellen Guiley, *Harper’s Encyclopedia of Mystical & Paranormal Experience*, HarperSanFrancisco, 1991, pp. 301-305, 595-597.

understanding and conceptual knowing, and *both* sorts of counting are free and logical.²⁴

Example Four: Two reflections on history: Western philosophy of history hovers over history and its writings to consider their overall general principles that rule and govern events and their writing. Collingwood's well-known proposal that history is our present reenactment of past ideas of past people serves as principle of history and its writing.²⁵

In contrast, Chinese “theories of the studies of history 史學理論” consist in going-through 通 writings of history to explain and assess their origins, representations, and methods of writing and editing. Not accidentally, the two pivotal books *on* history-writing carry in their titles the character going-through 通, never above, historiography.²⁶ Importantly, we note that both sorts of reflections on history are legitimate, and “both” here ciphers relativism that freely goes either way and both ways.

Example Five: Climates: Many types of contingent climates arbitrarily settle on us to shape many cultures, yet people remain free to think and behave as they wish. Specifically, the climate-milieu shapes a specific style of persuasion, style of argument

²⁴ Kuang-ming Wu, *On the “Logic” of Togetherness: A Cultural Hermeneutic* (1998), pp. 350-353, and *On Metaphoring: A Cultural Hermeneutic* (2001), pp. 10 (note 23), 54-58, both from Leiden: Brill.

²⁵ R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (1993), and *The Principles of History* (1999), both from Oxford University Press.

²⁶ (唐)劉知幾, *史通* and (清)章學誠, *文史通義*, omitting a further consideration on how both 通's differ, if any. Cf. Wu, *Togetherness*, op. cit., pp. 342-385. This 通-going-through is essential not only in various histories but also in various fields of studies, as Arthur O. Lovejoy realized in 1938 in his pivotal essay, “The Historiography of Ideas,” *Essays in the History of Ideas* (1948), NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1960, pp. 1-13.

and style of validity, and shows that these three are after all three aspects of rational performance.

Argument is the route of rational performance, persuasion is what hits and convinces, and validity is what convinces the arguer, as persuasion is what convinces the hearer, as valid. Validity is persuasion on the arguer as persuasion is validity to the receiver. Rational performance has three climatic sorts—monsoon sort, desert sort, and meadow sort—in Watsuji's opinion.²⁷ All this describes “culture” as mode of thinking.²⁸

Culture-milieu is like smell. Smell is not subjectivity but objectivity initiated toward the subject. Smell is other. I smell a thing and a person as my others; I smell me as my other. One culture's fragrance, culinary or philosophical,²⁹ can be another culture's stench, and can serve an unmentionable cause, among others, of war. I smell all over my culture unawares, until made aware by others to smell it myself, to initiate my reflections on my culture as my intimate other, and such reflections can catalyze concord.

Now, how could we have cited these examples? What is it that enabled us to do so? It is the Milieu of common sense

²⁷ 和辻哲郎, *風土: 人間學の考察*, 東京岩波書店, 昭和三十八年, tr. Geoffrey Bownas, *A Climate—A Philosophical Study* (1956).

²⁸ Copleston recognizes “extra-philosophical factors” (economic, scientific, psychological, etc. conditions) that condition, i.e., determine thinking (1-19, etc.), and asserts that we can understand ways of *thought* of other peoples in other cultures and times (140). He did not resolve this “and,” but places the basis of universal understanding on deductive analytical “true always” principles. Freedom has no room here. His is one mode of thinking in one sort of culture.

²⁹ E.g., Chinese and British peoples look askance at “too neat an argument” as a suspicious propaganda. Cf. Lin Yutang, *The Importance of Living*, NY: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1937, p. 417.

beyond usual formal logic. World-renowned mathematical logician Whitehead's last quip in life says, "The precision is a fake," because not even the supposedly apodictic "One and one make two" can cover *every* concrete case of addition.

For example, "a spark and gunpowder produces an explosion, which is very unlike two things. . . . In fact, there is not a sentence, or a word, with a meaning which is independent of [its] circumstances," which are beyond formal logic to cover, yet common sense has no problem discerning an appropriate situation that makes a specific utterance meaningful.³⁰ This dependence on circumstances is relativism; this common sense³¹ expresses the Milieu that enwraps the dependence. Both joined in I-Milieu enable us to understand addition in "one and one make two." It is time we must consider Milieu.

§ Milieus, Historical and Cultural

We may find this point curious. Looking over these five examples, we note that relativistic freedom is needed for exercises of our I-Thou and I-It activities. Example One of marital love is a free I-Thou exercise. Example Two and Three of two fact-connections and two sorts of logic list I-It (causal, conceptual) and I-Thou (synchronic, notional) exercises.

³⁰ Whitehead's "Immortality" included in Paul Arthur Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead*, La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1951, pp. 682-700, esp. 699-700.

³¹ In the name of concrete living, Lin Yutang eloquently pleaded for "the return to common sense" (416-421) and "be reasonable" (421-426) to conclude his pivotal book, *The Importance of Living*, op. cit., and his *My Country and My People*, NY: Halcyon House, 1937, pp. 109-115. I owe these references to my incomparable friend, Dr. Brien Kelley.

Examples Four and Five concern, however, comparisons of treatments of time-Milieu (history) and region-Milieus (cultures). Milieus must be treated with I-Milieu attitude, and I-Milieu here naturally *compares* culture-Milieus and history-Milieus. What does this I-Milieu treatment mean? To answer, we must look into what I-Milieu is.

Milieu is the invisible air we naturally breathe to live *in* unawares, until we are *made* aware of it by immediately feeling pain, by finding it lacking, absent, foul, or conflicting. Both Northrop in 1946 and Huntington in 1996 were provoked by the pain of the “clash” of milieus that they call the clash of cultures.³² But they did not realize that, even in the pain-situation, the air crucially remains invisible, and it is illicit to treat the foul culture-air as if it were a broken chair.

They have made a category-mistake (Ryle), committed a fallacy of misplaced concreteness (Whitehead). They thought of “Oxford University” as existing *beside* its colleges, taking the mind in the body as a ghost in the machine (Ryle), an oddly out-of-context combination.³³ Ryle’s category-mistake amounts to describing mistaking the I-Milieu for an I-It relation, mistaking the surrounding forest for many individual trees added.

What is required is for me to live in the air to relish the air, to go through many colleges to realize what it means to visit Oxford University, to undergo the various dispositions and behaviors to experience the mind. I must live within the Milieu to “know” the

³² F. S. C. Northrop, *The Meeting of East and West*, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1946. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1996.

³³ All this is rifled from Gilbert Ryle’s well-known *The Concept of Mind* (1949). Cf. M. O’C. Drury, *The Danger of Words*, NY: Humanities Press, 1973 in psychology, the science of elusive mind.

Milieu, and such my knowledge cannot be described because description is possible only in I-It.

The knowledge is a sensitive discernment by living through in a Milieu, not disposable information. Martin Buber could express his discernment of I-It and I-Thou relations because he was not a European while living in Europe. His Jewish Milieu differed from European and their “clash” as it were brought out the two relations, and being in Europe enabled him to express this discernment in an articulate philosophical poetry.

