

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

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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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§ My Body My Milieu

I am my body (Marcel) that makes me to be my self. My body is my Milieu in which I am what I am. My language and attitudes are sexed (Merleau-Ponty⁶³). My feeling is visceral; life is emboweled. Killing myself disembowels, as Japan's hara-kiri 腹切り or seppuku 切腹, self-embowelment, paradoxically shows forth what I really am. Such showing forth can turn into a showoff, however, to kill the very purpose of killing oneself. No wonder, Camus says, "There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide," that explicates "an absurd reasoning."⁶⁴

Another complex manifesting my Milieu as my body is this. I am what I eat, as I eat what I am, and my body is my thinking as

⁶³ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, London: Routledge Kegan & Paul, 1962, "The Body in its Sexual Being," pp. 154-173. Cf. his *The Structure of Behavior*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1963. He describes without probing into the why of what it is, however. We are trying to supply the bodily rationale of his careful description. Descriptive phenomenology tends to run baseless this way.

⁶⁴ This is how Albert Camus begins his incisive essay "An Absurd Reasoning" collected in *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, NY: Random House, 1959, p. 3, though he seems to think incoherently if not absurdly. Here, does absurd reasoning have to be absurdly reasoned out? We ask in bewilderment. The whole essay wanders for lack of anchorage in the body that thinks.



I eat. My thinking is not my bodily thinking, my thinking that happens to be bodily, but rather my body itself thinking, my body that thinks; such my body is thinking.⁶⁵

Now, if my body thinks as it feels, then my feeling thinks and my thinking feels, and a felt thinking is true thinking, truly persuasive. Persuasion here proves. We have considered this point. It is no use persuading if an argument is invalid, but once it is valid, does it not persuade valid? What is validity for but to persuade us into buying it as valid?

Rhetoric leaves proof and turns into decoration over invalidity, because thinking leaves my body, to turn disembodied, into cognitive manipulation of conceptual signs. Invalidity arises out of my thinking disembodied, as evil arises out of my self taking holiday from myself to wander around, blown all over as dead leaves in the winds of whims. Sincerity imbues authenticity that heads toward authentic validity.⁶⁶

By the same token, if my body thinks and eats, then my eating thinks to nourish my comportment as deliciously decent and harmonious as I eat healthy. My healthy eating molds my morals, and socio-politics builds on socio-economics; “Enough clothing and foods, and we know decorum decent,” says Mencius (1A7,

⁶⁵ See Kuang-ming Wu, *On Chinese Body Thinking: A Cultural Hermeneutic*, Leiden: Brill, 1997.

⁶⁶ Martin Buber thus links evil to inauthenticity and untruth. Truth and goodness are earthed in us, quite autochthonous. See Martin Buber, *Good and Evil*, NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1953.



7A22). Nature is a mutual eating society and ethics is ecological economics.⁶⁷

Moreover, sex is related to eating, taking in the other to fulfill each in the other, to parent each in the other into a family, into a neighborhood, into a socio-polis. Sex is mutuality-enjoyment of gender-differences to engender the other in each, that is, to engender the other by happily taking the other into the self. Thus sexual exploitation of various sorts perverts sex to destroy sex and self.

The gender-differences of various sorts engender sexed languages in sexed attitudes, tender and virile, caring and heroic, and the intercourse of these sexed differences composes a happy healthy society.⁶⁸ To use such gender differences for selfish gain at the price of others perverts gender roles and destroys society together with the self.

So, sex, eating, thinking, these bodily three, interfuse to compose my Milieu to which I relate and with which I interact, to envelope into myself. Music is here smiling. Beethoven's melody argues to freely make a musical point, whatever it is,

⁶⁷ Edward Goldsmith (*The Way: An Ecological World-View* [1992], Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998) and Frederick R. Gehlbach (*Messages from the Wild: An Almanac of Suburban Natural and Unnatural History*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002) said so in quite a roundabout way.

⁶⁸ What is said here about sexual disparities is not tied to physiology. It is applicable to social actuality anytime. Homosexuality has sexual distinctions of the said sort. "Male"-virtues belong quite often to ladies today, as "female"-virtues are claimed by men.



while Mozart's melody just sings, sings with abandon, and sings nature.⁶⁹

Mozart does not babble but sings, shows, and carries us along, sweeping us into happy harmony inside and out, to body forth cosmic concord. Such a body-singing draws people; Mozart is popular forever without fawning on people. Music is Milieu on the move to mold harmony irresistible, all over, all around, inside and out.

To extend Schopenhauer, nature objectifies itself in music into ourselves as we objectify ourselves musically into nature. Our bodies cannot help but objectify ourselves into cosmic harmony, among distinct beings. Such music of bodily beings describes the I-and-Milieu—inter-milieu-ing, inter-enriching.

Body-singing quite often turns into dirges, however, as historical China is well aware of. China keeps expressing this sorrow since Ch'ü Yüan's *Ch'u Poetry* 屈原楚辭 wailing over it, the Preface to the *Poetry Classic* 詩序 touching it, and all subsequent literature lamenting over it, including today's. The ill is nepotism, spun out of bodily life, chronically corrupting socio-politics.⁷⁰ The ill comes about this way.

⁶⁹ So, do not look for argument in Mozart, for he has none. Do not look for delightful abandon in Beethoven, either, for he is seldom abandoned. Musical enjoyment occurs only appropriately to appropriate musicians, all of whom are geniuses in their *own* right. The fact remains, though, that musical enjoyment takes place both in musical argument and in musical abandon, just that enjoyment can occur only as we look for the right sort of enjoyment in the right sort of musicians.



My comportment, initiated in my body, naturally develops from myself to my family at home to develop into community, and then the nation. Nation has its root in people's homes, as Chinese epithet of "nation 國家," literally "nation 國 (as) home 家," illustrates well. Thus in China, the ruler-lord is parent-officer 父母官 of the people.

This notion is a common sense and common ideal shared by everyone in China. Even the tyrant urges his people to obey him their parent-officer, and his people in turn demand him to behave as befitting their parent-officer. Both tyrannical rule and popular revolution proceed by this shared notion of the ruler being people's parent-officer. Government is personal, and politics is interpersonal family harmony.

Mind you. The Chinese ideal of socio-politics is *harmony* 和, not identification 同. Harmony is composed in differences, as bodied forth in musical and culinary harmonies. China extols government by musical and culinary joys. In fact, China seems to accept the culinary harmony as a musical harmony of taste-buds and visceral joys of nourishment, and both harmonies are as dynamic, total, and intimate as "I am my body." Our human calligraphy sings the music of reason in eating and socio-politicking.⁷¹

⁷⁰ See Lin Yutang's descriptions of it in *My Country*, op. cit., p. 378, Index on "political corruption" and *A History of the Press and Public Opinion in China*, University of Chicago Press, 1936.

⁷¹ On "government by music," see the ancient *Rites Classic* 禮記 (樂記), 荀子 (樂論篇), 呂氏春秋 (大樂, 古樂, 音律, 樂成), and 蔣義斌's "<樂記>的禮樂合論," <<東方宗教研究>>, 1991, October, pp. 73-107. On "government by



Such sentiment of musical and culinary harmony in socio-politics is wholly opposed to the standard Western view of politics as basically adversarial between the ruler and the ruled, so much so as to require compromise with social contract. Such has consistently been the case from Hobbes through Locke and Jefferson, and makes Thoreau to hurl defiance at his government, “That government is best which governs not at all,”⁷² that is, the best government is no government.

In contrast, China’s government is bodily harmony, musical and culinary, but unfortunately it almost naturally leads to risking nepotism in bloodbaths throughout history. Nation as one blood-related family leads to nation-as-*my*-family, no other; one single royal family comes to monopolize the world through decades and centuries. Age-long nepotism of selfishness engenders tons of problems, for good reasons.

cooking,” see 左傳(昭公 20 年), 國語(鄭語, “史伯為桓公論興衰”), 呂氏春秋(本味), and 說苑(雜言, ch. 17), etc. On Chinese calligraphy as musical art, “大美學家宗白華說: ‘中國的書法本是一種類似音樂或舞蹈的節奏藝術. 它具有形式之美, 有情感與人格的表現. 它不是摹繪實物, 卻又不完全抽象, 如西洋字母, 而保有暗示實物和生命的姿勢... 書法... 成為... 表達最高意境與情操的民族藝術.’” (back-cover of 董其昌書宋詞冊, 遼寧美術出版社, 2001) 聞一多 said that 文字 paints things’ sense while 畫 paints things, in “字與畫” 聞一多全集, 武漢湖北人民出版社, 2004, 2:205-207. We are much impressed with the Chinese sentiment of bodily harmony—expressed in music and cooking—extended to a most general praxis of social comportment and cosmic political management. Precisely this personal harmony sadly plunges us into nepotism. We will consider how this happens, and try on how to resolve the problem.

⁷² Thus begins Thoreau’s resounding “Resistance to Civil Government,” *Walden and Resistance to Civil Government: Henry D. Thoreau*, Second Edition, ed., William Rossi, Norton Critical Edition, 1992, p. 226.



My body has innate tendency to extend to my others. Mencius (1A1-7) caught this innate tendency in Tyrant Liang Hui's 梁惠王 spontaneous release, of innocent bull in jitters being dragged to sacrificial slaughter, out of his heart unbearable at the sight of (people in) pain 不忍人之心, and then Mencius urged the tyrant to naturally extend it to "unbearable government 不忍人之政," on pain of being unable to keep his own family.

Sadly, selfishness constipates this innate tendency to extend. As this innate expansion of my innate unbearable heart is unnaturally forced to freeze and coop up (how it could have happened remains a mystery) in selfishness, I turn callous, stiff, and stony, defying my neighbors in pain demanding me to help.⁷³ I am now an uneasy lump of a monster imprisoned in my own insensitive inhuman defiance. "Don't I have rights to be me?" This seems to be how nepotism arises in bodily family-government.

I defy my innate tendency to extend to others, "old-ing my old folks to reach people's old folks, young-ing my young folks to reach people's young folks" (Mencius 1A7). My innate tendency is my inner music. Music must sound *forth*. Music stopped sounding forth stops sounding, and stops music itself. My defiance stops my music, and I have to defy my defiance in the end to be myself; if I don't defy my defiance, other people will do it for me, and it is bloody revolution.

⁷³ Extrapolating from Simone Weil, Murdoch claims that I must obey the absolute demand of my neighbors expressed in their pain. Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, NY: Schocken Books, 1971, p. 40.



What can we do, then? First, we must note something important. Music and cooking are not egalitarian but harmonies of *different* tunes and tastes. Harmony comes from differences together. Difference connotes discrimination, and harmony sounds suspiciously similar to nepotism that also discriminates. Harmony is no indiscriminate uniformity but also has its peculiar stresses, tendencies, and styles, somewhat similar to different sorts of nepotism in different dynasties.

