

Forming One Body with All Things: A Utilitarian Interpretation of Wang Yang-ming

YAMAUCHI Tomosaburō

Professor Emeritus

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“Master Wang said: The great man regards Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things as one body (that is, embodies all things). He regards the world as one family and the country as one person. As to those who make a cleavage between objects and distinguish between the self and the others, they are small men. That the great man can regard Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things as one body is not because he deliberately wants to do so, but because it is natural to the *jen* (仁, ‘ren’) of his heart to do so. Forming one body with Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things is not only true of the great man. Even the mind of the small man is no different. Only he himself makes it small. Therefore, when he sees a child about to fall into a well, he cannot help a feeling of alarm and commiseration. This shows that his *jen* forms one body with the child.” (Wang Yang-ming, cf. Chan, 1963, p. 659.)

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I The Unity of Knowledge and Action

Chu Hsi’s (朱子, 1130-1200) philosophy had dominated the Chinese intellectual world since the twelfth century. Chu Hsi’s interpretations of the Confucian Classics (mainly Four Books) were declared the official doctrines and were made the basis of the civil service examination system through which government officials were selected. But the civil service examination system had now become a gateway for personal fame and success. Chu’s philosophy had, having lost its original strength, become scholasticism concerned with fragmentary and isolated details and non-essentials. (Cf. Chan, *IPL*, xix - xx.) It was only with the arrival of Wang Yang-ming (王陽明, 1472-1528) that new life was breathed into an ailing system of thought. Yang-ming’s philosophy restored Confucianism to its central emphasis on practice and action and his influence dominated China for some 150 years. The Yang-ming school in Japan was, alongside with Chu Hsi school, the most influential in the traditional way of thinking in Edo-era (ca. 1603-1868). Under the shadow of Western power, Yang-ming’s philosophy inspired samurai philosophers and leaders with its eagerness for direct action and its spirit of ‘jen’ (i.e. dedicating oneself for the whole society). They were often prepared to sacrifice even their lives in order to save people from sufferings or in order to attain the independence of the whole country. These people thought they were ‘doing *jen* sacrificing their lives.’ (*Analects*: 15:8, Cf. Yamauchi, 2002.)

Yang-ming’s ethics of action was so influential to the traditional Confucian thinkers that his ethics might be compared that of Professor Singer, if one seeks a moral philosopher who could be influential enough to

rival Yang-ming today. My own interpretation of Wang Yang-ming's theme is quite unorthodox. This is because my concern is not with putting Yang-ming's ideas precisely, but searching for guidance from the past. Given these goals, I think it would be permissible for a non-specialist in Chinese philosophy to interpret Yang-ming's moral philosophy in the light of Hare's two-level utilitarianism.

The monistic Neo-Confucian views of nature were diametrically opposed to those traditional Western views that were characterised by dualism (that is, the separation between humans and nature). The unity of humans and nature was the common presupposition of Confucian ways of viewing nature, what might be called 'holism' or 'eco-holism' in the jargon of contemporary environmental ethics. The question is how any moral precepts can be derived from this holistic, continuous ecological view of nature. Elaborating in detail on ecological facts on humans and nature, is quite different from answering ethical questions like 'how are we to live in this global ecological crisis?' or 'what ought we to do in order to restore the sound natural environment?'

Yang-ming's moral philosophy started by criticizing Chu Hsi's descriptive thesis of investigation of things. (Cf. Ni, 2002, p. 68f.) Chu Hsi had, in his interpretation of the *Great Learning*, (『大学』) rearranged the text so that 'the investigation of things' came ahead of, and led to, 'the sincerity of will'. Since Chu Hsi had taught that principles are inherent in things, young Yang-ming, who wanted to become a Confucian sage, decided to investigate the principle in things. He sat in front of bamboos and tried to investigate their principles and after seven days he became ill. He was so disillusioned that later he came to think that there was no principle outside the mind. Yang-ming claimed that 'the sincerity of will' was the necessary foundation on which 'the investigation of things' must be based and that 'the sincerity of the will' should come first so that the text of the Great Learning should be returned to the original. This was the point of departure of his philosophy of action that puts, so to speak, action ahead of knowledge.

The very basic requirement of the moral philosophy of Yang-ming is the unity of knowledge and action (知行合一). For all moral purposes the only thing which needed to be done was to bring forth 'liang chih' (良知, good knowledge), the key word of his philosophy. Liang chih has been variously translated as 'innate knowledge' (Chan), 'the intuitive knowledge' (Fung, Liu), or 'primordial awareness' (Tu). According to Yang-min's 'liang-chih', if a person knows that they ought to do something and does not do it, this knowledge means that he does not in fact know. Knowledge in this sense must result in action. The decisive moral question in environmental ethics is not only what is the matter with the environment, but what are we to do. This is one of the reasons why Wang Yang-ming's moral philosophy is, I think, most useful when applied to environmental ethics.