He intuitively expressed the Judeo-Christian God as the Eternal Thou, yet, lacking in I-Milieu relation, he was unable to explain how this Eternal Thou as our Milieu (Acts 17:28-29) is shrouded in mysterious unknowns. Thus various Milieus can be compared by I-Milieu sensibility, i.e., sensitive empathy and receptivity to the environs, each in its unique flavor and fragrance.

We walk out of the pine forest into the vast ocean shore, and at once feel and savor their differences. Likewise, we must go into this Milieu, then go into that, and feel their peculiar air, scents, and warmth, one after another. This experiential undergoing is like comparing two precious friends, for I-Thou has its own I-Milieu atmosphere.

The I-Thou and the I-Milieu can help each other understand their respective modes of understanding. It is likewise with comparing philosophies, for Milieu and philosophy are both global. Philosophy comes out of culture that can be deliberated by philosophy. But philosophy is not culture; philosophy is eminently conscious, while culture often operates tacitly. Culture is Milieu to philosophy, which is unexpressed Milieu to people in a culture.

Thus comparative philosophy goes hand in glove with comparative culture. Comparison is an inter-verb, often tacit, of inter-learning, inter-deepening, and inter-enriching, to inter-elucidation and inter-enlightenment of one's own culture and philosophy, often hidden from notice.³⁴

Cultures and philosophies must not be put on top of one another to hide the ones below, so as to “leak up” from underneath to undermine whatever culture visible on top.³⁵ Instead, cultures and philosophies must be placed side by side, so as for each to inter-illuminate the other about what the other has been unaware of within itself. All this is unheard-of in the Greek Western Milieu that is always explicit, analytical, and clear-cut.³⁶ Copleston was such a Greek-Western thinker.³⁷

We have Milieu that embraces, not principle that governs, for we can do no deduction or induction under the concrete daily sun. Rather, the life-world is a Web of many colors and sounds, as

³⁴ Arthur O. Lovejoy's pivotal 1938-essay on this point is thrown by the roadside—"The Historiography of Ideas," in his *Essays in the History of Ideas* (1948), NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1960, pp. 1-13.

³⁵ Richard Wilhelm must have been undermined, in a psychosomatic illness, by his hidden China clashing the visible West, in C. G. Jung's story, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (1961), NY: Random House, 1989, pp. 373-377. Jung's collective unconscious and archetypes are parallel descriptions of I-Milieu.

³⁶ Michael Polanyi's life-long elucidation of the "tacit dimension" in life and knowledge may have been victimized by his own explicitness. See his *Meaning*, University of Chicago Press, 1975, among others.

³⁷ Curiously, Copleston never defines *culture* or *criteria* to identify them, much less what *philosophy* is, to vitiate his treatment of how cultures relate to philosophies, to show how unconsciously he takes "thinking" as western and understanding of others as what westerners do. So he un-problematically, extensively, discusses *German* three-stage patterns of cultures and thinking (141-150). He I-It-ly treated delicate comparative philosophy and culture, as Northrop and Huntington did. They never *compared*.

vast as east is far from west, as past is away from future. Here things echo one another, events crisscross to happen together (synchronously) and consecutively (causally) with reason of contingency, rhyme of dissonance. History is born of winds of chaos while the sun rises in the east with dews of historic dawn, one day at a time. This Web is Milieu in which things freely move and have their being.

Enwrapped in this Web-Milieu, anything goes. When things get out of hand as did Nero or 秦始皇, “Heaven Web” appears as “sparse, sparse, loose yet leaks nothing,” says Lao Tzu (73, cf. 5). “Loose” lets “anything go”; “leaks nothing” lets the “out of hand” perish. Do the decent perish with the indecent? That’s part of contingency of relativism for us to ponder on, to pry ever wider our sense of decency in I-It and I-Thou.

But the fact, the history-Web, remains “leaking nothing”; world history judges the world, and the judgment is the Milieu beyond our control in I-It, in I-Thou. We call this fact, this history, this Web, “Reality,” “Truth”; these exalted names we can call, and they are beyond comprehension, to keep us on our toes on the go, open, and free. “Anything” still “goes” in relativism under the indescribable Web-Milieu.

What is this Web? Web is interwoven, a mutuality-Milieu. “Anything goes” to interweave, and so violence to the self violates the self, violence to the others violates every other, including the violator, and so violence destroys the violence-perpetrator. “Violation of every other” includes that of innocent victims, however. That is what violates our sense of justice.

Why do doers of good get destroyed with evil-perpetrators? Violation of our “justice” is a mystery of evil in free “anything goes” in the life-world. This is part of the Milieu of mutuality beyond our comprehension. The mystery keeps us humble,

barely receiving its partial boons, e.g., we are not divine under the incomprehensible Milieu-Web, and our “orthodoxy” must be open, ever striving against its own ossification in self-satisfaction, etc.³⁸ In the meantime, the mystery of Mutuality-Milieu continues to keep us on the go, to allow us to be free and historically relative.

What is I-Milieu? The question remains, staring at us in the face. We thrash about to find handy explanations, all inadequate. Seven come to mind, overlapping. *One*, I-Milieu can be like a finger that points me to the moon, *and* like the moon that directs the finger to point at it; Milieu is the pointing finger and the guiding moon, both in one. *Two*, I-Milieu is my school embracing-enabling me to learn-enrich, a seedbed-greenhouse of my self-growth and self-harvest.

Three, Milieu is like culture that is that in which we behave, making our living sensible. Culture is our meaning-context while it is in turn made up of all our behaviors. Culture and we inter-make, and so do Milieu and I. *Four*, Milieu is like history that is our meaning-generating womb, yet this womb itself is not wise or not-wise.

Five, Milieu is like comparison to inter-learn and inter-enrich, while each item compared may not be rich. *Six*, Milieu is revealed ineffably in relativism with voluptuous riches of variety and differences ciphering Milieu that comes alive in relativism. *Seven*, Milieu is like Gestalt that gives context, perspective and meaning to things and deeds that in turn compose their Gestalt.

These are all metaphors, none quite adequate to the ineffable Milieu to which and in which I live. I lose words to express my

³⁸ This is the main thrust of Martyn Lloyd-Jones’s *Why Does God Allow War?*, Wheaton, IL: Good News Publishers, 2003.

Milieu, as I am short of words to describe my living, or am ignorant of my face that I am. Milieu is too common and too real for words and images. Milieu is my realm, my place, and my smell that I do not know, and do not know how to express. I just *show* it unawares as I live on.

I am redolent of my Milieu where anything goes for me, where I am completely relative to myself and to my others. Relativism expresses such free indomitable differences, all at home in their Milieu. Relativism itself differs as locales differ. Such relativism, each different, expresses *its* Milieu and no other. This fact shows in philosophy as well.