We must then discriminate two sorts of discrimination. Harmony is no monopoly. Nepotism assigns different functions to people solely from the perspective of selfish monopoly of governance by one family, *excluding* all others. In contrast, although harmony also assigns different functions to different tunes and tastes, its central concern lies in manifesting the *whole* music, the whole dish, and the whole world of people.

Neither harmony nor nepotism has the West's impersonal equality under the law of blind justice, both harmony and nepotism are rooted in "I am my body," and the functions of individuals are respectively recognized as distinct in both harmony and nepotism, and yet one is quite independent of the other in nature and character. We also remember that the West's supposedly impersonal equality, under law and social contract, often breeds nepotism as well, though perhaps easier to spot there than in China.

Remedy against nepotism in the Western adversarial context is the impersonal system of contractual law. Remedy in Chinese bodily family context is to take on the worries of the *entire* world



as my own worries, to take on caring for the entire body of common folks as my own life-task, loving them as if we were all injured.

Both remedies have not worked well often, however, although often appealed to. Still, Richard Nixon's Water Gate affairs were resolved without firing a single shot or shedding a drop of blood. Throughout so many dynasties in China there have appeared many loyal subjects and brave heroes risking their lives, and we would surmise that things would have been much worse otherwise.⁷⁴

Despite all odds, we have hope because repetition in history is no iron-clad mathematical series analogous to ten divided by three. There is no law against us to somehow switch back the age-old corruptions of nepotism, the sad selfish translation of personal politics into private one.

If we have translated cosmopolitan body-politics into selfish private nepotism, we can translate it back to body-communal politics. We can somehow retranslate intense privatization in nepotism back into interpersonal sharing of happiness with all, as Utilitarians and Utopians have envisioned again and again. Life, our bodily life, consists in this exciting effort at this struggling retranslation, as the fish swimming against the stream to spawn for posterity.

⁷⁴ Among many documentaries to this effect, see Lin Yutang, *A History of the Press and Public Opinion in China*, University of Chicago Press, 1936, NY: Greenwood Press, 1968.



That is revolution that has been practiced in repeated bloodbaths in history, but this time it will be quieter, less bloody, and more thorough, so we hope. After all, we all live the truth, “I am my body” and so we *can* “old” our old folks *to reach* people’s old folks, “young” our young folks to reach people’s young folks (Mencius 1A7), and turn all within the Four Seas into brethren, as Greek sophists also advocated.⁷⁵ The more of this sane truth we practice, the merrier we *all* get. Our hope never dies, nor does our struggle.

Now, in all this, one feature stands out for our attention, “repetition.” Matters about my body are same different, which I love to repeat; in repeating them, they come out *different*. I don’t mind repeating them, for my routine is my living, which I don’t mind at all. To think of it, this phenomenon is itself strange.

I don’t mind enjoying the same dish I have enjoyed before, enjoying the same music I continue to enjoy, sleeping and waking up every night and day, living in the same house, living with my children and my parents, gripping the same pen, talking with my good old friend, and so on.

Love loves to be told what it knows already, and then things happen, repeatedly, and I don’t mind it at all! Such is not the case with cognitive or mechanical matters, however. Seldom do we get excited at being repeated “ $2+2=4$ ” in usual situations, any more than we would be excited at going everyday to work at an assembly-line factory.

⁷⁵ *The Analects* 12/5. W. K. C. Guthrie, *The Sophists*, Cambridge University Press, 1971, pp. 44, 241, and 344, index on “unity of mankind.”



The fact is, dull mechanical replication or mathematical repetition seldom occurs in the human world. Human life is made of *bodily* repetitions, such as heartbeat, breathing, walking, routine business transactions, even the weather that comes back repeatedly, anything that touches my bodily life, none of which repeat mathematically. The hospital is routine and vital, different from assembly-line factory. “I am my body” is my truth ever fresh and vital, so routine, so much of common sense, and so extraordinary.

Love loves to be told what it knows, and loves to repeat what it is best at doing, that is, doing loving acts, because love is my body-act, my body living on, and my body-living keeps reenacting same-differently. Does history repeat itself? Well, it does and it does not, and so no iron-clad deductive rules for history have ever been devised, despite the fact that we clearly recognize patterns in it. We have to say history rhymes itself, as if we knew what it means.

This is history that records an accumulation of our body-living that haunts; here yesterday is fresh as today, and exciting as tomorrow. Here tomorrow is as graspable as today, for we have records of yesterdays, we have history to mirror our living forward. This is what it means to say we humans are historical, not quite as instinctive as animals, although we are also animals. We are not “naked animals”⁷⁶ but historical animals, thanks to being aware that “I am my body.”

⁷⁶ Desmond Morris' *Naked Ape* (1969), NY: Dell Publishing, 1971, overkills.



§ Milieu in Involving Thinking

We now turn curious. What *sort* of thinking have we been engaging in as we presented I-Milieu? It is not quite our ordinary way of thinking. Usual reasoning evolves from premises to reach a conclusion; it is an evolving thinking. The Milieu embraces everything, involving everything to describe the situation; it is an involving thinking.

Evolving thinking argues to clinch a point; involving thinking plays with⁷⁷ evolving thinking to live on, to enable things involved to go on, and clinching is senseless here. In evolving thinking validity is life, at which the thinking aims. In contrast, involving thinking persuades to convince, and persuasion here is all-inclusive.

When someone laughs, failing to be persuaded, involving thinking embraces the laugh to persuade us, saying, “No laugh, not enough to be Tao.”⁷⁸ Un-persuaded laughs are involved in persuasion; it is Milieu-thinking. This is because Tao has nowhere not there, even in piss and dung, for the lower we go, the more we see it shown, as we step on the lower part of a pig to assess it. As pigs nourish us, Tao the ambiguous Hun Tun treats us all quite well.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Cf. “playing with argument” in Kuang-ming Wu, *On the “Logic” of Togetherness: A Cultural Hermeneutic*, Leiden: Brill, 1998, pp. 150-215.

⁷⁸ “Upper persons hearing Tao, assiduously go-on it. Middle persons hear Tao, as-if there, as-if not. Low persons hearing Tao, greatly laugh it. No laugh, not enough to be Tao.” Lao Tzu says (41).

⁷⁹ *Chuang Tzu* 22/43-46, 7/34.



Mind you. All these points are stated in short stories. The points are bottomless, and the above abridgements are just one imperfect extrapolation among countless many. All extrapolations are graciously embraced by these stories smiling at them. Story-thinking is Milieu-thinking that involves softly, unobtrusively.

The whole situation is musical. Beethoven “argues” for a free musical point inexpressible in words, and teaches us to enjoy argument as music, and to make an argument enjoyable—persuasive—as music. Mozart does not even argue; he just innocently shows, and we are disarmed, while Mozart has to go *this* way. This inevitability is “validity” that persuades; persuasion and validity join in the inevitability of musical showing.

It is said that, when asked what he meant, Gabriel Marcel went to the piano, played a tune, and said that *that* was what he meant. What he meant is there staring at us, seeping into us, flowing over stuttering words. Milieu-thinking is music-thinking that involves and bodily embraces to make sense beyond words, embracing words, overflowing them.

In any case, such is how Chuang Tzu comes to mention his opponent Confucius more frequently than Mencius his contemporary who is supposedly Confucius’ legitimate authoritative heir. Of course, Chuang Tzu also *enjoys* “debating” with Hui Shih the Name Scholar 名家 who opposes Chuang Tzu head on. The Chuang-Hui struggling confrontations actually show an inter-involvement of two sorts of thinking, evolving and



involving. Such is also Taoism-involving meeting Confucianism-evolving.

I-Milieu involves Yes and No, that is, Yes in No, No in Yes, internecine, inter-nascent. This is the logic of togetherness, a radical both-and embracing either-or. A teacher listens to two disciples arguing, goes to one and says, “I think you are right,” and then goes to the other and says, “I think you are right.” A third disciple says, “But they are mutually opposed; how could both be right?” Whereupon the teacher said, “And I think you are right, too.” Milieu-thinking is the “too”-logic, an involving thinking.

All this amounts to saying that involving thinking plays with evolving thinking to involve everything, and so everything (including evolving thinking) is used and involved as ploy to present I-Milieu. The Milieu in involving thinking is thus *indirective*, saying things seemingly irrelevant, to point to Milieu indescribable, for description pinpoints while Milieu cannot be pointed *at*. So we describe all sorts of situations, so common and routine, and then smile. Here are some examples, exempla mostly from Chuang Tzu.

Chuang Tzu (2/94-96) dreamed last night to be a butterfly; he was sure that he was a butterfly fluttering. Suddenly awake, he was now sure that he was a man, not butterfly. On second thought, however, he was not sure. Was he a man having dreamed a butterfly, or a butterfly now dreaming a man? He the man and the butterfly are distinct, and this it is that is things inter-changing, for distinction enables interchange. Dream is thus



an involving thinking, *both* either-or (distinction) *and* both-and (inter-change).

Hui Shih said (26/31-33), “You words are useless.” Chuang Tzu said, “Knowing uselessness, we can then talk about use. In the vast heaven and earth, people use only sole-areas to walk. Useless areas once dug away, is sole-area still useful?” Hui Shih said, “No use.” “The useless is then useful, clear as sun-and-moon.” Staying opposed, use and uselessness inter-involve to inter-support; contradictions present I-Milieu.

By the same token, Chuang Tzu proposed wording word-forgotten, in no word, no silence, i.e., not words alone, not silence alone, but involving both, words in silence, silence in words. *Thus* it is that Chuang Tzu declared, “Great Tao declares not,” to name its Name unnamable, to do without doing, and nothing not done.⁸⁰ All this presents our common sense that is not unconscious, yet not quite conscious.

We may have noticed that the subtle commonplace is presented in a story-form. Milieu-thinking is story-thinking that *involves* contradictions and contingencies beyond usual logic. History is concrete storytelling, repeating without repeating, for

⁸⁰ *Chuang Tzu* 1/22 (聖人無名), 2/59 (大道不稱), 7/31 (無為), 12/7 (無為為之), 25/51(非言非默), 26/49 (忘言與言), and th list goes on. The entire *Book of Chuang Tzu* is imbued with such involving thinking. The book is a Milieu-book that is filled with incompatibles from the point of view of evolving thinking, and yet appears so natural in our common sense, and the book calms us with all its incompatibles. This is because all-inclusiveness contains incompatibles in the view of evolving thinking, and such incompatibles cipher all-inclusiveness to put us at ease, at home.



each concrete involvement has its own direction at the time, and then another direction at another time, and all this while, all these directions come to show family resemblance as intelligible history.

No wonder, history tells stories. As music goes through dissonance to make rhythmic sense, so history tells stories of irrational contingencies into a coherent sense for posterity. History is musical reason in time as music is I-Milieu embracing, an involving thinking, also in time. Time undergoes; an involving thinking undergoes to understand.

Thus time, history, music, and Milieu, they are all reasoning in the making by embracing everything, and inter-involving everything. It is powerful thinking indeed that is yet so gentle, unobtrusive, and all-inclusive. When thinking includes everything, the thinking appears haphazard. The wonder is that the very haphazardness here calms us as it puts things in perspective. We all feel at home here, for Milieu *means* home. Such is the very character of the I-Milieu our home and our life-world.