'Knowing is the beginning of action, and doing is the completion of knowledge.' (Yang-ming, *IPL*, 5, 26.) 'Take one's knowledge of pain. Only after one has experienced pain can one know pain. The same is true of cold or hunger. How can knowledge and action be separated? This is the original substance of knowledge and action, which have not been separated by selfish desires.' (*IPL*, 5.) 'When one knows how to attain the desired end, though one speaks only of knowing, the doing is already included; likewise, though he may speak only of action, the knowing is also implied.' (Liu, 1964, p.171.)

This reminds us of the contemporary theory of what Hare calls 'prescriptivism' in contrast with 'descriptivism'. For Hare, a moral judgement is a sort of imperative since its aim is to guide our action and a morally right judgement is a sort of universalizable imperative. (That is, the moral judgement is applicable to all the participants of the same moral choice situation, even though their roles may be different in that situation.) Since a moral judgement is a kind of sincere imperative, we will know a person's moral principles not by studying what they say but by studying what they do (Cf. Hare, *LM* 1.1). On this point Yang-ming's theory could be considered to stand nearer to Hare's prescriptivism, like Socrates, than any other traditional moral thinkers. It is from this fundamental similarity of both ethical views that one can, as will be shown shortly, find many corresponding points between Yang-ming's theme and Hare's theory.

According to Hume's law, there is no 'ought' from 'is'. If this were so, it would be impossible to get any prescription or imperative for action from the description of ecological facts. Hare would say that in order to take out an 'ethical rabbit' from 'ecological hat', 'ethical rabbit' must be hidden in the 'ecological hat' in advance. Later we shall see where lurks the prescriptive force in this eco-holistic view of nature.

II Yang-ming and Singer

Mencius says, "When I say that all men have the mind which cannot bear to see the suffering of others, my meaning may be illustrated thus: Now, when men suddenly see a child about to fall into well, they all have a feeling of alarm and distress, not to gain friendship with the child's parents, nor to seek the praise of their neighbours and friends, nor because they dislike the reputation [of lack of humanity if they did not rescue the child.] - - - The feeling of commiseration is the beginning (or germ) of humanity (仁, jen / ren) ; the feeling of shame and dislike is the beginning of righteousness; the feeling of deference and compliance is the beginning of ritual propriety; and the feeling of right and wrong is the beginning of wisdom. - - - If anyone with these Four Beginnings in him knows how to give them the fullest extension and development, the result will be like fire beginning to burn or a spring beginning to shoot forth. When they are fully developed, they will be sufficient to protect all people within the four seas (the world). If they are not developed, they will not be sufficient even to serve one's parents." (*The Book of Mencius*, 2A:6. Chan, 1963, p.65.)

A common experience of feeling that underlies fundamental morality is the emotional inability to bear the sufferings of others. Yang-ming is said to inherit his idea of jen as 'liang-chih' (innate knowledge) from Mencius. (Cf. Tu, *CT*, p.32.) He expresses his message in a quite Menciusian fashion as follows:

'Therefore only when I love my father, the fathers of others, and the fathers of all men can my *jen* (humanity) really form one body with my father, the fathers of others, and the fathers of all men. When it truly forms one body with them, then the clear character of filial piety will be manifested. Only when I love my brother, the brothers of others, and the brothers of all men can my *jen* really form one body with my brother, the brothers of others, and the brothers of all men. When it truly forms one body with them, then the clear character of brotherly respect will be manifested. Every thing from ruler, minister, husband, wife, and friends to mountains, rivers, spiritual beings, birds, animals, and plants should be truly loved in order to realize my *jen* that form one body with them, and then my clear character will be completely manifested. -- This is what is meant by "regulation of the family", "ordering the state", and "bringing peace to the world". This is what is meant by "full development of one's nature."' (Chan, 1963, p.660f.) 'Thanks to divine guidance I happened to entertain certain views on innate knowledge (liang-chih), believing that only through it can order be brought to the world. Therefore, whenever I think of people's degeneration and difficulties I feel pitiful and have a pain in my heart. I overlook the fact that I am unworthy and wish to save them by this doctrine. And I do not know the limits of my ability. When people see me trying to do this, they join one another in criticizing, ridiculing, insulting, and cursing me, regarding me as insane. Alas! Is this to be pitied? Just at the time when I feel the disease and pain in my own body, do I have leisure to pay attention to other people's denunciation and ridicule? Of course there are cases when people see their fathers, sons, or brothers falling into a deep abyss and getting drowned. They cry, crawl, go naked and barefooted, stumble and fall. They hang onto dangerous cliffs and go down to save them. Some gentlemen who see them behave like this talk, laugh, and bow ceremoniously to one another by their side. They consider them to be insane because they have discarded etiquette and taken off their clothing. And because they cry, stumble, and fall as they do ... Alas! It is all right if people say that I am insane. The mind of all people is the same as mine. There are people who are insane. How can I not be so? There are people who have lost their minds. How can I not lose mine?' (Yang-ming, *IPL*, p.181.)