Supposedly universal, philosophy is actually its own Milieu expressed in thought, in terms of which the philosophers shape their Milieu in turn, as said well by Langer for whom the Milieu is “tradition,” “environment,” “forms of thought,” “mother tongue,” etc. She said,³⁹

Every philosopher has his tradition. His thought has developed amid certain problems, certain basic alternatives of opinion, that embody the key concepts which dominate his time and his environment and which will always be reflected, positively or by negation, in his own work. They are the forms of thought he has inherited, wherein he naturally thinks, or from which his maturer conceptions depart. . . . As every person has his mother tongue in terms of which he cannot help thinking his earliest thoughts, so every scholar has a philosophical mother tongue, which colors his natural *Weltanschauung*. He may

³⁹ Susanne K. Langer, “Cassirer’s Theory of Language and Myth,” in *The Philosophy of Ernst Cassirer* (1949), ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp, La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1973, pp. 381-382.

have been nurtured in a particular school of thought, or his heritage may be the less conscious one of “common sense,” the popular metaphysic of his generation; but he speaks some intellectual language that has been bestowed on him. . . A great philosopher, however, has something new and vital to present in whatever philosophical mold he may have been given. The tenor of his thought stems from the past; but his specific problems take shape in the face of a living present, and his dealing with them reflects the entire, ever-nascent activity of his own day, . . . and a true philosopher is a person to whom something in the weary old world always appears new and uncomprehended.

Still, we outsiders see only thought moving on its own, showing its own sentiment. Thus we see French philosophy in Marcel, Spanish philosophy in Ortega, Italian philosophy in Abbagnano, German philosophy in Heidegger, as well as Chinese philosophy, medieval philosophy, and the list goes on as the inexhaustible list of human geographies⁴⁰ and histories of our life-world.

The life-world is the Milieu of all Milieus, History of all histories, the All-Encompassing that is Nowhere and Everywhere, for this Milieu is the “where” of nowhere and everywhere of all geographies, the “when” of every-when and no-when of all histories. This Milieu is the grand That Inexpressible that is nowhere every-when.

⁴⁰ Cf. an interesting yet superficial Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker, eds. *Geographies of Modernism: Literature, Cultures, Spaces*, London: Routledge, 2005.

At this point, the notion of comparison must come in, for every existing Milieu is a unique blend, a comparative synthesis, of various prior Milieus; such is what history means. History is miscegenation that is not just a source of strength; it is a fact of actual existents. Comparison is an inter-verb-in-time of mutual learning and enrichment into an ever new synthesis that is an existent stronger than the last one before this one.

Comparison is thus dialectically Janus-faced. In comparison, entities confront to exhibit their respective *identities*, for without A as A, B as B, no A-B comparison can occur. After comparison, inter-mixing then occurs, to A-ize B, B-ize A, and yet the B-ized A is A enriched, not B, and the very mixing of B-izing shows A, not B; similarly, the contrary occurs in B to show B more confirmed as B than before such inter-comparison occurred. Comparison mixes, variegates, and confirms to deepen identities.

So, when one faces existence honoring its Milieu, everything turns valuable and included. Negatively put, you cannot pluck things out or isolate it from its Milieu without devaluing its true existential potency, that is, its powerful meaning ex-pressed in its interrelationships embraced in its Milieu.⁴¹ This interrelationship is so ubiquitous and common, and yet so hard to capture in consciousness. It ciphers I-Milieu that does not hover over things but is their very texture. We are aware of it as its “common sense.”

§ Milieu and Common Sense

The I-Milieu has two interrelated elements, the “I” and the “Milieu.” “I” can be free in “anything goes” only when embraced in the Milieu; “Milieu” is meaningless without being the life-

⁴¹ This paragraph came from my friend, Dr. Brien Kelley, my kindred spirit.

world of my self at home there. This interrelation is so common and sensible that we call it “common sense,” all too naturally grasped by us, in fact, we are born into it as our taken-for-granted habitat.

The whole people, race, and nation live in this commonsense home-of-life, and common sense philosophers intuitively rally to it. Common sense is the meaning-womb of all our thoughts and acts, so much so that, rightly or wrongly, it is often identified with I-Milieu itself. Thus common sense is a handy cipher to understand I-Milieu.

Unfortunately, it is not easy to articulate what common sense is, precisely because it is so *common*, so much available everywhere. What “taking for granted” means is the most difficult to explain. Besides, “locales shift, things shift,” says Japanese common sense, where “locale” as common sense differs as place and time shift.

So, we are caught in a circle, i.e., to know Milieu, we must know common sense, yet to know common sense we must know Milieu. This strange dilemma shows that what is essential is so close to us that we do not realize it, how a “straight look” evaporates what appears only “out of the corner of my eye,” as Pirsig is never tired of saying.⁴²

Let us put the difficulty this way. Philosophy in the West is a thinking activity, eminently conscious; Freud is a philosopher in that he succeeded to bring to conscious consideration our unconscious hid away from thinking. Philosophy is confronted with a supreme challenge, however, in common sense that is not

⁴² This is the major point of Robert M. Pirsig responsible for the abiding charm of *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, NY: Bantam Books, 1974. It was sadly missed in Ronald L. DiSanto, Thomas J. Steele, *Guidebook to Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, NY: William Morrow & Co., 1990.

unconscious yet not quite conscious among people, either, who take it for granted and follow it unawares.

Philosophers in the West are indeed aware of the authority and effects of common sense as a basic presupposition of our thinking, and often stress its importance as such, while thinkers in China tell us *how* to get to common sense, as Chang Hsüeh-ch'eng does, and *how* common sense operates as being reasonable, as Lin Yutang does.⁴³ Let us go to the West first, then to China.

Western philosophers tout common sense as if it were uncommon, and keep harping on it as an authoritative indispensable presupposition of our thinking, its logical premise. They stress “sense” in common sense, and don’t know what to do with “common” except identifying it as “common *consensus*” that is eminently conscious. Thus Thomas Reid and later G. E. Moore philosophically “glorified” common sense. Urmson, the dean of history of British philosophy, sums up Reid’s ideas:⁴⁴

Reid gives a list of principles of common sense in the contingent sphere which is very similar to the one Moore gave in his ‘Defence of Common Sense’. It includes: (a) ‘the existence of everything of which I am conscious’; (b) ‘that the thoughts of which I am conscious are the thoughts of a being which I call myself, my mind, my person’; (c) ‘that those

⁴³ S. A. Grave’s historical “common sense” in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards, NY: Free Press, 1967, 2:155-160; cf. index on “common sense” on 8:409. Chang Hsüeh-ch'eng (1738-1801) 章學誠, *文史通義* (葉瑛校注), 北京中華書局, 2005. Lin Yutang, *My Country and My People*, op. cit., pp. 109-115; *Importance of Living*, op. cit., concludes with common sense as reasonable, pp. 417-426.

⁴⁴ Jonathan Rée and J. O. Urmson, eds., *The Concise Encyclopedia of Western Philosophy*, Third Edition, London: Routledge, 2005, p. 329.

things did really happen which I distinctly remember'; (d) 'our own personal identity and continued existence'; and (e) 'that those things do really exist which we distinctly perceive by our senses, and are what we perceive them to be'. Anyone who doubts these principles will be incapable of rational intercourse and those philosophers, such as Hume, who profess to doubt them cannot do so sincerely and consistently.

We are surprised at how dull these "principles of common sense" are, perhaps because this straight look evaporates common sense the fresh irresistible.

More arresting is the fact that uncommon people show—demonstrate—by their loss of common sense how essential it is for living; common sense is "common" that appears in the uncommon.⁴⁵ How feeble, though, are all these adumbrations of common sense!

Here is Western philosophy as descriptions of common sense. All Kant's critical philosophy itemizes features of common sense, such as time, space, and categories derived from Aristotle⁴⁶ who got them from common sense. Phenomenology describes structures of appearance of things, what is common sense. Moore defends common sense as the base of thinking whatever. Ryle straightens structural "category mistakes" to bring philosophy back in line with common sense.