But there is the all-inclusive and there is the all-inclusive. Picasso also captured two or more visages of the face at once in a single painting, which appears oddly crooked. He may have captured fame for it, but not too many may feel at ease watching his paintings as people do at Chuang Tzu. Chuang Tzu butterfly-dream is not quite Kafka's hero in *Metamorphosis* dreaming to be a green bug. What is the difference?



We are all human, and so whatever we think naturally mirrors nature. Rorty disliked philosophy as mirror of nature, though, and he has not quite succeeded in setting up its alternative since then. Ricoeur honestly described conflicts of interpretations, but has remained skeptical about how best to deal with the conflict.

We all see things darkly in a dark mirror,⁸¹ and honesty in describing it may help dispel the conflict; no contrivance here, please. Still, our honesty in mirroring our mirroring does not guarantee consensus of a natural comfortable sort. Is it due to cultural difference or Milieu-difference?

Or is it the difference of having or not having music, the musical flow? But we have many sorts of music, but still it is the way it should be, isn't it? The main thing is to be comfortable. My baby-blanket is not your blanket, and no one, not even myself, can design my blanket; it just comes out of my I-Milieu beyond designing.

Perhaps the I-Milieu gives us a clue. The Milieu is that in which I am, and that can be so intimate as to be my body. Still, I am not my Milieu but related to Milieu and shaped by Milieu. In other words, what gives me life and comfortable identity is the hyphen. “-” between the I-Milieu, the fit that makes me forget myself at home. I don't want to be jolted by angular Picasso or

⁸¹ Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Princeton University Press, 1979. Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations*, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974. Austin Farrer, *The Glass of Vision*, The University Press, Glasgow, 1948. These books produce problems more than solutions, for none is aware of I-Milieu beyond consciousness and unconsciousness.



grotesque Kafka, and this “I don’t want” expresses my fit in my own I-Milieu, my blanket, not yours, that decides *my* comfort.

Can I be a misfit in I-Milieu? Yes, by being selfish, self-obsessed, *against* the Milieu, as we have considered a while ago. To cure misfit, we do well to be a Mr. Hun Tun, ambiguous in himself, and treats all around him very well, expressing his disinterested interest in everyone. Ambiguity here must implicate forgetting selfishness. Never mind sticking up for my rights. Instead, I must blend in, as kids do. My I-Milieu would then appear of itself, and my blanket comes about.

Hun Tun and kids have one thing in common, honesty. There is honesty and integrity in intellectual pursuit as much as in living, for intellect is an integral part of human living. Truthfulness is part of truth more than we think it is, and machinating contrivance is not part of it.

Rather, artless honesty is true art, true art that is truth. Mozart inspired Einstein intellectually, says Philip Glass the musician,⁸² and we are not surprised. Mozart draws me also because I *feel* he is so disarmingly sincere. Honesty, intellect, and music, they go hand in glove, if not synonymous; they make my blanket, my Milieu.

§ Milieu in Religions

Perhaps, then, the “-” in I-Milieu is my salvation from

⁸² Philip Glass, “Einstein and Music,” in Andrew Robinson, ed., *Einstein: A Hundred Years of Relativity*, NY: Harry N. Abrams, 2005, pp. 153-155.



self-cheat, self-pretense. Religion is here, the Beyond between the I and the Milieu, the Beyond as my Mediator. God is both the Milieu and the Mediator between “I” and my Milieu, to make and continue to re-make me absolutely honest, no pretense.

Of course, religion can be said to be my blanket of Mozart, or intellectual pursuit, or anything I am comfortable in, my blanket. Religion is my blanket because nobody can be dishonest in “my” blanket that softly hugs me into me. Religion can be the still small voice of silence whispering in me from beyond me, to softly straighten an Elijah in me, jittery, defiant, self-righteous, and unconsciously dishonest.

Religion is clearly the voice of Delphic Daimon to Socrates, calling him not to pretend but to be radically honest with himself, to literally be dead honest to himself to death, to live forever through history among us, as Spiegelberg reported.⁸³ Honesty is authenticity declaring “I am what I am,” “Here I am,” “Here I stand.” Honesty is solidly immortal, Mozart’s resounding clarion truth of the historic music inside us all.

But what Daimon, which God, do I have to hear and obey? Which religion do I follow? Usually no one was born without religion, but if I follow what I have since childhood, I am in trouble. So many of them I have, how should I deal with their conflicting plurality? Here is my little talk to cherished readers on comparative religion.

⁸³ Herbert Spiegelberg, ed. *The Socratic Enigma: A Collection of Testimonies Through Twenty-Four Centuries*, Indianapolis, IN: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1964.



So happy I am to meet you here, my dear reader, and I am sure you are happy as well, for no one would purposely read these pages for pain. This is, I assure you, because we all live to seek happiness, life is the root of happiness, and religion is the root of life. Religion is our ultimate happiness, all-comprehensive.

The human world is, however, an infinite ocean of pain. In religion, all our problems in the end come to naught in the eternal calm, in the joy of the fresh dawn. The eternal calm is the quietude of Nirvana, the ultimate joy of no joy. The joy of the fresh dawn is the Resurrection morning, when Jesus is asking if we have enough to eat (John 21:5), ineffably mysterious. To come home to this ultimate of joy, we must repent our former life (Christianity says) to silently meditate every minute (Buddhism says).

Not accidentally, we gather here to think on religion as the joy of all joys. This is what it should reasonably be, won't you say? Still, religion is such a vast and deep theme that we must consider only one of its concrete difficulties, i.e., "comparative religion."

"Comparative religion" is made of two components, "religion" and its "comparison," and so our consideration is divided into these two sections. "Religion" is ineffably mysterious, and its "comparison" is our *human* acts of inter-learning to inter-deepen.

A. Religion



As we think of religion, we must think of a line. The place above the line is the trans-mundane realm where we are not; it is beyond words, beyond our knowing. The place below this line is this mundane world where we are; it is the world of our language and knowledge. All religions are the realm above line manifesting itself to the realm below line. This description of religions includes Buddhism, for if all people walking on the street are Buddhas, “All people on the street are Buddhas” would be senseless tautology.

The realm above the line is mysterious beyond words, the realm below it has words, and all religions straddle both these realms, and so religions cannot help but use words to refer to mysteries beyond words. Thus expressions in religion present a problem. Besides, religion is about the eternal where one or many is irrelevant, and yet there exist so many religions in the human world. Now, what does “many” mean in the eternal? On these two difficulties we must consider three points: One, how to express the inexpressible, Two, what attitude to adopt to religion, and Three, why many religions.

One: How We can Express the Inexpressible

The function of religion is to manifest the inexpressible trans-mundane realm to mundane expressible realm, and so cannot help but express what is inexpressible. Religion is ineffably inexpressible yet must express in our language such inexpressible mysteries. This is the basic difficulty in which religion resides. Now, how can we express the inexpressible? I can see seven ways.



[1] Religion is like the wind just ceased blowing. The Big Clod belches its breath, called “wind”; when windless, it is “chih t’iao-t’iao, chih tiao-tiao” (Chuang Tzu). This phrase, “chih t’iao-t’iao, chih tiao-tiao,” means nothing, yet this senseless phrase did express no-wind. Religion is heaven-piping, heavenly music, true music hugging silence. Here, sounds perform no-sound, the louder it goes, the quieter it is. The rest is all noises, no music at all.

[2] Religion is mysterious beyond words, so whatever thing is said out. Buddha is toilet tissue that wipes our bottoms, we need it everyday, and so we need Buddha everyday. Tao is piss, we have it everyday, and so there exists Tao everyday. And yet at the same time we can of course say Buddha or Tao is no toilet tissue or piss. To say tissue and deny it is to engage in “no word, no silence.” Religion appears here.

[3] Religion is full of contradictions. No contradiction, no religion. Contradiction is to say it and then say its denial, to wipe away what is said. God exists and does not exist, he is the Absolute, out of the world, and is incarnate in this world. Similarly with Nirvana of which we cannot even attribute “non-existence” to its not existing. Those who enter Nirvana enter this world to save its people in mercy. “Nothing, wu” exists as a word and does not exist as its referred meaning.

[4] Religion often says things in no need of being said, to provoke our pondering. Confucius stood at the river bank and sighed, “Water! O Water!” (Mencius 4B18). The river is full of water, why did he have to say the needless word “water”? He



said (6/15), “Who can go out, not through the door?” Who does not know the need of going through the door to get out? Chuang Tzu said in the story of “Morning Three,” “ $3+4=4+3$.” I have been thinking about all these needless words on what they could possibly mean.

[5] Religion often denies what should not be denied. “I forget myself” is impossible, for without me I cannot forget myself, but with me-forgotten I cannot forget myself. “Sages not decease, great thieves not cease” is absolutely atrocious; it should have been its contrary, “great thieves not decease, sages not cease.”

[6] Master logician Whitehead said, “The precision is a fake”; another master logician Wittgenstein said, “You ought to carefully read my propositions as if climbing up a ladder, and then kick the ladder away.” Neither of them said what goes next. Lao Tzu said, “Tao can tao, not always-Tao,” and then continued saying the say-able “not always-Tao,” so as for us to realize the unsay-able Always-Tao.

[7] Since religion is inexpressible, we just say nothing. Our no-say would then say the unsay-able. The word, “mystery,” begins with an “m,” mouth closed saying nothing. Bodhidharma sat, in zazen, facing a wall in silence for nine years, to practice the mysterious Tao of the ineffable.

In sum, with methods as above, religion often conveys the inexpressible mysterious realm.

Two: What Attitude We should Take toward Religion



Since religion conveys to us the trans-mundane realm inexpressible, our attitude to it naturally should be an unconditional absolute reverence, wordlessly on our knees before it to worship. China has been dealing with people and things with such respect analogous to religion, called “social ritual, li-chieh 禮節” as the basis of societal order and instruction.

Three: Why We have So Many Religions

Religion comes from the trans-mundane realm down to our secular realm, and so is above the notion of numbers. Why then do we have so many religions among us? The reason is that we are all human, belonging to the secular realm. Seen from our worldly point of view, the trans-mundane religion takes on a bewildering variety of manifestations beyond our grasp.

In general, our world religions lie between two extreme poles, religion of vacuity (Buddhism) and religion of being (Christianity). In these circumstances, we cannot help but compare religions. Still, religions straddle between mundane and trans-mundane realms, how can we in the mundane world compare these religions that concern the trans-mundane realm?

B. Comparative Religion

We must always keep in mind that we are all human, all belonging to the secular realm. As we compare the high religions beyond us we should never forget this point. Religions came from beyond ourselves to transform us all, and so all we can do



is to kneel before them. Kneeling before them is the most basic principle to “deal with” religions.