Here is another passage from a celebrated contemporary utilitarian philosopher for whom theory and practice, knowledge and action are said to coincide. Although in a different, contemporary context, the passage has definite resonances of Yang-ming's message above.

'There is a tragic irony in the fact that we can find our own fulfilment precisely because there is so much avoidable pain and suffering in the universe, but that is the way the world is. The task will not be completed until we can no longer find children stunted from malnutrition or dying from easily treatable infections; homeless people trying to keep warm with pieces of cardboard; political prisoners held without trial; nuclear weapons poised to destroy entire cities; refugees living for years in squalid camps; farm animals so closely confined that they cannot move around or stretch their limbs; fur-bearing animals held by a leg in a steel-jawed trap; people being killed, beaten or discriminated against because of their race, sex, religion, sexual preference or some irrelevant disability; rivers poisoned by pollution; ancient forests being cut to serve the trivial wants of the affluent; women forced to put up with domestic violence because there is nowhere else for them to go; and so on and on.' (Singer, *HWL*, p.222.)

Singer argues for saving starving people, seeing it as synonymous with the saving of a small child from drowning. He imagines that on his way to his lecture he notices that a small child had fallen in a shallow pond and was in danger of drowning: He could easily wade in and pull out the child, but that would get his clothes muddy and make him cancel his lecture. If he chooses to walk on, he has undeniably done something seriously wrong. But we are all doing the same, Singer says, when we, seeing people in danger of dying of starvation, do nothing at all. (Cf. Singer, *PE*, p. 230f.) Indeed, we can contribute to eliminate hunger and poverty with relatively small cost on our part. Here we can see that Singer's practical ethics is one of the most promising ways in recommending people to act for saving the poor from hunger.

Here we can see what is common between both ethical practices of Yang-ming and Singer. Compared Singer's views that were born from, and most applicable to, today's situation, Yang-ming's theory has, though very similar to Singer's utilitarian position in social ethics, much wider perspective in containing views of nature based on monistic unity of human and nature. While Singer's utilitarianism is constructed on the much advanced today's logic and wide information, Yang-ming's view is rather intuitive and synoptic and it needs, in order to make it more understandable for today's readers, some interpretations under the light of the sophisticated method of today's ethics.

Today we are confronting a critical situation that human beings have ever experienced; that is, the global ecological crisis and the world hunger that is deeply related with the environmental crisis. One of the ultimate moral choices in this critical situation is between two courses of action: one is to continue accustomed life style and do nothing to save people from the crisis, and the other is to start action and contribute for reducing the gap between rich and poor, trying to restore nature. In order to attain right choice what is needed is critical thinking that gets rid of the intuitive way of thinking that are, originating from our cultures and religions, so widely diverse. Let us next examine the fundamental structures of utilitarian ethics so that one can see clearer what is common and what is different between both Yang-ming and Singer.

III Yang-ming and Hare

Let us first look at how to interpret Yang-ming's 'liang-chih' within the framework of contemporary Western ethics. When one of his pupils asked "Sir, you once said that good and evil are one thing. But good and evil are opposed to each other like ice and burning coals. How can they be said to be only one?" Yang-ming's answer was that "the highest good is the original substance of the mind. When one deviates a little from this original substance, there is evil. It is not that there is a good and there is also an evil to oppose it. Therefore good and evil are one thing." (Yang-ming, *IPL*, p.228, Chan, 1963, p.684.)

The highest good here mentioned could be interpreted, like a *liang-chih*, as a sort of criteria for distinguishing good and evil. (Cf. Chan, 661.) Putting aside about the question of the highest good, when moral problem occur, one needs to decide which course of action to choose. If there is little to choose between the courses of action, then the serious problem of choosing will not occur. But in a situation where the choice does matter, the decision one makes is important. Such a situation usually occurs because one has preference (desire or interest for that matter) for possible courses of action, without which no incentives nor motive for action will occur. One is questioning which course is right and if one chooses the right course, alternative course must be wrong and vice versa.