⁴⁵ All books of Oliver Sacks' (a neuropsychologist [psychosomatic thinker?] teaching at Albert Einstein Hospital in NYC) describe uncommon people.

⁴⁶ "If common sense is identified with what is commonly believed and its criticism is thought of as designed to elicit and defend the truth in common beliefs, then Aristotle may be called the first common-sense philosopher." (S. A. Grave, in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards, NY: Macmillan and Free Presses, 1967, 2: 157)

Wittgenstein watches common sense as he explains thinking, the connection of ideas, as game, fibers crisscrossing, and family resemblance. Buber points out how we are related in two ways, I-Thou and I-It, all sane and commonsensical, as if no one knew them.⁴⁷ Our addition of I-Milieu is in line with common sense, though the addition may or may not be a continuation of the Western tradition.

When Santayana courageously claims to build his “system” on common sense he explicitly says he is not going out of line with the philosophical tradition but underlining it, while stressing how important common sense is to our thinking⁴⁸:

Here is one more system of philosophy. If the reader is tempted to smile, I can assure him that I smile with him . . . *my system is not mine, nor new*. I am merely attempting to express . . . the principles to which he appeals when he smiles. There are convictions in the depths of his soul . . . a certain shrewd orthodoxy which the sentiment and practice of laymen maintain everywhere. [This is] common sense [that], in a rough dogged way, is technically sounder than . . . schools of philosophy . . . [I give] to everyday beliefs a more accurate . . . form. . . . I stand in philosophy exactly where I stand in daily life. . . .

The wonder here is that there are not more philosopher than we see *explicitly* professing that they are thinking enwrapped in common sense, that even those who explicitly use “common

⁴⁷ The list is our own. G. Berkeley, C. Peirce, H. Sidgwick, B. Russell, M. Black, and many well-known others are omitted here.

⁴⁸ George Santayana, *Scepticism and Animal Faith* (1923), Preface. Curiously he soon dropped “common sense” in this volume and in his one-volume abridgement, *The Life of Reason* (1905-1906).

sense” as a philosophical centerpiece never bother to look at common sense to describe *what* it is even while appreciating how basic and indispensable it is for thinking. They are all busy being intent on the *effects* of common sense.⁴⁹

Scientists rework to refine common sense that they think is a crude unorganized mass of established beliefs, but actually natural sciences extend common sense, never go out of it.

Common sense can never be established with that kind of complete logical substantiation which certain rationalists seek. It rests upon a prior acceptance of an existential subject-matter, of “animal faith.” The life of reason is not the basis of man’s existence any more than of nature’s ways . . .

Thus Dewey’s philosophy patterned after natural sciences is “experimentalism of practical common sense” as his logical theory is based on the ordinary experiences of common sense as necessary presuppositions of inquiry.⁵⁰

Now, *Chinese* thinkers take the Tao as the wherefore and wherefrom of all things and events, and this Tao manifests itself in common sense, what is the common people’s being so without knowing their being so. We can obtain this common sense of all times and places by studying history, the story of timed accumulation of common sense, to mirror human experiences.

⁴⁹ Common sense is peculiar in that how it works is often mixed—involved—with what it is. Peirce’s “belief-habits” (*Collected Papers*, V: 359) can define what common sense is or describe how it works. This feature further proves common sense as elusively pragmatic, living-involved.

⁵⁰ These sane assertions are rifled from *The Philosophy of John Dewey* (1939), pp. 82, 112-3, and *The Philosophy of George Santayana* (1940), pp. 127, 188, both edited by Paul Arthur Schilpp, and published by NY: Tudor, 1951. These sayings remain true today.

Such storytelling is literature, so in China history, literature, and thinking (philosophy) are at one, and often comes out as commentaries of the classics.

Common sense in China (and perhaps in the world) operates as the mean, i.e., dwelling in the center and the common, in life. This attitude abjures excess and seeks moderation; it lives among the common things and people, balancing two extremes to go at their center to harmonize them, enveloping them all by appealing to life, not to theorization and systematization but personally involved, not abstract but always flexible, factual, and fitting, that is, expedient and compromising toward happiness.

All this is a portrayal of how common sense works, not what it is. We can at most vaguely adumbrate the general feature of common sense, as follows. Common sense appears to be a “consensus gentium” as an of-course criterion of truth, and relied on by common folks unawares in life and thinking. Of course it can turn out to be factually incorrect (geocentric view); still this fact is irrelevant to its ubiquitous utility, for common sense is an accepted context of meaning and truth, the locale where we commonly believe, feel at home and relax.

Thus all philosophies, both in the West and in China, tirelessly exhibit common sense as if it were uncommon. Literature untiringly portrays the dramas of common sense; even the epic-and-extraordinary is out *of* the ordinary. Chinese philosophy is literature at its best, as Lin Yutang extols common sense in China.⁵¹

⁵¹ Lin Yutang eloquently pleaded for “the return to common sense” (416-421) and “be reasonable” (421-426) to conclude his pivotal book, *Importance of Living*, op. cit., and his *My Country and My People*, op. cit., pp. 109-115.

Common sense is our Milieu we are unaware of as we are of Emperor Hun Tun, whose story goes as follows.⁵²

Emperor of South Seas is Shu; Emperor of North Seas is Hu; Emperor of the Middle is Hun Tun. Shu and Hu oftentimes meet at Hun Tun's Land. Hun Tun treats them very well. Shu consults Hu on how to repay Hun Tun's virtue [of hospitality], saying, "People all have seven holes to see, hear, eat, and breathe; this [person] alone has none. Let's try and dig them." Daily one hole is dug; seven days, and Hun Tun dies.

The key feature here is that Emperor Hun Tun treated everyone very well although he himself had no holes to see and breathe. In other words, he reigns at the center-land of everything as their Milieu. Then, upon turned to and drilled holes, Hun Tun dies of the others' grateful drilling, as Chuang Tzu wryly portrayed. Common sense (sense of gratitude) toward I-Milieu (Hun Tun treating us well) can turn out surprising.

Now, is there anything noteworthy anywhere in common sense here? Nothing, and yet how extraordinary this story is! We are brought to realize how strange it is to see what has been routine and tacit in life. That is common sense that points to Milieu, *the* extraordinary ordinary.

Common sense is one of the manifestations of our Milieu. We all live and move and are "sane" within common sense, which personally, publicly, and non-verbally enwraps us all. All laws and order, all police work, all socio-politics and intercourses,

⁵² *Chuang Tzu* 7/33-35; it is Wu's literal translation. See Kuang-ming Wu, "Emperor Hundun 渾沌: A Cultural Hermeneutic," *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy*, September 2007, pp. 263-279.

commercial, ethical, artistic, religious, and all decencies, they all have common sense as their baseline, their final court of appeal.

Common sense is the sun that makes everything visible and sensible, but is not visible in itself, for it just blinds us, destroys us, when we directly look at it to analyze it, to describe it, to treat it as an object. To realize the existence of something ubiquitous, hitherto unnoticed, and is impossible to *directly* describe, is an eye-opening life-revolution, whose repercussions have been traced so far, e.g., persuasion, relativism, and now common sense. We must now consider what indirection in all this is and means.