We must remember that we are no gods or buddhas, and are not supposed to pass judgment on any religion or any believer, but on the contrary must, as humans, learn from any religion to deepen ourselves. Thus from the basis of all of us being human we can derive three basic methods of comparative religion: One, we must not take ourselves as gods or buddhas, but Two, learn from religions other than our own. Still, three, can't we forgo friction that often attends learning from other religions? Our answer is No; we must learn from all religions in friction, on pain of facile syncretism to dilute our integrity.

One: We Should Not Regard Ourselves as Gods or Buddhas

Never for a moment, as we compare religions, forget that we are all human. I am human, and you are human as well; everyone is human, not angel, not divine, with no special secret mysterious truth, and should never, as “holier than thou,” evaluate, criticize, and judge others. We cannot judge others, saying, “Believe in Jesus! Otherwise, you will go to hell!” or “Jesus is the Answer; what is your problem?” and the like.

Nor should we judge other religions as heinous, coming from devil, or take other religions to have the Hidden Christ in them, and so we learn about Christ when we study these religions. This is to study Christ, not to study these religions. Nor should we take all religions as so many different paths to lead up to the one identical hilltop, which is of course “my true religion,” and so on. These attitudes amount to taking ourselves as divine, having



absolute truths with which to judge others, other religions and other people, completely forgetting we ourselves are entirely human.

Two: We Should Learn from Other Religions

Since we are all human, we must learn one from another, taking other religions as “stones from other hills,” coarse and unsightly as they are, to use as whetstones to whet sharp ourselves and deepen our religion unawares. But since other stones are unsightly, learning from them is full of friction.

Here is an extreme example to illustrate this essential principle. This is the monotheism that rejects other religions most, the least willing to learn any truths from any other religions, and yet, precisely in this Christian faith, the Christians could and have learned to deepen themselves, in three aspects.

Aspect One: The Trans-Mundane Turning Mundane, the Beyond-human Becoming Human

The Christian faith is itself a lump of great contradiction. Its God is absolute, completely severed from this world, totally beyond this world and the whole humanity. And yet, this absolutely transcendent God did “become flesh” to enter this world, to become totally human. Now, what’s going on here? How could anything trans-mundane become mundane, no-human become human?

In this impossibly helpless squeeze, the Christians could appeal for help to Zen Buddhism that totally differs from the Christian faith. Zen has no trans-mundane absolute divinity but is



wholly dipped in the here and now, to discern and experience the extraordinary in the ordinary. Zen sees within the common concrete things the absolute God beyond this world, can experience stupendous mysteries within daily trivial ongoing. Zen thus insists on the secular-sacred unity in the day-to-day, simple, and concrete routines.

This Zen-eye would enable Christians to see in the humble carpenter in an obscure village in obscure Taiwan none other than Jesus himself who appears today in Good Samaritan we despise, and appears in the humblest of the poor who renders the Ultimate Judgment on us as to how much love we have. It is at this moment that the trans-mundane absolute God becomes flesh to appear among us. Here the First commandment to love God with all our hearts and souls manifests in the Second Commandment to “love my neighbor as myself.” The trans-mundane is now mundane, the divine is now human.

Aspect Two: The Concrete Manner of Trans-Mundane God Appearing Mundane

If so, *how* does the trans-mundane God appear mundane? Concretely, how does the absolute other-worldly God enter this world to appear “holy”? How does “the Word become flesh” appear to us for us to see so? How is the Zen of the immediacies of here and now fulfilled in the eternal Christian faith? We see four points here.

[1] We think that since God is beyond the human world, He must appear wholly out of our expectation. The precious divine rod that protects us would turn into the rod of divine wrath once



he gets angry at us, and this divine rod is the Assyrians our ferocious enemies we much tremble and fear (Isaiah 10:5, 45:1). Divine coming is as unexpected as the thief coming on us, and his Holy Son died on the cross with great thieves. The whole Bible is the book of unexpected miracles. Divine appearance is out of our expectation. This is the first point.

[2] Beware, however. The high clean beauty of lotus flowers depends on their coming out of the dirty mud without being soiled (Chou Tun-i). Unexpected miracles that stun us also depend on happening in the expected daily events. Unexpected events must appear in the common expected daily routines. Unexpectedness is made possible by relying on expectedness. Secular world is thus the womb of sacredness. Unexpectedness needs expectedness. This is the second point.

[3] Still, we must be careful about the relation between the unexpected and the expected, for they are not on the same plane. If we expect that the divine must appear unexpectedly, we would then *expect* the unexpected, which would then become part of our expectation. Remember, the unexpected is the unexpected, eternally out of the ken of expectation.

Do you want the divine prove its divinity by miracles? The divine would then cease to be divine. Thus all arguments for the existence of God must fail; they are all doomed. God dwells among good people and bad people, he appears both expectedly and unexpectedly, both out of our expectation. This is the third point.



[4] Therefore, we should not expect that God must appear unexpectedly, nor can we expect him to appear expectedly. We must instead not expectedly, not not-expectedly, live on in the daily routines. The Bible would then talk to us in this secular world. This is the fourth point.

Now, let me ask you. I have been till now stressing the importance of both the expectedness and the unexpectedness, as if to explain Christianity. But have I been just explaining Christianity alone? Have I not portraying Zen Buddhism as well? Never should we forget. Where did I get the above four points from? Haven't I got these points by looking at the Christian faith with the Zen eye? If so, aren't both religions mutually different and mutually dependent to mutually deepen?

Aspect Three: How an Exclusive Religion Learns from Depraved Practices to Deepen Itself

Up till now we have been looking at Christianity from Zen's eyes. We now turn around to look at the "depraved religious practices" in the Christian eyes. During human history there have been three extremely vile practices of depraved religions: worship by sex, worship by the first-born sacrifices, and cannibalism. We must see how Christians react to them. These three extreme examples concretely demonstrate how various religions should mutually learn to mutually deepen, for even the most exclusive of all religions did deepen itself by learning from the most depraved of religious practices.

Can we imagine more radical confrontation than this? On one hand, here is the world's most stringent of all religions, admitting



of no slightest infraction. On the other hand, we cannot imagine more heinous “pagan” practices than the three here. When the most exclusive religion and the most depraved practices met, we are sure violent rejection must have happened, which did but, surprisingly, their history did not end there.

Worship by Sex: Surrounding ancient Israelis was the god Baal who was Husband to humanity, who worshipped him by engaging in sexual intercourses in the forest. Prophet Hosea intensely loathed this practice, and absolutely rejected it. But then, we are surprised as we read the Book of Hosea on, where Yahweh appears as Husband of Israelis wooing for the love of his wife Israelis! Later Paul also said that Christ is Husband to the church his wife for whom he sacrifices his life.

Sacrifice of the First-Born: Surrounding ancient Israelis was also the ferocious god Moloch feared by people, who thought they would pacify him and obtain his blessings by offering him their most precious treasure, their first-borns. The Bible consistently and intensely hates this barbarous practice and violently rejects it. But we know how, later, the center of Christian Gospel has God offering his Only Son at the cross, wanting us to accept him to receive eternal blessings!

Cannibalism: Since time immemorial, many tribes have been having the depraved practice of cannibalism, eating human flesh. All of us extremely loathe such practice, and curse it as the greatest crime unforgivable. But we look at Christ Jesus, who came to our human world to offer his body for us to eat and his



blood for us to drink! This is the Eucharist, the sacrament at the center of Christianity. What is going on here?

Thus the intense fire of absolute rejection refined out the inner truth from Baal sex, i.e., the ultimate intimacy of “bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh,” and the human pursuit of Baal turns into the Christian *God* pursuing humans.⁸⁴ The violently angry fire of absolute rejection refined out the inner truth from offering of the first-born to Moloch, i.e., the most painful devotion with the greatest sacrifice, and human painful offering to Moloch turns into Christian God granting *his* painful devotion to humans.⁸⁵ The violent angry fire of absolute rejection of cannibalism⁸⁶ refined out its inner truth, i.e., ultimate transference of life-vitality, and our pursuit of enemies and parents turns into God granting *his* life-transference to humanity.

⁸⁴ Can't we see synonymy among “This finally is bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh” who is a human wife, “You shall have no other god before me” told by jealous God, and “You shall love Lord you God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind,” our required love to God? In what sense is divine love “sexual,” then? William G. Cole, *Sex and Love in the Bible*, NY: Association Press, 1959, began with *divine* love in both Testaments, but did not end with meditating on “and” in “sex and love” in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

⁸⁵ Even a staunch champion of human rights among infidels, such as Francisco de Vitoria, insisted that we have an obligation to rescue victims from religious human sacrifice (quoted in Samuel Fleischacker, *The Ethics of Culture*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994, pp. 174-175). Only Sören Kierkegaard in *Fear and Trembling* (Princeton University Press, 1983) felt the horror of our religious human sacrifice, but failed to envisage the horror of God's offering of his only begotten Son.

⁸⁶ John 6 toward the end honestly describes the horror of Jewish audience at Christ's cannibalistic offer.



Thus the process of Christian-pagan confrontation has three stunning stages, first, violent rejections as expected, but then, an unwitting upside down transformation of paganism, and lastly, sacramental ingestion of heinous paganism, now transformed, into the very center of the exclusive religion. If this is not a violent confrontation ending up ingestion, learning so surprising, so revolutionary, I would not know what it is.

Three: Can't Friction of Inter-Learning be Abolished?

It is precisely this revolutionary confrontation that gives us a pause. Here we perceive an extreme important point. That is, all the above three examples differ totally from casual acceptance of others. Facile syncretism that welcomes others at the drop of a hat amounts to adulterating oneself to lose one's austere dignity and integrity.

Syncretistic religions such as the Baha'i faith and Unitarianism risk this danger of self-loss. In contrast, the above three examples manifest the revolution of inter-deepening by inter-learning performed by rejection, refinement, and sublimation, all quite painful. Going through such painful process alone, however, can we truly practice comparative religion in actual life. This is also the ultimate of life practice, to continue painfully to inter-learn, inter-transform, and inter-enrich.

Some people may want warm frictionless inter-learning in the name of universal concord, and opt for secular-sacred interpenetration and ready syncretism any time. My responses are as follows, to conclude that the less friction, the less deep



inter-learning. Facile warmth pays the price of avoiding true mutuality.

One: Facile secular-sacred interpenetration is one thing; their uncanny mysterious interpenetration with fear and trembling is quite another. If we humans are matter-of-factly divine, if all people on the street are Buddhas, to say so is a tiresome tautology as saying a spade is a spade. If all ordinaries are indifferently extraordinary, Zen's shocking bite and zing is gone. Thus, the line must stay as we stay incorrigibly human.

Two: Facile syncretism is one thing; agonizing syncretistic enrichment is quite another. Ready syncretism is water thinning the milk of self-integrity. Unitarianism has no bite, no zing, but welcomes whatever "excellent" to idly tell and hear new things (Acts 17:21). John Hick and all divinity-affirming philosophers smack of facile syncretism, as all arguments against theodicy smack of pious expectation.