As Hare says, 'what ought to be done, on any theory including utilitarian theory, depends on the alternatives to doing it.' (Hare, *MT*, p.142.) The right course depends on the existence of alternative wrong courses, without which 'right' is not right. In this sense of mutual dependency both are one thing. But both are, at the same time, quite different and inconsistent like ice and burning coals. (Cf. Yasuda, 1988, chp.2.) Impartial acts are usually right and partial acts wrong. It is impartial preferences that come together with the right course of action and selfish desires that come together with the wrong course of action. (In the right course of action people's preferences could be universalizable and in the alternative wrong course they could not be universalizable.)

One can, in this way, interpret the Neo-Confucian thesis of 'the preservation of the Heavenly Principle (or Principle of Nature) and the elimination of human desires' as follows: one must choose the right course of action which is accompanied by impartial preferences, not the alternative wrong course with partial desires ('human desire' usually meaning 'selfish desire.'). The *lian-chi* of a moral agent will choose the right course that accords with the universalizable heavenly principle, and avoid the alternative wrong course that is accompanied by selfish partial desires that are not universalizable. One could interpret Wang Yang-Ming's theme of 'tien li' (天理, 'Heavenly Principle', 'Principle of Nature') to imply the logic of morality that Hare and others call 'universalizability', (not 'universal' in the sense of 'general'). Then, it would not be too far-fetched to suggest that '*liang-chih*' manifests itself in Hare's phrase 'universal prescriptive knowledge'. On the other hand, 'Heavenly Principle' (tien li) simply means 'the principle of right and wrong'. Yang-ming says that the faculty of '*lian-chih*' (innate knowledge) is to know good and evil. To extend '*lian chih*' means to sincerely identify with the Principle of Nature so that one knows right and wrong and shuns selfish desires. (Cf. Chan *IPL*, xxxvii.)

Our interpretation corresponds with common parlance in traditional Confucianism. Some versions of Confucianism produced the popular expression 'heaven knows'. Heaven was said to watch our good acts as well as our evil acts even if no one on earth knows. In other words, even though someone escaped punishment in doing some evil acts, heaven would punish him someday, because heaven was believed to be something that is completely impartial. Therefore, 'self-care in solitude' (慎独) is what was recommended. Heaven was thought to be more than an impartial spectator. When one fell into difficulty through no fault of their own one could find consolation in such beliefs as: 'Sincerity moves heaven' and 'Heaven's vengeance is slow but sure'.

Jen contains not only cognitive dimensions of psychology, but also has an affective dimension. According to Professor Tu, 'to Yang-ming, consciousness as cognition and conscience as affection are not two separable functions of mind. Rather, they are integral aspects of a dynamic process whereby man becomes aware of himself as a moral being.' (Tu, *CT*, p.32.) This observation coincides well with Hare's thesis that "if I am suffering, I know that I am suffering, and if I know that I am suffering, I am suffering." "These related *cognitive* and *affective* states bring with them also a *conative* state. If I am suffering, I have a motive for ending the suffering. This also is a conceptual truth, which holds in virtue of the meanings of the words." (Hare, *MT*, p.93. Italics are mine.) Hare's method requires, after putting oneself in the other's shoes, that one represent other peoples' preferences with regard to suffering in one's own mind. This state of mind

can be compared with the state of mind of *man of jen* forming one body with others.

To consider other people's interests as one's own means to have sympathy with other people, something which is close to 'love', or rather 'benevolence'. 'Its [utilitarianism's] theoretical part is simply the requirement of impartial benevolence -- a purely formal requirement which is, if my own view is correct, no more than a restatement of the logical properties of universalizability and prescriptivity which characterize evaluative judgement.' (Hare, *ET*, p.234.) Here, giving *impartial benevolence* is another expression for 'giving equal consideration to other people's interest'. That is the reason why *jen*, the most basic Confucian key virtue, can be rendered as 'impartial benevolence'.

The Golden Rule might be expressed as: 'Give the same weight to the interests of others as one gives to one's own interests,' or 'Give equal weight to the interests of each individual who will be affected by your conduct'. To consider the interests of people (containing those of sentient beings) impartially is also the motto of Singer's version of utilitarianism. This might be called 'interest egalitarianism', as Hare once put it euphemistically. (Cf. *PM*, p.112, 117.) *Impartiality* and interest (that is, 'desire' or 'preference' for that matter) are two key concepts of morals in, for example, H. Kuhse and Rachels cf. (Kuhse, 1997, p.87, Rachels, 1986, p.11.) These two concepts coincide with, or rather originated from, Hare's two logical features of *universalizability* and *prescriptivity* of moral judgement. It was Hare who elaborated the Golden Rule by using these two requirements of moral judgement. (Cf. Hare, *FR*, p.86-125.)