§ Milieu the Indirective

If what Milieu means is hard even to adumbrate, then our awareness of Milieu can be typified with indirection. As the unusual reveals the usual, so not-seeing, we see; that's indirection, the way we see Milieu, and this indirection reveals I-Milieu where I am, what I am, and how I am, if not why I am, i.e., the origin and meaning of where, what, and how I am.

Indirection also describes history, for history is being made unawares by the agents until made aware of by latecomers. Indirection further describes the penetrative going-through 通 of China's historical reflections on history, for this going-through 通 history is itself history and its meaning. Both history and reflections on history are the I-Milieu spread in time. My relation to my Milieu, the I-Milieu, is thus spatiotemporal, and has two showings, vaguely and ambiguously.

The I-Milieu is *vague* as mist. Russell the clear-headed logician confessed to his life-long task as a persistent endeavor to cut through the mist of vagueness toward clarity, and yet he is hesitant. On one hand, "Philosophical progress seems to me

analogous to the gradually increasing clarity of outline of a mountain approached through mist, which is vaguely visible at first, but even at last remains in some degree indistinct.”

On the other hand, he also said in the same breath, “The world in which I have lived has been a very rapidly changing world [and I am not] indifferent to the very remarkable transformations which it has been my good or ill fortune to experience. . . . I cannot believe in ‘sacred’ truths. Whatever one may believe to be true, one ought to be able to convey without any apparatus of Sunday sanctification.”⁵³ This is because he was sincere enough to change his mind as the years went by.

Change of mind and change of times may signal mist and unclarity in which Russell had to live to dispel mist, to make “progress” *out* of the mist. Russell was in the mist (changing mind) trying to dispel the mist (unclarity); clearing of mist requires mist. The pursuit of clarity is a *vague* project indeed, as if trying to decide *which* single hair plucked makes the head bald. The project is made indistinct and unclear by the Milieu being vague, in which the project of clarification is pursued.

The Milieu is also *ambiguous*, “driving around” in a circle. Upon capturing *this* point, we are shown *that* point giggling and coming, and grabbing both these points lands us in a tight squeeze of neither this point nor that point, for the situation changes as we grab both points, as we think we grabbed them.

In the meantime, the rumbling of more points coming echoes ominously at us in the horizon. Life is such a delightful and frustrating mess of ambiguous cacophony. Life ciphers the I-

⁵³ This is Russell’s revealing confession in his Preface to *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell: 1903-1959*, eds. Robert E. Egner and Lester e. Denonn, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1961.

Milieu I live in—ambiguously. Such is how indirection goes, always clearly capturing unclarity; it is a delight, a frustration, and a maze amazing—during which time the Milieu appears to us. Paul Ricoeur is sensitive to the indirection method. Hermeneutics is the method of deciphering indirect meaning beneath the apparent ones of myths and symbols, for “the symbol gives rise to thought.” Such “hermeneutic detour”⁵⁴

Has led him through such inquiries as *The Symbolism of Evil* (1960), which analysed the symbols of myth and religion, and *Freud and Philosophy* (1965), concerned with the interpretation of dreams and unconscious desire, to an impressive variety of studies of the signifying activity of language, ideology and fiction—*The Conflict of Interpretations* (1969); *The Rule of Metaphor* (1975); *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* (1981); and *Time and Narrative* (1984-1985). . . . Ricoeur insisted that meaning is always mediated through cultural, linguistic and social signs.

Ricoeur impresses us; we think that such indirection is needed because I-Milieu is as hidden underneath its appearances as the layers of meanings are under myths, our intuitive hunches of the Milieu in which we live. But we are not convinced; does indirection have to be so much laborious as Ricoeur practiced it? Don't we directly feel I-Milieu, however indirectly we have to express it?

⁵⁴ Richard Kearney, “Paul Ricoeur,” in *Concise Encyclopedia of Western Philosophy*, op. cit., p. 333.

Now, we have a strange dilemma of experience vs. its expression here: Experience is felt directly, yet cannot be expressed directly. Something directly in us can be expressed only indirectly. What does “direct” experience look like? What does “indirect” expression of it mean? First, we consider direct experience.

Try and shut our eyes and close our ears, as Emperor Hun Tun naturally does, and then we will *feel* embraced by the eyeless earless reign of his great hospitality in Midland. Or even close our surveying analytical eyes, and just hear and overhear music—let it spill over us. We will then feel confronted and enveloped in the developing music. Music is an invisible developing order of Milieu enveloping us as it develops, and cannot stay put.

Or even just drink a cup of water, and feel the water enter inside and pervade us. All such experiences are so direct they cannot be de-scribed, put down on paper, but can only be indirectly expressed. Every time everyday as I routinely eat, drink, and go to sleep, I experience the I-Milieu, experience being at home.

Mind you. Such experience is not at all mystical or exotic but is my daily routine. Without this routine I cannot even live, it is part of my being alive—and this experience is indescribable precisely because it is direct. As I cannot see my own nose that is too close to me, so I cannot describe my experience that composes me myself, to form my base for all my judgments. Judgment cannot judge its base, which can only be *expressed*. Similarly, I cannot truly describe my direct experience; I can only express it, in indirect showing.

Let us be more precise. Direct experience is too common and ubiquitous to talk *about* as if it were a specific object in front of

us. In addition, direct experience is so intimate that it cannot be argued for at all. It can only be expressed in poetic epigrams, and such expression of direct experience cannot but be poetic in motion, poetically musical, and quite naturally. All this adumbrates Milieu the ineffable, expressible solely as musically poetic.

§ Milieu the Musically Poetic

My Milieu can only be felt, intuited, experienced. Such experience cannot be described but can only be expressed, and this sort of experience-expression is a poet's work. Experiential poetics here cannot help but be musical, resonant, spreading into Milieu. Milieu and music are intrinsically entwined. To understand the poetic nature of Milieu we must discern how impossible it is to describe music; as invisible and ungraspable, music is no object but can only be felt and dwelt *in*.

Milieu is a music of beings, a symphony of be-ings and doings that booms throughout the life-world in time, developing as it envelops every being, whose every idea-fiber moves from one premise to another, to crisscross into a conclusion, which in turn becomes a new idea-fiber to move on, as the being-music of reasoning, logically, causally, synchronically, i.e., as a cosmic symphony.

To sing in such a chorus in words—"word" is an idea-fiber—is to perform a being-music, a musical poetry of ontological reasoning, the logic of symphony of various spheres called Milieus. This idea-fiber-word connection is particularly apparent in China where characters—original onomatopoeic ideograms—flow one into another to interweave a musical tapestry of arguments and proposals. In China, to word-argue and character-

write is to sing an idea-poetry-music to invite the audience to join in.

Only a musical philosopher-poet can be equal to this musical task. Schopenhauer is here at the pinnacle of philosophy, influencing Wagner, Nietzsche, Mann, and Wittgenstein, among many musicians, literati, and thinkers, and Schopenhauer claims to have been influenced by the Oriental musical sentiment.

We can only dwell in music and be tuned, but cannot watch and grasp music as an object. Music lets exist and is not an existent; it is an enfolding power to tune and enable, invisible and indescribable in itself. Music is resonance-power in which existents become as they are. How does it do so?