Divinity-affirming thinkers tend to blur the line dividing us from the divine. Emil Brunner proudly declares, "Through God alone can God be known," not realizing that this statement effectively shuts us humans out of divine knowledge. Brunner takes "through God" to mean revelation, but then God reveals himself as the Mysterious, the Beyond, the utterly Unknown, to us. Brunner also claims thus, and then goes on to speak of God as such and such, as if he knew God, as if he were God.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer says since the Incarnation whenever we think of God we see this world and, seeing this world, we see God. But then, because God is God and never us or our world,



since the Incarnation this world turns unknown as God. Everything familiar is now utterly unfamiliar. Bonhoeffer misses *this* mystery. We are a nothing now, and the Christians approach being Buddhists.

Divinity-affirming thinkers tend to forget all this mystery as much as divinity-denying thinkers do who demand the divine to be such and such as we humans expect, and thereby identify divine as human, and reject the Not-human. Both sorts of thinkers are silly in being stuck in the human when they claim to think about the Not-human.⁸⁷ Both sorts of thinkers thus miss the divine.

Divinity-affirming or divinity-bashing, they all try to trap the beyond-human within the human. They all forget we are all human. In contrast, real syncretistic inter-enrichment enters horrific heretics to violently reject abominations, before ingesting and digesting them into *our* sinews; biting otherness stays in the process of painful learning.

So, an incredible paradox is here. It is hard to imagine how Hick's divinity-affirming thinking, so syncretistic and reasonable, would deign to be polluted by "barbaric horrors of paganism." Nor would neatly rational and "Unitarian" arguments against theodicy have anything to do with pagan depravities. Such

⁸⁷ Exceptions do exist, of course. Kierkegaard said of the divine as "the infinite qualitative difference" with "fear and trembling." Rudolf Otto had the Holy. Today's thinkers are subtle, such as Ian T. Ramsey and Basil Mitchell. But, on the whole, the risk of humanizing the Not-human stays with human thinking. Anthropomorphizing is inevitable in the human world.



syncretistic and/or Unitarian decency that recites “excellences” of civilization, however, adulterates the integrity of religion.

In contrast, violent and persistent rejections with unspeakable horror of the universally recognized “abominations” harvest, unwittingly, gutsy digestion of them, to deepen and strengthen the core of the world’s most trenchantly exclusive religion. Unbelievably, it is rejection in extreme horror that digests to consolidate integrity; it is selective admiration of civilized excellences that disintegrates integrity. Rejection resurrects while admiration dissipates, because rejection of others solidifies and deepens the self, while other-admiration indefinitely thins away the self into the admired not-self.

Now, what’s going on here? What is it all about? To understand this strange situation, we must go back to our initial insistence, that there exists a firm line distinguishing the mundane from the trans-mundane. We must look into what the line means, and what it means to us.

There is a firm line that distinguishes, and beyond it is another line alive; we the human subjects are caught in a twofold thrust. On one hand, our life-world has a line that distinguishes two realms, me vs. other, i.e., we vs. they, right vs. wrong. I am *not* the other, and I must not be the other to be myself. On the other hand, however, these two realms must join, and must not separate. The “not” must be abolished, for I cannot tolerate split-mindedness.

This twofold thrust is another line; it is a meta-line hovering over the line of distinction, insisting that the other is not me, *and*



must be made into part of me. This meta-line is a fault-line, tensed, in pain. To deal with the meta-line pain is life's growing pain that stretches beyond from this me-realm toward that other-realm.

Religion is the ultimate meta-line that shoots down from the Beyond, the other-worldly, to this-worldly realm. Looked at from our this-worldly perspective, this meta-line of uncanny meteor shooting down to us manifests a bewildering variety of many me-other lines, i.e., many religions, and the distinction-lines here get serious, quite dramatically in an ultimate manner.

Religions other than mine are heretical and often abominable. Rejection ensues, often desperate and violent, as understandably occurred in the exclusive religion of Christianity, but, we must note, all religions must be exclusive if they are to be they and not others. Even syncretistic religions must oppose other religions that are "not syncretistic," at least not purposely.

Here in religion also, the same human drama of meta-line tension and trust must struggle on, magnified to an ultimate degree, for we are all human, and religion concerns the ultimate. Here the meta-line growth in sheer pain has three stages: violent rejection of other religions, their radical sacramental transformation, and then ingestion-incorporation, often unawares, into "my religion."

All this is growth in inter-learning to inter-enrich, often struggling, often quite painful. Such is comparative religion in stark praxis, not pretty, not at all groovy. But the pain is



absolutely needed to confirm the “self” of religion. No growing pain, no firm self; no friction, no gutsy religion.

So, religion implicates the line dividing (not separate) this world from the Beyond, me from the other, innately as the line divides husband from wife; both inter-learn to inter-enrich only as husband is distinctly male as wife is as much female (even homosexually). All pages above on comparative religion take this line as basic and essential, for interpenetration must assume distinction, as syncretism must include rejection.

Now, however, in such serious inter-learning and inter-transformation, many religions give us humans riches so various, blessings so concrete. Such is Joy Inexpressible, the essence of religion, and the ultimate purpose of life. We would piously receive and enjoy such religious fulfillment of life, its inexpressible wholeness. Thus we gather here for many religions seriously interacting to inter-enrich, in all their fount of Ineffable Joy!

We see, here, not “fusion of horizons” (Gadamer) but interweaving of Milieus, in Athens, India, and Jerusalem, ever crisscrossing to inter-enrich, from which we benefit in an ultimate way. This is an involving thinking at work, the I-Milieu dynamics in musical history, again in an ultimate way.

Our concern is not on what the Beyond is, for it is unknowable, but on what effect it has on us. How the unknown can have impact on us the known is also unknown. The fact is, however, that we do feel we receive its effects that are inescapable and thoroughgoing, and so they render us transparent, that is, we



have no more zigzag pretense. The Beyond thus cleanses us thoroughly. The cleansing is salvation.

This is a sort of spiritual, that is, total, hospital where nothing can be hid from sight, from inspection. Both spiritual and physical hospitals heal, but neither is quite the blanket I want; they *give* one instead. This is because of thorough cleansing, which may involve pain, what makes us transparent, transparency describes being consistent all over.

Consistency ciphers being at ease with oneself without hang-ups or contrivance, and the whole situation here describes hugging my blanket. Blanket-hugging is I-Milieu alive, and religion is our Milieu-Beyond to enable us to inter-learn and be enriched among all the various religions.

§ “Does it matter if we are unaware of I-Milieu?”

My classicist friend Dr. David Schenker kindly supplied this question and another question in this section, “‘The same point can be driven differently’; do we have a directive here?” Whether these questions are important or not, pivotal or not, is irrelevant. What is important is that both questions are mind-teasers.

They are interesting enough to pick up and consider, thereby bring into focus what has been said about I-Milieu. The questions help to consolidate what I-Milieu is, and that is what is crucial about these questions. My gratitude remains. Now here goes my grateful response, for its pennies’ worth.



I am not aware, not unaware, of I-Milieu, and so asking this question seems as if asking of time how many pounds it weighs. I-Milieu concerns no problem of awareness any more than time does weight. I can then say time weighs half a pound, as I can say I-Milieu is a matter of unawareness.

Or I could have said, “Of course, it matters if we are unaware of I-Milieu,” and also said, “Of course not,” and either answer would have been right, and wrong, at the same time. But such a methodological twister is uninteresting, so we had better begin all over again, to express the same point by going around it.

The I-Milieu is like common sense, of which we are not aware, not unaware, until we feel odd at those who “have no common sense.” We are not *clearly* aware of I-Milieu though not *completely* unaware, and its unawareness may cause repercussions as those deficient in vitamins. We feel odd if not pain, and tend to be self-obsessed. Nepotism is one symptom we have considered. The cure, as heavy vitamin-dose for vitamin-deficiency, is to become consciously aware of I-Milieu, we found.

Learning in Milieu is most radical. It deepens us to learn from those others oddly without our common sense, in fact, despicable abominable ones, and our learning can be quite painful in violent rejection, as described above. Milieu-revolution is a revolution of common sense, a most radical shocking way to inter-learn.

Religion is the ultimate of our nature-habitat; nature is our essential milieu, unrecognized, taken for granted. Familiarity with nature breeds contempt of our very life to kill us. Proud



cultural separation from nature separates us from ourselves, from living. Separated from nature as from religion, we die.

“The same point can be driven differently”; do we have a directive here?” Well, the same point can be driven differently according to the changing situations of “I,” “Milieu,” and their mutual changes. The key here is interest, excitement, and persuasion. Since our interest, arguer’s and audience’s alike, tends to shift and to vary in every situation, the same point must be driven this way and that to persuade both the arguer and the audience, depending on how our directions of interest go.

Mind you. We find ourselves persuaded or not-persuaded only while we meet the point presented and argued for, not before then, and so we cannot pre-plan how the point should be driven. Persuasion is part of I-Milieu, to illustrate my spontaneous attitude to my Milieu. I am not aware of which Milieu I am at home in until I live in a foreign Milieu to feel Milieu-shock, called “culture-shock.”

I am not aware of “my religion,” either, until confronted with a different religion. I am not aware of my common sense until meeting a foreigner. Religion and common sense are part of I-Milieu. Likewise we feel about culture, family, nature, and the like. “My father” is an indexical as “I” and “here” are, for all these terms are reference-sensitive, situation-dependent, meaning differently according to who uses the terms where and when.⁸⁸ Most nouns and words, if not all of them, are situation-sensitive;

⁸⁸ This is why the use of proper nouns presents a problem—of description. Proper nouns seem to stay put, description-less, in all situational changes.



they are I-Milieu words. Asking “Does it matter if we are unaware of I-Milieu?” answers itself.

By the same token, the epithet, “poetic truth,” sounds like an oxymoron because we commonly take “poetic” as subjective and “truth” as not-subjective, and so “poetic truth” sounds like the “subjective not-subjective.” Upon realizing that both “poetic” and “truth” involve truthfulness, and untruth truth is senseless as untruthful poetry, “poetic truth” sounds almost a tautology.

Now, truth must be poetic as poetry must be truth-full, penetrating straight into the matter expressed, in order to make sense. Thus a “good poem” inflicts “immortal wound,” says Frost.⁸⁹ Logic is now part of the criterion of good poetry as poetry is essential to logic. Importantly, to say “truthfulness pertains to both poetry and truth” is to say both are part of I-Milieu expressing I-Milieu *alive*. “Does it matter if we are unaware of I-Milieu?” The answer is obvious.

We have considered persuasion made aware unawares as an enveloping air and essence of proof, relativism made aware unawares as manifestation of life free and fresh, history as historic each moment-now toward the future, without being histrionic, and life as poetry flowing musically to argue-by-showing in singing sense.

All these are common sense notions involving, portraying, I-Milieu so essential, so alive unawares. Without I-Milieu, life ceases to be human and turns into machine and/or animal, or

⁸⁹ *Robert Frost: Collected Poems, Prose, & Plays*, NY: The Library of America, 1995, p. 712.



rather, a monster of human-machine and/or human-animal, neither human nor machine or animal. “Does it matter if we are unaware of I-Milieu?” Well, it does and it does not anymore.