Hare founded, I think successfully, his utilitarian ethics on the basis of the above mentioned two logical features of moral words. The structure of his utilitarianism must, because it is based on formal logic, be universal: it contains, in its core, no substantial moral principle, nor does it contain any moral concept derived from substantial principles. If one sticks to one's own substantial principles derived from religious, ideological, or culturally oriented belief, such principles would hardly reconcile with other sorts of substantial principles. In this sense, Hare's type of utilitarianism is suitable and promising for developing the ethical foundation for a single global community.

The 'heart/mind unable to bear the suffering of others' in Confucian ethics will, if it is expanded to the society at large, lead theoretically to the ethical view that states we should maximize the total happiness (interest or preference for that matter) of people. This is like a version of utilitarianism. In this sense, Yang-ming's position coincides fairly well, at the level of social ethics, with some versions of contemporary utilitarianism. This is more so if one sees the formal framework of both views apart from the intuitive principles originating from the different cultural backgrounds.

The Five Constant Virtues (i.e. *jen*, righteousness, ritual propriety, wisdom, and faithfulness) are, according to some interpretations, based on the 'jen' (cf. Chan, 1963, p.560, 570, Tu, CC, p.57.) 'Jen' is sometimes juxtaposed with other virtues based on five human relationship (love or familiarity between father and son, righteousness between lord and subject, orderly love among spouses, among brothers, trust between friends.) But *jen* could be interpreted not only as representative, but as fundamental, in the sense that it forms the basis by which other virtues are justified. (Shimada, p.49.) According to this interpretation, *jen* is fundamental while other moral principles and virtues are derivative and secondary, justifiable and adjustable by the basic morality of *jen*. If this interpretation is right, then one could locate *jen* at the critical level of morality. Other Confucian principles and virtues (that have been criticised as patriarchal or andro-centrism), could be shelved temporarily. This move will make it easy for us to interpret the Confucian way of moral thinking within the framework of two-level utilitarianism and find some common motifs between both traditions.

IV The Anthropocosmic Vision of Tu Wei-ming

The unity of heaven and humans is the fundamental theme that underlies the Confucian way of viewing

nature so that human nature is thought to be imparted by heaven. Humans and nature are considered not to be separated entities somehow combined. Rather both are an inseparable continuous whole. Humans, who are earthbound, are at the same time originally Heaven-oriented. This unified vision of humans and nature is expressed as “anthropocosmic view” by Professor Tu Wei-ming.

Here the position and role of human beings in the universe are suggested. That is, human kind, though being integral parts among an ecologically interwoven continuous whole, are bearers of ‘ch’i’ (氣, vital force) in its highest excellence and therefore most intelligent among sentient beings. -- ‘The uniqueness of being human is the intrinsic capacity of the mind to embody the cosmos in its conscience and consciousness.’ (Tu, *CT*, p.132.) ‘As the son or daughter of Heaven and Earth (the receiver of the cosmic force in their highest excellence), humanity is the embodiment of that which is most refined in the creative process of the universe.’ (ibid., p.158.) Here, I see the role of humans as *moral agents* who can, or must, choose the right or wrong course of action in the moral choice situation, and who are able to change the natural environment for better or for worse. (Cf. p. 235f.)

Next, let me see what sort of ethical way of treating nature could emerge from this anthropocosmic image of humans and nature, with the image of humans being able to act as moral agents.

If we follow the family metaphor of Chang Tsai’s Western Inscription, (張載, 『西銘』) Heaven and Earth are our parents. (Cf. ibid., p.67f.) Parents are those who bear, nourish and take care of us; children, in turn, will appreciate and be obliged to repay the debt whenever possible. This is, in Confucianism, one of the fundamental virtues in human relationships. The judgement, ‘Heaven is my father’ means that Heaven is something that is beneficial and for which one is obliged to respond. In other words, the descriptive judgement that heaven is one’s father entails a sort of prescriptive force asking us to do something in reciprocity. This entails such imperative judgements as “obey the mandate of Heaven!” or “take care for the welfare of nature!” Compared with some judgements that state the purely ecological fact that human existence is interwoven in the eco-holistic process of whole nature, Confucian anthropocosmic views of nature harbour prescriptive elements.