Music literally shakes and moves our whole self and our inmost world; music is the cosmic language everyone instantly and directly understands, striking us, compelling us. Its rule and order is expressible numerically, and our train of thought, our argument, and its validity are thus all musical.

Of course some philosopher would demur, "Validity is intrinsic to argument, independent of arguer's satisfaction." This statement ignores reality as musically relational. Without "It" there would be no "I"; without "I" there would be no "It." Thus without an arguer arguing, there would be no argument, and without arguer persuaded as valid, there would be no validity. This fact is not contingent; it is an ontological fact and necessity.

Reality as correlative is presented as music. Argument is a logical movement in which the arguer understands she is arguing. Persuasion is logic-movement turned intelligible-satisfactory as valid, to the arguer *and* the hearer; the "and" here resonates musical. We should never pretend that validity is perspective-free, much less persuasion-free. Validity carries persuasion to

compel assent from arguer and hearer. Intelligibility, assent, satisfaction, and persuasion are progressing correlatives as poetic music.

It is idle to argue that without validity there is no persuasion, but without persuasion there can still be validity. “Unpersuasive validity” is an oxymoron, an unintelligible non-existent. Persuasion is so much intrinsic to validity as to cipher validity—if honesty pervades arguer and hearer. This point has cash value for Milieu.

The inevitability of the persuasion-validity relation powerfully argues for the inevitability of the reasonable inebriating power of musical poetry *throughout* the life-world. This point “proves” the inevitable rationality of musical poetry in the whole cosmos; three points, inevitability, rationality, and musical poetry, they entwine to compose the cosmos in lilting persuasiveness. “The world is full of thoughts,” “singing in the rain,” and “she is beautiful as night,” these three sentiments are now singing in the same chorus, thanks to the cosmic-Milieu being musical poetry.

Innermost inevitability of musical poetry here is rational and irresistible *throughout* the life-world, where the “throughout” ciphers Milieu, impossible to objectify. Milieu is musical and poetic, and such cosmic poetic musicality is rationally compelling and inevitable; no other expression is adequate.

Now, all this validity-persuasion connection amounts to demonstrating rationality as coherence, fullness, and harmony at the core of things, facts, and people, and such a coherent harmony, ever on the move, is musical poetry. This interconnection among all in all is what makes sense; rational is music and poetry inside every being and among all beings. All this fullness and harmony describes I-Milieu that makes common sense to explain culture and culture-shock, coherence and

correspondence theories of truth, deontological universalizability and utilitarian “most happiness for most people,” etc.

Explanation is explication, one meaning-*ply* wombed *out*, then another, of motherly Milieu, as parts of cosmogony-myths, birthing and returning, birthing-returning without ceasing, a cosmic music in creative variations, rhythmic modulations returning to the womb. This is “she, beautiful as night,” my calm womb to dawn soon to slowly embrace those trees of life, covered with dews. All is quiet silent music of life, the poetry-music of I-Milieu.

Now let us hear Chuang Tzu’s stories of Emperor Hun Tun again, together *with* his story of Butterfly Dream.⁵⁵

Emperor of South Seas is Shu; Emperor of North Seas is Hu; Emperor of the Middle is Hun Tun. Shu and Hu oftentimes meet at Hun Tun’s Land. Hun Tun treats them very well. Shu consults Hu on how to repay Hun Tun’s virtue [of hospitality], saying, “People all have seven holes to see, hear, eat, and breathe; this [person] alone has none. Let’s try and dig them.” Daily one hole is dug; seven days, and Hun Tun dies.

Last night, Chuang Chou dreamed to be a butterfly; flitting, flitting, he was a butterfly, going as he wished, not knowing he was Chou. Then suddenly, he awoke; now he was so thoroughly Chou. But then, he did not understand—did Chou dream to be the butterfly? Did the butterfly dream to be Chou? Chou and butterfly, they must be distinct. This it is that is called “things changing.”

⁵⁵ *Chuang Tzu* 7/33-35, 2/94-96. Both stories are quite short and pungent.

Chuang Tzu's Hun-tun-story must be retold to embrace his strangely ordinary butterfly-story, where butterfly hovers as dead in life-after-death-after-life, fluttering life-after-death after life after death. Hun Tun dying is butterfly fluttering; those who have ears must hear this, to call to those who have forgotten word to word with, to chant and sing these stories of no stories. I-Milieu is here, beautiful as night in silent music of death, ever wombing the dawn of fresh change.

Now we have heard exempla of Chuang Tzu the musical poet mumbling light stories, not Kafkaesque heavy ones; these light stories are poetry in prose, sparkling dews vanishing into our inside to dawn us into sense, to lay us afresh in bed as each day dies into night, to womb us into fresh dawn, covered with dews of short stories to sparkle in sense, silently singing life. Dews of short light stories encircle us inside; they are dews of Milieu soft inside as light little stories, smiling poetry to hum tunes haunting, hushed.

Here is I-Milieu alive, beautiful as night, fresh as dawn dews, word-forgotten exempla humming not-humming, beauty-forgotten beauties of tunes tune-forgotten, sparkling this way and that as Mozart's dew-drops, poetry wordless, silent music all over. My I-Milieu is my tree, flowerless, fruitless, in simple naiveté shading me to allow me even to complain that I don't see flowers, don't eat fruit. Aesop is smiling. Here is my I-Milieu alive, tender and shy fresh as a little missy, who mothers me with fresh dews of dawn, caring for me as I take care of her. She is *my* I-Milieu.

§ Milieus, Names, Words

Anything anywhere anytime I meet can be, in fact, is, my Milieu, without which I vanish into thin air, and even thin air is my needed Milieu to vanish into. Correlatively, I can be Milieu to anything anytime for it to come about existing. All this is the true sense of relativism alive, where anything goes inter-milieu-ing.

My Milieu is what I meet anywhere I go. They are my neighborhood of my friends, even my enemies. My Milieu is obviously my home where I have parents and children, my siblings and relatives. My home my Milieu is trees; each of them I meet as I walk casually, and I look up to it, and take a deep breath.

On my way I meet birds twittering unseen, squirrels skittering around, dogs and cats walking across my way, even horses trotting and chickens hopping. I smile at them my Milieu. I look around “my” buildings that form my cityscape where I walk around. I look at the resting area with chairs dusty and empty. They are my Milieu molding me.

I enter my house my home; things familiar, art objects, interior décor, with bibles and books, tablets and typewriter, CDs and stereos, kitchenware and knickknacks, they all envelop me into myself, making me at home. This is my self-ed realm; things are looking at one another self-less-ly. My home is my self-ed realm where I look at things *and* my self-less realm where things look at things. “Look” here is looking and assuming a look, an act of inter-milieu-ing.

A little missy comes with thumb in mouth, with her blanket rubbing against her cheeks. She is at home in her blanket that takes her anywhere anytime. She can jump with her blanket, and lie down anytime on her blanket. My “blankets” are my books I

browse, my journals I jot, my cell phone I reach for, my toolshed, my desks and lamps.

Trees I meet are my blanket that embraces and stabilizes me. I create these Milieus as I am created by them; children parent adults who parent them, and we are inter-parenting alter egos. I am made of and made in my Milieus that shift as I make them, out of things that envelop me as I meet them now, and then soon later, and then even later. My continuing existence of a particular sort—of this Milieu—depends on this Milieu, which depends on this particular self, me; the I-Milieus inter-milieu to co-exist.