Just think. Why does a kid love to repeat a word, a story, or a game? It is because she is in love, enthralled in trance by what she has found around her. She is now an entranced lover who cannot say enough about the beloved in all its being itself and no other, and so its name she found must be sung as a top trumpet note in the swooning melody of her love, again and again, penetrating, overflowing her beyond her life and words. She must present just what is here now, again and again.

Now, do we think only kids repeat? Don’t we adults also repeat our New Years, our Christmases, our birthdays, our sleep, meals, baths, and our breathings? Isn’t every minute such a repetition we cannot get over? Isn’t “longevity” simply such repetitions we wish prolonged forever? Isn’t life the rhythmic repetitions of *my* enthralled melodies?

Not only do kids repeat in joy; we adults are entranced into repeating *them*. My grandson Andy aged two demanded, “Mom, three take five, how much? Give up? – Two, get it, Mom?” Of course, Mom gave up! She was overwhelmed! This story comes back to me again and again, each time afresh in irresistible smiles and tears. I become Andy the jumping ball aware unawares. Kids do parent adults into kids to repeat into history a-growing, I-Milieu alive, jumping up and down, repeating.



Never think that this matter of repetition is confined to our ordinary daily living. William Strunk the champion of succinctness repeats as well, and that with gusto.⁹⁰

“Omit needless words!” cries the author . . . , and into that imperative Will Strunk really put his heart and soul. In the days when I was sitting in his class, he omitted so many needless words, and omitted them so forcibly and with such eagerness and obvious relish, that he often seemed in the position of having shortchanged himself—a man left with nothing more to say yet with time to fill, a radio prophet who had out-distanced the clock. Will Strunk got out of this predicament by a simple trick: he uttered every sentence three times. When he delivered his oration on brevity to the class, he leaned forward over his desk, grasped his coat lapels in his hands, and, in a husky conspiratorial voice, said, “Rule Seventeen. Omit needless words! Omit needless words! Omit needless words!”

How enthralling it is to read this paragraph, on Will’s “trick” of repeating omissions with gusto! Of course omission heads for brevity that abhors repetition, especially repetition of precisely the same words. Still, Will relished repeating omissions, apparently thinking that precisely *such* repetitions cannot be omitted. Should we ask him why? But does it matter? We are so enthralled by his relishing such self-contradictory repetitions.

⁹⁰ William Strunk, Jr and E. B. White, *The Elements of Style* (1979), Boston: Allyn and Bacon, p. xv. This is Mr. White’s—a writer of his own distinction—engrossing portrayal of his beloved teacher Will Strunk.



Repetition is thus *the* way to get the kid our life to her beloved and be filled to flow over. Repetition is I-Milieu at work in the kid to *make* her, now a new person in the Milieu of her beloved. So are our repetitions that make and remake us afresh. “Does it matter if we are unaware of I-Milieu?” Is she aware? Does it matter?

After all, this is how the same point is driven home differently, repeatedly, to present my I-Milieu differently, repeatedly. Such is kids’ repetition afresh I cannot get over. Time envelops alive every existent in its unique self. The repetition embraces me through time as my blanket-in-time, I-Milieu alive.

Driving a point reminds us of *how* we use words. Gabriel Marcel perceptively criticized Martin Buber, saying that using words to designate the Thou reduces the Thou to an It. Buber no less perceptively replied, that words can describe something to turn it into an It, and words can call on something, and it is invoked a Thou, addressed.⁹¹ Words can function It-descriptively, and can function Thou-vocatively.

All this is word-revealing about I-It and I-Thou, but what about words in I-Milieu, how do they function? In I-Milieu, words are, as my intimate friend, Dr. Chang, Chung-yue, felicitously said, raindrops descending on the Milieu-pond, unaware that it is the Milieu-pond that enables raindrops to come down, to exhibit the pond. Haiku Master Basho intoned, “An ancient pond; a frog jumps in; a water sound. 古池や, 蛙跳びこ

⁹¹ See Paul A. Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Martin Buber*, La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1967.



む水の音。” This well-known haiku must mean to show this Milieu-pond via a casual frog’s casual jump, and its sound.

It is the mission of the haiku to present the Milieu, and this haiku *did* it. This is perhaps the best known haiku in Japan, if not in the world. We suspect its fame derives from its presentation of the Milieu-pond by way of casual quaint sound of a frog casually jumping in. The *sound*, not the frog, is crucial that shows the Milieu-pond.

Beethoven argues with the sound-words of music, we said. Musical arguing delightfully presents the rhythmic point by melody sounds. Mozart sings the sound-words of music, we said. Musical singing shows entranced the rhythmic point by melody sounds. By arguing or by singing, we are carried away out of ourselves, into the rhythmic pond of the world-milieu beyond this mundane world.

Out of the raindrop-sounds in nature, Beethoven and Mozart naturally compose the melody-words to exhibit the womb-Milieu. Words express life’s reasonable activities as It-descriptive, as Thou-vocative, and as Milieu-raindrops; all these three present our life and life-world that is the Milieu. My words and my music show I-Milieu alive.

Raindrop-rhythm is musical reason throbbing in time, rhetoric that is argument proceeding in persuasion toward validity. Music is thus argument ensouled to carry us away, sweeping us along to novel rhythmic points, as argument is musical persuasion in self-fulfillment. All moves to satisfy in the music of sense. The movement is natural rain.



Rain on pond, pond in rain, their misty intimacy is so calm, so soothing. This intimacy is the raindrops crisscrossing to intimate the pond and its point, to lift the pond to moisten everything everywhere. Premises rain into a conclusion; it is an idea-intimacy so valid and convincing. Premise-ideas crisscross to show the conclusion persuasive to arguer and argued-to, as the conclusion involves premises into significance. Both intimacies naturally intimate I-Milieu to moisten me home, sane and sensible.

So we think, until later when we are apt to find flaws in the argument. And then the later-we form another argument with the former-we, this time “more valid,” we think, until later still, the argument-in-time continues to rain to moisten the pond of humanity. This misty intimacy is the reenacting history that judges and corrects as it moistens us home, sane and sensible.

We remember Russell pursuing clarity to dispel the mist of unclarity,⁹² and as his circle of clarity expands, its circumference contacting the unclarity-mist also expands. Russell’s mist is important. Mathematical axioms are changeless to develop and change, hugged in the mist that “treats all very well,” beautiful as night. The mist is a kind Emperor Hun Tun the Milieu, in which

⁹² We have considered him before. See his Preface to *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell: 1903-1959*, eds. Robert E. Egner and Lester E. Denonn, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1961. The more Russell pursues clarity to dispel the mist of unclarity, the mistier unclarity manifests, smiling at us, enabling Russell to pursue clarity. It is a classical case of the Yin-Yang, interecine, inter-nascent.



Russell and I move and live. The mist-Milieu hugs us as we go on pursuing clarity; all this describes history the I-Milieu in time.

History is thus I-Milieu in retrospective awareness. Timed Milieu in retrospection is awareness unawares. “Does it matter if we are unaware of I-Milieu?” The answer is then, Yes and No, all too naturally in history. History rains on us aware, in us unaware, drop by drop, in continuous raindrops, inter-involving into a misty tapestry of today.

These raindrops are persuasion as proof, relativism as life free, poetry as immortal music, music as argument in natural time, religion as I-Milieu of nature ultimate, and of course “history” in involving thinking. They are raindrops composing the point, the pond of I-Milieu alive, aware unawares. In I-It, I know, love, hate, manage, and exploit; in I-Thou, I relate with you, soul to soul, never objectified. I-Milieu is that in which I-It and I-Thou take place alive.

It is in these activities, in I-It and in I-Thou, that I feel the silent force of whatever exists, to feel supported, inwrought, by the I-Milieu, present and active speechless in I-It and I-Thou. To feel is to appreciate, aware unawares. Appreciation is fitting in I-Milieu to spread to I-It and I-Thou.

Does it matter if we are unaware of all this? It does this time, looked at in such way. This is because human life without appreciation is life mechanical and animal-like, dry as a stone. It is a monster, neither human nor machine or animal or stone. We had better appreciate stones, machines, and animals, to be human alive, genuine, in the appreciative I-Milieu historically alive.



§ Janus-Faced Relativism in Milieu

My psychologist pal, Dr. Brien Kelley, asks if there is any cash value to I-Milieu I have been touting, and if so, what it is. This is a good question, to go a positive way on the road charted negatively by Dr. Schenker in the previous section. In response, let us first consider relativism as Janus-faced, unique and related. Then we would realize the unsuspected indispensable Milieu, my Mother, smiling behind all.

To begin, relativism says, “What’s right really, uncompromisingly, is right for me, right for you, right for her, right for us, right for them, and so on, and *that’s all*,” no further cynical extrapolations, usually made by those who do not know, and do not care for such insight.⁹³ But this is an important truth to make up the world. “Stay here; and you’ll see,” relativism says. Let us stay and see.

“What’s right is right for me, for you, etc.” means everything is unique, individual, what it is as it is. The world is made of the ontological law of identity, “A is A and not not-A.” Relativism insists on this integrity, dignity, of “it” being it, of “me” being me that makes the penetrative poetry of itself, of myself. “Be

⁹³ On extrapolations from relativism, see Martin Hollis and Steven Lukes, eds. *Rationality and Relativism*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986, and Rom Harré & Michael Krausz, *Varieties of Relativism*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1996. On staying in relativism, see Joseph Margolis, *The Truth About Relativism*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1991, and Kuang-ming Wu, “Rorty, Confucius, and Intercultural Relativism,” in *Morality, Human Nature, and Metaphysics: Rorty Responds to Confucian Critics*, ed. Yong Huang, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, Chapter Two, forthcoming.



myself, for every entity is *sui generis* to be this entity.” So, everything is relative to itself, distinct from others. This is what makes the world wild and irregular, diverse and free, alive and voluptuously rich.

Now let us go a step further into the other face of relativism as relation. To say so as above, is already to be above it all to see everything as correlative; “me, not you” *relates* me to you. Distinction is within disjunction (not you) as never a disjunction (with you), for I am distinguished *among* you. I am not you, *and* I cannot claim so without you who are bone of my bones. The other is the tacit dimension of the integrity of each unique entity. Relativism-to-itself *is* relationism-to-others.

Thus, each on its own, raindrops rain down on the pond, composing the misty air to cover everything everywhere.⁹⁴ The mist is a veil of ignorance of universal justice (Rawls), a hidden pre-established harmony among the unique monads (Leibniz), and an invisible left hand of the divine (the Bible).

The universe is a “pluriverse” (James), whose universals are transversals (Schrag).⁹⁵ It is as *pluri-verse* that the universe exists as “universe”; it is as *transversals* that universals behave as

⁹⁴ This natural image of raindrops on the pond replaces the conventional image of a system, i.e., ideas tightly “co-stood” to cluster into a “sy-stem.” The replacement is needed because nature has no system; it just comes to be systematic. This is another way to dwell in nature as our life-milieu.