If one generalizes this argument without using family metaphors, then other arguments would be possible. If one loves their own existence then they will prefer to live rather than perish. In order for humans to live, the natural environment is a necessary ingredient for survival. In other words, to prefer to live entails wanting a sound environment for one’s existence. The major premise may be “humans live in a stable natural environment!” Building on this, a minor premise may be “xyz are conducive to restore the environment”, with the conclusion “do xyz!”. If the major premise is, as an unconscious presupposition, hidden from the scene, as often occurs, then ethical imperative of “do xyz!” will be derived from the ecological statement of “xyz are conducive to a stable environment.” This is my answer to the question of how to derive ethical judgements from ecological judgements, that is, how to take out an ‘ethical rabbit’ from ‘the ecological hat’.

We saw earlier that ‘jen’ could be translated as ‘impartial benevolence’ (cf. p.33). We also saw that it coincides fairly well with utilitarian social ethics. However, *jen* has such a range of meanings that it is difficult to find any corresponding word in Western traditional ethics. If one takes humans and nature as united in the anthropocosmic vision, then the same *jen* that worked in the field of social ethics will show another, quite different aspect.

Chu Hsi says that, “The mind of Heaven and Earth is to produce things, in the production of man and things, they receive the mind of Heaven and Earth as their mind. Therefore, with reference to the character of the mind, although it embraces and penetrates all and leaves nothing to be desired, nevertheless, one word will cover all of it, namely *jen*”. (Chan, 1963, p.593.) For Chu Hsi ‘jen’ implies ‘the spirit of life’. Also for Yang-ming *jen* is “the principle of unceasing production and reproduction.” (Yang-ming, *IPL*, 93, Chan, 1963, p.675.)

Nature was, because of its unceasing productiveness, considered as something like a benefactor for whom humans were obliged to repay. *Jen* could be considered as a sort of anthropocosmic feeling. If one regards the whole natural environment as something beneficial and one has some reciprocative feeling for it that allows one to project the notion of 'impartial benevolence' among people onto Heaven, then hopefully one would understand what *jen* meant for Neo-Confucians.

Let me next take up some relevant Confucian key words as examples of how an anthropocosmic vision permeates everyday ways of thinking:

First, 'chi' (氣, vital force) in Japanese (the same Chinese character is used with pronunciation of 'ki') is still alive in such words like 'ch' i' (meaning spirit), 'heaven's ch' i' (weather), 'original ch' i' (meaning 'health' or 'vigour') and in many other terms referring to spirit, heart, intention, atmosphere, or mood. The unusual difficulty in making 'ch' i' intelligible into Western languages suggests that 'ch' i' expresses a certain aspect of anthropocosmic views. If one translates it as 'vital force' or 'vital power', then other psychological aspects disappear. 'The underlying Chinese metaphysical assumption is significantly different from the Cartesian dichotomy between spirit and matter'. (Tu, *CT*, p.37.)

Second, 'li', (理, translated as 'principle' or sometimes as 'reason'), is the central concept in the Confucian epistemology, originated from 'the stripe of gem'. Humans have the ability to know and manifest, through self-effort, the 'li' within. But the same 'li' underlies Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things. So, 'tien li' (Heavenly Principle) and humanly *li* parallel and correspond.

Third, 'ch' eng' (誠), translated as 'sincerity', is not only for humans. While in Hare's prescriptivism, the moral judgement must be sincerely agreed in order for it to have prescriptive force, Confucian Heaven is also said to be sincere, since sincerity is the way of Heaven. (Tu, *CC*, p.71. Cf. p.126.)

Fourth, 'hsin' (心) is translated as 'heart-mind' (Japanized as 'shin', or 'kokoro'.) When the human 'heart-mind' is projected onto Heaven, Heaven has also hsin. In contemporary scientific terms, Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis imagines the globe as an organism with humans as the mind of the globe. For Neo-Confucians too, humans were the heart-mind of Heaven.

Anthropocosmic views are also expressed in other words like 'shu' (恕, reciprocity), and 'hsiao' (孝, filial piety). 'Shu' means reciprocity among people. It is one of the central virtues of Confucian human relationship ethics that is crystallized as the Confucian Golden Rule. But it also means the mutual reciprocal relationship between humans and nature. (Tu, *CC*, p.102-06.) 'Hsiao' is another key virtue in Confucian human relations. It also means the reciprocal response to heaven from humans (Tu, *CT*, p.45.) If one translates these words which originate from non-dualistic cultures into modern Western concepts rooted in the separation of human values from nature, their anthropocosmic implications will not only disappear, but they will be changed into anthropocentric notions. The result would be un-intelligibility at best, destruction of another culture at worst.

V Forming one body with all things

Given the preceding discussion, we may ask: what is the difference between Western and Eastern ethical views? The main difference is that, while in utilitarian ethics the value of nature is considered as instrumental for, and secondary to human values, in Confucianism humans and nature are considered as an interpenetrating whole. Social ethics is not distinct from Confucian cosmology. Thus, social ethics is only part of the whole anthropocosmic ethical system detailing how to treat the natural environment. In other words, social ethics was founded, to use contemporary language, on environmental ethics.