My body and I also inter-milieu; “I am my body” (Marcel) and my body is I, and this “and” makes “I.” I am my psychosomatic Milieu. Autoeroticism, for example, is healthy and health-producing, and how I write makes and molds what I write as I write out my thoughts. My work and what I work out inter-mold, the how and the what entwine, and the persuasive and the valid inter-milieu.

All this happens because my body is milieu-ed alive in my mind that is milieu-ed in my body—to make sense, exactly as Confucius’ and Plato’s disembodied minds are milieu-ed in my embodied mind to make sense. Collingwood calls it reenactment, but we might as well call it re-embodiment re-milieu-ing.

It is well-known how Socrates’ and Confucius’ ideas appear enfolded in dialogical Milieus, and this dynamic incarnation reenacts itself dialogically each time they appear among their readers in subsequent days. This fact holds for every idea of every sage, Jesus’ or Buddha’s or any thinker’s. Ideas always appear dialogically milieu-ed. Milieus create ideas.

Names clue Milieu to create. To name is to create, and to know the name is to access the named existent. The

“superstition” of guarding names from the enemies is a serious practice, no laughing matter, for not knowing a name means non-existence. I told my little Peter of four, “Peter, go get my watch in the house.” “OK, Dad,” he ran in, came right out, saying, “I can’t find it, Dad.” “That’s funny. I’ve just put it on the desk. Go get it.” “OK, Dad,” he came right back, “I can’t find it, Dad.” We went in. “Here it is! Can’t you see the watch?” “O, I didn’t know *that’s* a watch.” No-“watch,” no watch.

No wonder, the Name-School 名家 with Confucius are serious on right naming 正名 to save the world from chaos, as cosmic as the Judeo-Christian God who creates by calling names,⁵⁶ “light,” “day,” and so on, out of chaotic nothing,⁵⁷ for six days, and on the seventh day stops calling.

The stoppage is the Sabbath-cessation of creation-by-naming to namelessly address the Namer, so that we come home to the sacred Name beyond all names, the Milieu of all Milieus. From the command not to call the Namer, we must learn not to call names whatever in vain. Chinese people never call their superiors by name, but always address them by “titles” to respectfully evoke their “relations.” Evocation here reenacts and re-presents I-Thou relations.

Words thus name things, and cannot be casually thrown about as vain babbles. Words must be worded with, word-forgotten (Chuang Tzu). Musical poetry is worded, one at a time, powerfully charged, criss-crossed, interwoven in time, to form an epigrams-in-music, evoking existence. Words charged persuade us *valid*. Argument musically moves epigrammatic words to move arguer, argued-for, and argued-to. The argument composes

⁵⁶ Similarly, God calls some persons’ names into prophets.

⁵⁷ Here chaos and nothing are synonymous.

a persuasive music, charged names parading, creating, persuading.

Lin Yutang negatively presents this point to clinch *The Importance of Living*.⁵⁸ He said, in effect, that sages are silent; stupid folks babble vain words. Even Beethoven tends to argue deeply while Mozart just sings as birds born to sing.⁵⁹ Sages stay themselves; their few words and hushed epigrams express their charged silence. It is the sagely that is common *sense* milieu-ing us into reasonable life, solid existence, true being, beautiful as quiet night to refresh us into the dew-covered dawn.

I have a headache; I hug my head. You have heartache; I hug your heart. Hugging *milieus* you and me into you and me. Counseling is a listening innermost presence to pained existent pouring out its twisted presence. Inter-presence inter-milieus to inter-create a mutual dawn, an eternal morning softly beautiful as restful night. Words are few and short, gestures calmly persuade to validate the twisted pain, to embrace and soothe, beautiful as night milieu-ing us both toward dawn. The sages counsel us from hushed past; we rest in them in our historical studies too deep for words—all is calm, at home.

Now, I and Milieu inter-birthing, names creating things, and words few, simple, and deep, these three are here. Someone says these points are dated and antiquarian; people today often casually name things, and no less casually throw words around. They pay no more attention to outmoded naming and wording.

⁵⁸ Lin Yutang, *The Importance of Living*, op. cit., pp. 417-426; they are concluding pages.

⁵⁹ There are other subtler differences among other composers, to be sure, but this is the simplest and starkest contrast I see, and this contrast is more than enough to busy ourselves for a while.

We sadly agree. Deprived of honor and reverence, our life and life-world turn dishonorable, disrespectful, despicable and callous, out of touch with ourselves, quite inhuman. Woodruff⁶⁰ noted today's loss of reverence without seriously realizing how serious it is for us all today, i.e., total devastation.

Self-devastation shows in ubiquitous neurosis and its disrespectful manipulation that goes by a casual name, "counseling." Despicable style of life devastates everything, everyone, and the whole world. All-out callousness results in global devastation, in ecological mess. What's good to be fashionable, modern, and up to date *this way*?

We thus sadly agree to today's absence of seriousness in naming and wording, and their sad aftermath. Honor loses itself into wasteful dishonesty; reverence loses itself into calculative manipulation. Names are abused; words are cheapened. An ocean of glib callousness drowns people, things, and tasks. Nothing stays any more; people are afloat and jittery, and the entire globe is adrift in ruins. Two proposals are here to save ourselves and the devastated world today.

One, we are required to dwell in the Milieu *beyond* drifting milieus today that cheapen everything. Take a deep breath and live in a deep different dimension, and we will note this. Without the name of "watch," Peter could find no watch. We have no names of "honor" and "reverence" today, and we cannot find them anywhere; our life is cheapened. We must *name* "honor" and "reverence" in life to regain such life-attitudes to people, things, and tasks. Our life would be deepened in honor and reverence again.

⁶⁰ Paul Woodruff, *Reverence: Renewing Forgotten Virtue*, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001. See its review by Kuang-ming Wu in *Taiwan Journal of East Asian Studies*, June 2006, pp. 293-298.

Two, world problems rampant today deeply disturb all our thoughts and behaviors, our very living. World problems arise out of clashes of cultures, to which Huntington and Pearl Buck, Lin Yutang, Eliot, and Northrop respectively alerted us.⁶¹ Culture is the base of all our thoughts and behaviors. The I-Milieu inter-birthing is culture at its essential base, to manifest in recalling honor and reverence. Today, intercultural learning in respectful naming and wording is a must.

The Name-School and Confucius have tried and practiced such righting of names in their age of profound disturbances. They are being reenacted today by common sense philosophers, language analysis of Ryle and Ian T. Ramsey, and critical overhaul of thinking by Wittgenstein and Derrida. They all intuitively rally to our three points, respect of milieu, words, and names, as remedies of world ills.

And of course wording and naming are our Milieu working in us, by us, and on us. The I-Milieu acts out in respectful naming and wording, nudging us to cherish and honor them. We must follow its nudging, and then we will come to honor and cherish our neighbors, friends, home, trees, small and big animals, and Nature as a whole, as we cherish our dear little Missy's blankets. Ecological reverence will revolutionize our life and reform our socio-politics toward cosmic concord.

⁶¹ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1996. Pearl Buck's Introduction to Lin Yutang's *My Country and My People* (1936), NY: John Day, 1938. F. S. C. Northrop, *The Meeting of East and West* (1946), NY: Macmillan, 1950, T. S. Eliot, *Notes towards the Definition of Culture*, London: Faber and Faber, 1948. Cf. Samuel Fleischacker, *The Ethics of Culture*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994. Mircea Eliade, *The Two and the One* (1962), University of Chicago Press, 1965.