⁹⁵ William James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, London: Longman, Green & Co., 1909. Calvin O. Schrag, *The Resources of Rationality: A Response to the Postmodern Challenge*, 1995, p. 170. Kuang-ming Wu, *On the “Logic” of Togetherness: A Cultural Hermeneutic*, Leiden: Brill, 1998, p. 469, index on “transversal.”



“universal.” This is how Emperor Hun Tun gently reigns, even while mortally wounded by gratitude, in the center-land amidst turbulence of the South Sea and the North Sea, “treating both very well.” Emperor Hun Tun is ambiguous pluriverse-universe that traverses universally.

A poetic philosopher-theologian Farrer tells us warmly,⁹⁶

But if they [all the unique creatures of God] have a family resemblance, they have an unlikeness too. I don't know whether your aunts play over you the tiresome game of family faces: I mean of sharing out your eyes, nose and chin among your direct and collateral family elders, who are supposed (frequently by a causal connection which would baffle the student of genetics) to be responsible for these several features: you begin to feel that your face is nothing but a heap of mixed genealogy. And when they have finished with your face, they start on your mental and moral qualities and failings. When the nuisance has subsided and the aunts are gone, your mother says: ‘Never mind, dear: they have to talk like that. But it's a lot of nonsense. You are just yourself, and very nice too.’

My Milieu is my Mother who makes me and makes me to be me. Remember, Milieu is always my I-Milieu. I-Milieu is here as the

⁹⁶ *Austin Farrer: Reflective Faith: Essays in Philosophical Theology*, ed. Charles C. Conti, London: SPCK, 1972, p. 32.



pond to accept and enable all raindrops, each one unique and together, thanks to the pond.

Thus, everything is indispensable. Without the uniqueness of relativism, there would not even be a single grain of sand in which to see a world (Blake). Without the relatedness of relativism, there would not even be a world to exist through/as a unique grain of sand. Without I-Milieu, I would be left motherless, an orphan wanderer, “no one to call me home,”⁹⁷ no center-land home to blanket me, no me to be me.

With I-Milieu embracing, I-Thou can begin to compose I-It, and I-It can contend with I-Thou. Now the world turns alive and real—pluralistic, contentious, and together, internecine, inter-nascent. How it all happens is illustrated by “love burning, love not burning” below, an instance of I-Thou inter-involving I-It, in the motherly pond, under the soft reign of Emperor Hun Tun. They are my I-Milieu.

§ Love Burning, Love Not-Burning

The other and I compose each other, for the other exists as other-than-me as I exist as I-before-other. Otherness thus composes me and other. The other is then my bone of bones, my flesh of flesh. My bone of bones is loved, not burning (LN); my flesh of flesh is loved, burning (LB). As my bone and flesh make me, so LN and LB make me be, thanks to the other, my other.

⁹⁷ See the touching stories by James J. Close, *No One to Call Me Home: America's New Orphans*, Chicago, IL: The Mission Press, 1990.



What is my other? It is my spouse, my friend, my enemy, my community, my culture, my Nature, and my Beyond (God, Infinite). Spousal relation is my clue to understanding these various self-other relations. Can we not see “bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh” that describes Adam’s wife can also describe love of my neighbor (e.g., my enemy, community, nature, culture) “as myself” and love of my Beyond “with all my heart, soul, will, and mind”?

Thus our delightful project here is threefold. One, we probe how LN and LB are composed to compose the self. Two, we meditate on how LN and LB are related. Three, we observe how LN-LB relation and LN and LB compositions of the self are related. Since these are all intimately related, we must let our thoughts on love and on the self roam free, and in our roaming intuit all three relations. Roaming free, we probe deep into life throbbing in love.

LB-LN Contrast

Love that burns (LB) we have, and love that does not burn (LN) we live. LB yearns after something outside; LN breathes what is one’s, “my bone and flesh,” whose loss is quite disastrous, a cataclysm to one’s life-world. Let us consider these significant phenomena of living.

LN is significant. It makes up life and is non-negotiable, unexchangeable as one’s hands and brain, as one’s bones and flesh, nor does one burn for one’s hand, which is one’s self. One burns after *having* something outside with passion, desiring one’s favorite paintings, books, and lover. In contrast, one *is* one’s



hand without which one cannot handle life and write about one's life-handling. Thus LB desires having, LN shows one's being-style; LB yearns to own and cherish, while LN shows how one is and lives.

Deprivation of LB is atrophy or a growing-out and maturity. Deprivation of LN is an indescribable collapse and choke-up, a desert, an existential disaster. We understand the catastrophe when we see what LN is. In LN I don't love you; I need you with my whole being. I give you my all, and take your all. When such a total give-and-take is choked up, suicide and homicide occurs to manifest deaths all around and inside. The choking shocks and strikes everything into pieces.

LB can easily turn tyrannical and obsessive. LN does not, though can be taken as imperial tyranny. LN is interdependence, LB is not. LN is caring and dialogical, LB is not. A tyrant manipulates *his* people, while a mothering ruler handles her people as handling herself.

LB sacks Rome and plunders it. LN cultivates the beloved assiduously, suffers and rejoices with the beloved whose joys and pain are one's own. Paul's Hymn of Love (1 Corinthian 13), as befitting his previous chapter on "members of one body" the church, describes LN, and sounds austere and passionless, but actually quite deep and intense.

LB-LN Connection

After the LB-LN contrast, we see their intimate connection. LB can begin LN, as burning romance yields marriage or



commitment of a marital sort. Burning turns plain and placid; life goes on without drama for a *Wuthering Heights* or a *Romeo and Juliet*. The LB beginning is as joyous as the child's birth that begins long years of quiet varied growth ahead, under consistent intense LN.

Having a good time, enjoying the season of spring, can only be LN, for time and nature cannot be owned but only be dwelt in. In fact, we cannot have time; we can only *be* in time, in or out of season, always in nature. LN dwells in, and time can only be dwelt in, not possessed. Time in nature is how we dwell in, in LN, as our home where we are ourselves.

Homecoming tastes LN, while an exotic trip to new places undergoes LB that can turn an exotic place into one's home, homed sweet home, by and by, a slow homecoming in home-turning, acquiring a second home in LN. We can say that this home-turning homecoming is the trip and process of life-schooling in nature.

Schooling, natural or scholarly, is one such experience of LB maturing into LN. Being schooled on living, day by day, is the schooling that the Chinese sages, among others, show in their lives, their history, and their writings. We on our part lovingly—in LN *and* in LB—reenact their lives, even in our own LN-joy of writing and writing about it. Thus our lives befriend theirs. LB and LN are the stuff of life; deprive us of them, and we die.

We have considered how LB turns LN. Do they become one? Yes, indeed. Their unity must have occurred in Confucius at 70 when he confessed that he “followed my desires (LB) without



overstepping the lines (LN),” and jealously advocated “loving virtue (LN) as loving sex (LB).”

Need we mention Buddhist meditation (LB) into Nirvana where love of no love of “Nothing” dwells (LN)? Or need we be reminded of the Christian devotion to Lord Jesus, their passion (LB) turned into calm dwelling (LN) in the Lord? Or the Taoist spontaneity that is intense being-with (LB) in nonchalant being-without (LN)?

All this is what sage-hood means, and our love of it, our lived, gutsy and loving aspiration toward it, is the sign of growth and maturity. What sort of love is this aspiration, LB, LN, or their unity? My writing, and my enjoyment of this writing, is it LB, LN, or their unity? All these are questions. Questioning is a quest out of love. I have told you that living, like this, is love. Writing is a dialogue with the reader, and dialogue is a mutual love, a co-living, and a love of living, LB or LN, or their unity.

Addiction is LB corrupted into sheer dependence, as power craved-after drowns those who just crave after it, not using it to benefit everyone. For the power-monger, power is a monster-tyrant enslaving him; if not used, power a good servant turns into a terrible master over its master. Addiction to power turns sinister in academia to choke away scholarship, and academia is now no academia but a cluster of group-think of comfortable no-quest. LB addicted kills LB.

Can LN be addicted to, too? Can natural motherliness (LN) be so corrupted as to make Lao Tzu mumble, “being cherished, being alarmed 受寵若驚”? Well, it can only after LN turns into



LB, and then into LB addicted—and all this is of course ominously possible. This is perhaps what alarmed Hsü Chih-moh 徐志摩, and that was why he divorced his wife, to whom he wrote passionate love letters.

Still, beware Hsü Chih-moh! Distance can turn love fonder but can also turn it foul. Familiarity can breed contempt, taking things for granted to slowly erode into a nothing, via negligence of cherished care for the “health” of one’s self and one’s other and get sick, or else turns into LB. On the other hand, avoidance of familiarized contempt can corrupt into addiction. Life forever dances on a tightrope, mad with love of all sorts.

Yüeh Fei’s 岳飛 “Pure loyalty to appreciate the country 精忠報國” is an impatient devotion of LB that corrupts and finally kills him. Fan Chung-yen 范仲淹 says, “Before the world worrying, I worry; after the world rejoicing, I rejoice.” His confession expresses an intense devotion of LN that haunts him every day of his life.

Love as Home-Milieu

Such haunting comes and comes repeatedly, to engulf us who act out in this milieu of LN. Now the It excludes the Thou but the Milieu interestingly includes both. The I-milieu relation resides in I-Thou that differs in every Thou, as we dwell in one friend differently from dwelling in another. Does this situation describe friendship, both in our befriending ancient Thous in history and Thous now in politics and commerce?



Befriending Thou now is the milieu we live on—LN of life—that can be quite casual. Even this casual Thou-milieu has four levels. I was once in a train when, across the aisle, I overheard a couple chatting about foods, cost of living, news events, on and on. Occasionally each corrected the other on what was said. Obviously, they were enjoying each other. Quite impressed, I was so happy, in LN.

Then I realized; this casual situation has four levels. Chatting happened, at the first factual level. Correcting each other in delightful chat was the second exegetical level. But accuracy matters not, not even on what was chatted on; they were enjoying themselves, and that was *the* point—the third expository level. And I myself was there watching, feeling good, and finding the three levels; it was the fourth hermeneutical level.⁹⁸ It all was the Thou-milieu in LN we cannot live without.

Kids in all their imperfections live their milieus to the hilt, beyond the hilt, and precisely their imperfections make them go beyond themselves. “Going beyond” ciphers perfection, for perfection is the dynamics of perfecting, to go beyond limit, even logical limit. Kids are “round squares” and “hard soft” beyond logic, so full of now bursting beyond now.

The I-milieu also obtains in the I-It that differs as every It differs one from the other, as we drive one car differently from driving another car. Music expresses the rhythm of such indwelling that is milieu alive. Milieu is that-in-which we live

⁹⁸ This is a life-application of Wu, “Chinese Philosophy and Story-Thinking,” *Dao: a Journal of Comparative Philosophy*, Summer 2005, 217-234.



and where things happen, and that-in-which is the situation of LN in the It.