Suppose there are two courses of action: A) to live a convenient and luxurious life surrounded with quite polluted air and water, or B) to live a simple inconvenient life with pure air and water. Most citizens in affluent societies would choose course of A, mainly because they wouldn't like to change their customs

with a hope of avoiding somehow the environmental catastrophe. Contrarily to the ideas of Confucian rulers or guardians of Platonic state, modern Western economy that was promoted by such thinkers as Adam Smith and John Lock, has justified the private ownership of property. For them self-interests that pursue wealth would increase the whole wealth of society, which eventually reduce poverty and make the society more equal. (Cf. Singer, *OW*, p.27ff., *HWL*, p. 39f.) However, such modern economical thoughts might be considered today as one of the origins of the huge global gap between rich and poor and environmental degradations. Because their argument was based on the prerequisite of plenty resource and infinite space for waste matter in the colonies and other places, the limitation nature imposed upon human society was out of their sight. Singer explains how the overflowing global sink makes Adam Smith obsolete.

If we limit our moral consideration only on human wellbeing, the other things would be out of our sight, then the ecological crisis would be liable to evade our moral concern, since self-interests outweigh, in people's mind, the concern for the environment. The ultimate choice we confront in the age of globalization could be better explained as the choice between a course X: making humans fat and nature die, or alternative course Y: restoring nature restricting excessive human desire. In this shape of the question, Neo-Confucian motto of 'eliminating human desire, attaining Heavenly principle' could offer more suitable answer than Adam Smith's 'invisible hand'. Yang-ming's ethical thinking well anticipates the final answer for the choice we confront today as follows:

Ch'eng Hao (程明道, 1032~1085). Yang-ming's forerunner, says "a book on medicine describes paralysis of the four limbs as absence of 'jen'. This is an excellent description. The *man of jen* regards Heaven and Earth and all things as one body. To him there is nothing that is not himself. Since he has recognized all things as himself, can there be any limit to his *jen*? If things are not parts of the self, naturally they have nothing to do with it. As in the case of paralysis of the four limbs, the vital force no longer penetrates them, and therefore they are no longer parts of the self. Therefore, to be charitable and to assist all things is the function of a sage." (Chan, 1963, p.530. Here 'humanity' is changed to *jen*.)

Following Ch'eng Tao, Yang-ming says: "Man is the mind of the universe. At bottom Heaven and Earth and all things are my body. Is there any suffering or bitterness of the great masses that is not disease or pain in my own body? Those who are not aware of disease and pain in their own body are people without the sense of right and wrong. The sense of right and wrong is knowledge possessed by men without deliberation and ability possessed by them without their having acquired it by learning. It is what we call innate knowledge (*lian-chi*). This knowledge is inherent in the human mind whether that of the sage or of the stupid person, for it is the same for the whole world and for all age." (*IPL*, 179. Chan, p.166.)

According to Yang-ming, when the great man sees a child about to fall in a well, he cannot help a feeling of commiseration and save the child. He continues, "It may be objected that the child belongs to the same species. Again, when he observes the pitiful cries and frightened appearance of birds and animals about to be slaughtered, he cannot help feeling an 'inability to bear' their suffering. This shows that his *jen* forms one body with birds and animals. It may be objected that birds and animals are sentient beings as he is. But when he sees plants broken and destroyed, he cannot help a feeling of pity. This shows that his *jen* forms one body with plants. It may be said that plants are living things as he is. Yet, even when he sees tiles and stones shattered and crushed, he cannot help a feeling of regret. This shows that his *jen* forms one body with tiles and stones. This means that even the mind of the small man necessarily has *jen* that forms one body with all. Such a mind is rooted in his Heaven-endowed nature, and is naturally intelligent, clear, and not beclouded." (Chan, p.659f., Here 'humanity' is changed to *jen*.)

If Heaven and Earth are our benefactors, or father and mother in the family metaphor, it entails the reciprocal obligation of 'care for' the benefactor. Because one cannot, in the Confucian context, call anybody father without feeling obligation, to call Heaven father entails some reciprocal obligation. If one forms one body with all things, one cannot, by the same token, help being obliged to take care of all things as his own

body. *Doctrine of Mean* (『中庸』) says that “If they [=those who are absolutely sincere] can fully develop the nature of things, they can then assist in the transforming and nourishing process of Heaven and Earth. If they can assist in the transforming and nourishing process of heaven and Earth, they can thus form a trinity with Heaven and Earth.” (Chan, p.108.)