The I-Milieu we are in as we practice it is thus the salvation of our life-world together with ourselves. I-milieu is the heart-music we make that ex-presses our deep awareness⁶² to home us; we dwell in our music of I-Milieu we reverently make to dissolve disturbances, inmost and worldwide, in peace and respect the world over, again and again. Now, “again and again” ciphers history. I-Milieu is history on the go.

§ Milieu as History

History is I-Milieu in time. It is quite elusive because it is so intimately concrete with us. It is the least tangible of gutsy actuality and the subtlest in revealing us by involving us, for history is ourselves in time ongoing, comprehending past and present in flux to push us into the future. History is an invisible, concrete, and dynamic accumulation of the now's to confront us now into the future. The power of history is incalculable, for history is shaped by us to shape us.

We must be mindful of history on pain of repeating it (Santayana) and yet it is so elusive as to be almost impossible to grasp it in our awareness. We think we know history until asked what it is, as Augustine described time. History as our being “aware” amounts to pragmatic reenactment, to re-experience the past without repeating it.

As such in flux, history dissolves concepts without reducing them to a nothing, without collapsing us into nihilism; on the contrary, history in flux establishes us in flux. History is the

⁶² Music as “expression of deep awareness” parallels Schopenhauer’s music as “objectification of consciousness,” though music is no object, awareness is no rationalizing will.

commonest phenomenon of life yet the most mysterious and elusive, for history is we ourselves living to quest after what it is.

As such to establish ourselves, history is the sole sure wisdom we have, for afterthought is best thought. Still, this wisdom keeps changing as time passes inexorably, enwrapping us, enabling us, and supporting us. “Contra history” is not even thinkable or intelligible, for no one can oppose history. It makes no sense to oppose history; we don’t even know what it means. We can only confess we have been wrong this way and that. History judges us in this sense, yet we kneel before no one.

History is storytelling; to know history is to tell stories. We walk around with stories ready anytime to tell, we each in our respective ways. History is thus autobiographical to show our unique self; history is our signature self, our signature. My story—my history—must be told to myself, to undergo myself, to understand myself.

To understand music we must hear it, take time to undergo it; history is my music all my own, uniquely in the making to make sense of myself inexpressible, indescribable otherwise. Socrates said self-examined self-understanding is a *sine qua non* to life worth living. He did not say that self-understanding is history-music that objectifies myself without making me into an object, for here I remain the subject being objectified. All this is I-Milieu in praxis. Every description of history describes I-Milieu in action.

All this is common sense that sounds so uncommon. We all know it yet we hear it so novel, as if we have never heard it before. History is our common sense forever fresh and uncommon. Facts are stranger than fiction, so as to be fresh materials for fiction that spins out common sense we have never

heard of before. History is our past ahead of us, the past in our future so exciting.

The doctor heals the same diseases over and over again, or does she? The days pass, over and over again the same way, or do they? The “or” here is a misnomer, for healing and days are both the same and different. History is such same difference, repeating without repeating, reenacting with a difference each time history happens.

History happens as a fact occurs, same different, contingencies collected to make sense beyond logic, for logic is in the final analysis just analytical, self-repeating, tautological, a-historical. The wonder is that logic itself develops and grows *here*; logic is a-historical history. History includes everything, even something not-historical.

In the all-time bestseller, that hilarious fiction *Journey to the West* 西遊記, a monkey calling himself the Great Sage Almighty-as-Heaven 齊天大聖 was paradoxically imprisoned—how could the almighty be imprisoned?—in the Mount of cosmic routine Five Goings 五行山, and then released to attend Monk Tripitaka 三藏僧 in journey to seek the Tripitaka Scriptures 三藏經, and thus they traveled through all sorts of exciting adventures.

Now we begin to wonder. Wasn't their travel a journey through the Five Goings? Wasn't the Tripitaka the Monk himself? If so, wasn't their journey through Five Goings an “imprisonment” in Five Goings, after all? But then, how exciting this fiction is, an all-time bestseller for both kids and adults! What an exciting exercise in futility this fiction is! No wonder, the naughty monkey was named Mr. Soon Sensing Senseless 孫悟空, for playing with senselessness is a naughty excitement.

All this rehearses Buddhism, where history is empty senseless. For us, the seeming senseless repetition is reenactment, a real exciting history. History is taken as empty senseless because it is all-inclusive, where everything comes around to amount to what has been already. But in history what goes around comes around to excite us *anew*. Collingwood calls it reenactment, repetition of the same with a fresh difference.

History is stranger than fiction to make a fiction of Journey to the West Heaven that is no journey. Time hums along to haunts and booms, to go on making history to make sense, to make us. That is I-Milieu in action, enveloping us all over, as we make our own Milieu.

History as all-inclusive describes how history has features beyond counting. Two can be cited, the unique as the general, and the past as the present. What has happened could have happened only in *that* “here now” in “*this* way,” and no other. Such unique events can yet be known anywhere anytime because it could happen anywhere anytime, perhaps similar enough to be recognized as “this event” incarnate.

This fact of replicable unique factuality describes how the past gone and no more is alive vividly today among us. We remember and we shiver at being haunted, in joy and in sorrow. What has happened happens once and for all, uniquely and generally, gone and here now, and this “and” describes history all-inclusive.

History is remembrance tucked in our inner recesses forgotten. Remembrance makes sense because of forgetting, and forgetting is sensible thanks to remembrance. We forget to remember, and then we remember to forget, to get on into the future, where we are surprised to meet what we have forgotten, and remember.

Remembering resuscitates the past, so as to forget to go on into the future. To remember is the past, to forget is the future, and both contingently happen in the present. “Remember to remember,” Mr. Forget says at present, smiling as it forgets the past into the future. That is history alive humming along. All this is the common sense music, ever familiar, ever fresh, of the I-Milieu embracing us that we make.

Happening is happenstance that makes sense retrospectively as historical sense. Contingency is reasonable in the future’s eye to head toward rationality. Reasoning must be reasonable this concrete way, on pain of ivory-tower manipulation of ghostly signs, to become “artificial intelligence” unintelligible and unhistorical, as it is cut off from the life-world of contingent happenstances.

Machine is separate from history yet inseparable from its human creator, and machine going its own way turns human persons machinating, perversely contriving. Impersonal machine machinates persons. All this elucidates the intimacy of history with human bodily persons. My Milieu is my body as much as it is my history. (To be continued.)

我與境地 (I)

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摘要

布伯的「我與你」及「我與它」之外，人間世尚有「我與境地」的關係。我與境地有分別而不可分離，不可混淆。我與境地息息相關，顯示於常識，文化，呼吸，及我的身體與健康裡，我間接地似知而不知境地。

在我與境的關係裡，論證顯出說服力，相對論描述獨特而相關的生命力，樂府詩詠歌於文字與書法，以命名，以文句，思維相纏，諸宗教相與，一直描述歷史。以上所舉皆例示「我與境地」的關係之不可不悉，以使人生完全煥然一新。

關鍵詞：境、我、文化、常識、樂府詩、我的身體、間接性、相對論、
宗教、思維相纏、命名

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