The music-milieu of LN is time that passes from today to tomorrow. Prudence is wisdom of tomorrow in LN-devotion today. Shorn of such prospective prudence, LB is deprived of care for present exigencies. Prudence needs the heat of LB to be kept, to keep going, however.

No LB, no LN that haunts. Still, no LN, no LB would last. LN digs as LB pushes; LN shows as LB shouts, “Don’t tell, show it,” urging itself to grow up to LN. Yüeh Fei must grow up to Fan Chung-yen, whose “world” is culture and the people in Nature in all the squirrels among the tree twigs and grass.

All this makes sense, and everything falls into place, when we remember that living-on consists in ingesting outside stuff to digest it to replenish oneself. Ingestion happens in yearning passion (LB) to take in, to gastronomically-viscerally enjoy life with gusto. Digestion is a quiet replenishment (LN) of the self without fanfare, composed and satisfied, even unawares.

Ingesting LB is for the sake of digesting LN, and so must lead to LN, as digestive LN is sustained by the heat of ingesting LB, fulfilling LN. LB is needed for LN to keep going, as LB ends in tragedy without LN to fulfill it. Voracious LB damages oneself as much as indigestive LN sickens the living. Corruptions of LB and LN in these ways stop living process, and the self dies.

Love as Becoming a New Person



Love has been compared to food ingestion (LB) and digestion (LN). Another comparison is to see love as being transferred to (LB) and breathing in (LN) a new milieu-of-being, to become and grow as a new person. There one acquires a new name, by obtaining a new degree (at school), new appellation (at societal initiation, e.g., marriage), and/or a new pet-name (by the beloved).

“New name” of course designates new self-identity, new being, with new mode of being and behaving. One enters and becomes (LB) a new life in a new milieu, and breathes one’s new air of being (LN). From this vantage point, we can understand the following three situations, among many others.

One, to *marry* someone, conventionally or privately, is to enter (LB) a new atmosphere and breathe in (LN) new air, and dwell and live *there*. Some people are happily satisfied *this* way through over sixty odd years with the identical spouse. Some others sadly grow apart as the years wear, and get divorced. Yet other people, such as Socrates, Haydn, and perhaps Lincoln, stubbornly stay together through their discomfort of incompatibility.

Two, *hobbies* are acquired (LB) and dwelt in (LN). We often acquire more than one hobby and en-joy them. We may come to change our taste and our hobbies. Hobbies make us happy and fulfill us.

Three, coming home is usually a happy homing, but there can be a twist that is not uncommon in our mobile world today. It is *going home to a foreign land*. My homeland grates on my nerves



after my long years of absence. In this homeland of mine I am not comfortable yet not resentful. I must take time to re-acclimatize; the self-imposed struggle is a mix of pain and joy.

Love as Relation

“Now, so far love is taken as *my own* process of ingestion-digestion, and coming to dwell in that in which I move and breathe. But love is usually taken as a relation of meeting, a *mutual* encounter. How is love as inter-subjective relation related to love as subjective taking-in and dwelling-in?” This is a good question. Let me try.

Love is obviously an inter-subjective relation of meeting and bumping. Ingestion-digestion is itself a relation with the other, but love as such an ingestive-digestive relation adds a new twist. The twist is that the other here constantly gives me surprises and novelties, daunting and attracting.

The other I love and know, personal or not, is forever new and fresh, never fully acquainted with, and can never be exhaustively known and owned. The beloved other combines aspects of unfamiliarity (LB) and familiarity (LN), and this strange combination forever fascinates and attracts me.

I must constantly adjust myself to this bewildering combination of the beloved other. This uncertain self-adjustment is responsible for love being vulnerable. The combination strains me, stings me, risking my toppling over into irrelevance and self-hurt. This combination sustains and threatens love at once,



preventing familiarity from breeding contempt and corruption to erode love.

Love as our air which we breathe is our weather in which we live. We know that the four seasons mutually differ to proceed in an orderly fashion, and “when winter is here, is spring far?” (Shelley) Still, often the weather now surprises us with discomfort. “Don’t you like the weather? Wait a minute,” advises our folk wisdom voiced by Mark Twain.

It is thus that the combination of predictability and unpredictability of the weather in which we dwell keeps us on toes to keep us going and keep us fit and adept—in love of ingestion (LB) and digestion (LN) of the inscrutable other we love. Love is forever in flux, for love meets the other who would never be fully known. That is what love as meeting and relation *means*.

“But what is it that mediates me and my other in our mutuality of meeting?” An important question it is. The answer is friendship that sensitively, feelingly, translates and expresses what friends mean, clued in, but not bound, by what they perhaps ineptly say. Friends discern and actualize for friends what they did not say but actually meant by what they said, unawares or not.

That’s what made both Kuan Chung 管仲 and K’ung Ming 孔明 great, for both prospered their respective states, Ch’i 齊 and Shu 蜀, by fulfilling what their rulers Duke Huan 桓公 and Liu Pei 劉備 meant, not what they *said*. Friends are made to make an authentic translation of the beloved’s intentions into actuality.



We see that translation of such loving existential sort spreads friendship of interdependence, to manifest all existents as inter-existent, to actualize our cosmic aspiration, “within Four Seas are all brethren.” We must remember that “brethren” here include all beloved existents, non-human as well as human. Love, brotherhood, and translation inter-implicate.⁹⁹

Pain of “Bone of My Bones”

LB says passionately to the beloved other, “At last, bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh!” and then is surprised unpleasantly at the beloved as the other, *not* the self. LB is now angry and despaired at the otherness. Anger and despair cut into LB to damage LB. LB has no choice but to sober down, lest it burns itself up in anger.

To sober down and to self-empty to accept otherness makes an odd pain, the pain of fire cooling down into dead ashes and cold water. Cooling is pain to LB, as sober actuality rains softly on it, dripping all over and around LB. The wet wind whirls chilly around it, cutting into the bone.

We casually call the process “growing pain” from crying for the moon to watching it wax and wane. Yet LB can refuse to “grow,” and things dry out, drained. Actuality drips on LB into chilly desert, depriving it of the chance “to will one thing” to keep the “purity of the heart.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Actually, friendship includes loving *enemies* as Jesus our Friend nudges us, and we do our best to understand it in the next section.

¹⁰⁰ Søren Kierkegaard, *Purity of the Heart Is to Will One Thing* (1938), NY: Harper & Brothers, 1948.



LB's stubborn fanaticism seals its own fate, a teenage passion to keep burning, refusing to shift and grow, and then LN can *come* unawares to softly dissolve the burning of LB. LB can now sleep and eat in sober quietude, thanks to dissolution of pain, in time. United with death, time can be a great resolution of problems.

Now, here is an important twist to "bone of my bones." The phrase has been taken above to mean that the beloved other is *identical* to the self that loves. The phrase can, however, also mean that the bone of my bones is not my identical self but the different other who fulfills and enriches me, less perfect at present, and so in need of the other to fulfill myself, as Plato's Eros indicates.

Taken in this new way, the other as the bone of my bones is both myself and my different self, my new enriched self, my truer self than my self before meeting this new bone of my bones. In addition, I now love to return my other's favor by serving as my other's bone of "my" bones enriching the other self. We both feed each other to fulfill each other. In this bone-mutuality, we are one in two, two in one.

Mutuality includes differences that often lead to conflict, however. Fights between lovers are common; pain described above is often inevitable. Its resolution depends on how willing one is to reach *out* to the beloved other to accommodate their differences, however difficult the reach-out is.

But how do they do it? They must focus on what they agree on, what they *share*, in the light of which to cooperate, mutually help,



to continually struggle to resolve the pain of their differences and, if possible, the differences themselves as they arise, inevitably, given the intimacy between otherness and difference, and then their difference would redound to deepen and enrich each other.

Here, have you noticed the verbs used so far? They all unite in presenting the throbbing movements of love, LB in LN, LN provoking LB. To struggle, to reach out, to resolve pain, to mutually cooperate and help, even to ingest and digest, these verbs describe the process of having “bone of my bones,” where the “of” is a process-verb of struggle together one to the other in love, to become one in the other.

All this is love growing into itself. Love is LB, two in one, of growing pain and its struggling resolution to ingest and digest the other into one’s self enriched, and into the other enriched self, and all this struggle is provoked by LN, one in two of mutual indwelling beyond now, drawing the two beloveds ahead, even *beyond* them.

Presenting Other Others to the Beloved Other

Love of two selves inevitably draws the third selves into them for mutual enrichment of both selves and of both selves enriching the other others and vice versa. This is to introduce new friends and their thinking, and to befriend the ancient. The self in love does so by explaining the other others’ thinking experiences to the beloved other, by retracing them with the beloved other, to reenact them together in education, to make history.



As the third selves are drawn into the beloved two, the two selves are pulled into a new LN-milieu; they are now new selves. This drawing and pulling is LB-explanation. Explanation can be performed in two ways, as an ontological LN-exposition, and as an epistemological LB-exploration.

Exposition fills in our ignorance with a survey of existing information out there. This is a top-down approach, going exhaustive to risk dryly listing, dotty. *Exploration* begins at where the third other began to explore, and traces how and why that other proceeded and grew as he did; genetic connections turn rationally coherent. The two selves are excited, feeling the gust of insights that resolved dilemmas, but this approach may risk losing comprehensiveness.

Looking as the other self did, these two selves are provoked to dissatisfaction with various new reasons, and thereby enriched. We are all wiser after the fact, thanks to the fact. The third others are thereby enriched by dissatisfactions of two beloved selves. Exploratory explanation enriches both explainer and explained and thereby makes history.

“Kant was influenced by such and such” betrays expository survey from top that is us here later, looking down, and back, at him. “Kant is provoked by such and such, and is inspired to respond with this and that” is prospective as Kant, exploring *with* him. The same content is handled differently; its exploration is excitingly actual-as-Kant, and is especially indispensable in elucidating Confucius alive.



LN-expository horizon is formed as LB-exploration goes on, hovering over to lead on. Horizon-ontology allures in front of exploring epistemology, as epistemology elucidates and expands ontology. Being is basic to knowing enriching being. Being without exciting knowing is desert-dry; knowing without steady being is rudderless. LN-being and LB-knowing inter-enhance into love-growth, history. LN-being and LB-knowing inter-compose the other's I-Milieu at work on both sides, in existents tacitly, unobtrusively.

§ A Brief Wrap Up

I have been thinking about I-Milieu. To think is to write, to write is to think with hand and with readers, and to think-with is to think concretely with friends, to inter-Milieu. Now everything appears inter-involved, in love. Love is interactions with things, matters, and persons.

LN interacts with LB, inter-relating, interacting, interchanging, and inter-changing, and inter-enriching, as I and my Milieu inter-milieu, and “inter-” is Milieu that is the context, the womb, and the home. This essay is a phenomenology of I-Milieu, concluded with the last section on the love-physiognomy of I-Milieu. Everything begins here, as love gives birth, and grows. We sigh impressed, grateful.



我與境地 (II)

吳光明*

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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