One needs to understand that the mind-heart unable to bear the suffering of people is the germination of *jen* or impartial benevolence. On the other hand, one needs to understand that people’s welfare depends on the natural environment and that people will suffer from the destruction of environment. Then, and only then, can one recognize that the benevolence of *jen* must be expanded beyond the gap of human welfare to the welfare of all beings, including all humans and nature, the anthropocosmic welfare. One needs to sincerely recognize this primordial awareness and teach oneself to ‘polish and train in the actual affairs of life’ (Chan, *IPL*, xxxviii.) . If this becomes the cognitive, affective, and conative state of mind-heart, then finally the individual will find in themselves a resonance of Yang-ming’s thesis of ‘forming one body with all things’ (万物一体, i.e. ‘embodying all things’ or in Jp. ‘ban-butsumittai’) and start to assist the welfare of the all humans and nature.

He said that ‘And yet the Grand Master (Confucius) was extremely busy and anxious, as though he were searching for a lost son on the highway, and never sat down long enough to warm his mat. Was he only trying to get people to know him and believe him? It was rather because his *jen*, which regarded Heaven and Earth and all things as one body, was so compassionate, keen, and sincere that he could not stop doing so even if he wanted to....Alas! Aside from those who truly form one body with Heaven and Earth and the myriad things, who can understand the Grand Master’s intention?’ (*IPL*, 182.)

This should not be seen as a panacea for the moral philosopher. Even Yang-ming would have found a solution elusive. However, if he was able to confront today’s environmental crisis, he would undoubtedly observe that people have, instead of ‘eliminating human desire’, increased them, that people have, instead of preserving the ‘Heavenly principle’, destroyed it. But he might also offer some encouragement.

Yang-ming lived in harsh times and had bitter experiences, so much so that his philosophy was said to be born from ‘hundreds of death and thousands of difficulties.’ He might, citing Mencius, have encouraged us saying that when Heaven is about to confer a mission to any man, it will exercise his mind with suffering. “That is why heaven, when it is about to place a great burden on a man, always first tests his resolution, exhausts his frame and makes him suffer starvation and hardship, frustrate his efforts so as to shake him from his mental lassitude, toughen his nature and make good his deficiencies.” (*Mencius*, 6B:15, Lau, 1970, p.181.)

{Yang-mings had exerted far reaching influence on Japanese thinkers. It was at the crisis of nation when the independence was threatened in 19th century, that Yang-ming philosophy inspired Japanese thinkers and revolutionarists towards saving the country. Their motto must have been ‘to do jen sacrificing oneself’ --- the old samurai usually defied death --- for the interests of people and the welfare of the land. Moreover, there lurked behind this motto, the Confucian ideal of world peace. The ultimate goal for the Confucian utilitarian samurai philosophers was in the world peace. (Cf. Nishi, 1878, Keiu, 1873, Kato, 1882.) If any philosophy among the whole history of philosophy could offer a guidance for a new environmental ethics and also for ethics of globalization, it must be Yang-ming’s philosophy of *jen* – of forming one body with all things. (『万物一体之仁』)

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万物一体之仁

—王陽明哲学に対する功利主義的解釈—

やまうち ともさぶろう
山内 友三郎

名誉教授

江戸時代の日本では、一般に人々は貧しかったが、貧富格差は余り見られず、自然は豊にされて、環境が保全されていた。これを支えるための思想があったが、それは、神道、儒教、仏教と並んで、神儒仏の三教を一致する総合的な哲学であった。とくに日本儒学は貝原益軒によって日本化され、彼の朱子学批判が後の思想家によって継承され、荻生徂徠によって完成された。これが二宮尊徳によって実践されたのである。他方、人類は現在地球環境危機に直面していて、このままで行くと地球環境は崩壊し人類は滅亡の淵に追い込まれている。これに対処すべき哲学としては、西洋先進国に生まれた環境倫理があるが、環境倫理では、環境危機の原因としての西洋近代主義批判が起こって、哲学者は東洋の伝統思想に目を向けるようになった。他方、アジアでも儒教研究が盛んになり、米豪で荻生徂徠の研究が起こって、徂徠研究の二冊の大著が英語とフランス語で出版された。しかしながら、地球を救うべき思想は未だ現れていない状態である。こうした中で現れた梅原猛氏の『人類哲学序説』はまさに画期的な業績である。本稿では、梅原氏の西洋近代主義批判と日本からの主張を継承しながら、日本の伝統思想に絶大の影響力を振った王陽明の哲学を取り上げて、比較思想と環境哲学の見地から、この解明を試みたものである。

キーワード：王陽明、ヘア・シンガーの公利主義、杜維明、環境倫理、比較哲学