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The Problem of Returning to the “Things Themselves” in the IR Theorisation: Phenomenology’s Possible Use in the Study of the Pre-Theoretical, Immediate Givenness of the IR Phenomena and Events

Athens Journal of Philosophy

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Athens Journal of Philology

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The current issue is the fourth of the second volume of the *Athens Journal of Philosophy (AJPHI)*, published by the published by the [Philosophy Unit](#) of ATINER

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Gregory T. Papanikos
President
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- Acceptance of Abstract: **4 Weeks after Submission**
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Freedom as a Mode of Thought: Hannah Arendt

By Zane Ozola*

This paper focuses on Hannah Arendt's ideas concerning freedom and the political in the Greek polis. By outlining the structure of the notions of labour, work, and action in relation to thinking, responsibility, and necessity, it aims to explore the possibility of thinking about freedom in the context of contemporary society. Arendt's phenomenological reflections on the nature of human beings and the significance of the political in Western society within the framework of the decline of Europe encompass a broad spectrum of themes. It traces the origins of Western culture and exposes how the evolving dynamics of the private and public, thought and action, and the progress of science and technology have contributed to a way of thinking that has led to the emergence of totalitarianism.

Keywords: *freedom, work, labour, action, political, human being*

“What I propose, therefore, is very simple: it is nothing more than to think what we are doing”
Hannah Arendt

In the modern age, significant shifts in human self-understanding have occurred, prompting reflection on the essence of humanness in contemporary times. This leads to the crucial question: can the true, original meaning of freedom be restored in Europe? These inquiries are interconnected, and the absence of a coherent systematic philosophy in Arendt's work underscores her commitment to cultivating a thought process that is vital and authentically reflective. Her thinking, rooted in ontologically significant questions, forms a political theory grounded in profound philosophical insights. Arendt, despite never identifying as a philosopher, addresses essential themes, interweaving the political, freedom, and thought. Her reflections on the human experience in the world are deeply entwined with considerations of place and the act of thinking, resonating with the realities and practicalities of human activity, especially when confronting the painful historical events of 20th-century Europe. These two dimensions, it appears, serve as the cornerstones of Arendt's thought, embodying a vitalism of time and space. Firstly, Arendt de-substantializes the political, illustrating that plurality, freedom, and unpredictability are inseparable elements essential for constructing a meaningful world. Secondly, she regards spatiality as the fundamental condition of human existence. These two principles form the bedrock of Arendt's political theory. A pivotal question arises in this context: What does freedom entail in her thought, and where does it find its place in the contemporary world?

In *'The Human Condition,'* Arendt directs attention to a pivotal event in recent history: the 1957 launch of the first-ever man-made object into the universe. This

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milestone marks a crucial point in human history—a 'step toward escape from men's imprisonment to the earth.' Arendt's contemplation of this event prompts a profound reevaluation of human existence. She raises the fundamental question: Is this departure from natural conditions merely a pursuit of progress and a demonstration of the spirit of scientific exploration, or does it delve deeper, suggesting broader implications related to technological progress that may potentially undermine and alter the ontological status of the human being in the world?

Arendt develops a comprehensive political hermeneutics, grounded in fundamental ontological insights into human existence in the world. Here, thinking and acting intertwine in the realm of the public. Originally, Arendt intended to title her work *'The Vita Activa'* to underscore the focus on the three fundamental activities of human beings. However, recognizing that in the Western tradition, *'vita activa'* was often conceived in opposition to and subordinate to *'vita contemplativa'*, considered a passive state of contemplation, she ultimately refrained from this title. In Arendt's framework, thinking and acting coincide, intimately connected to questions of freedom and responsibility. Her concept of *'vita activa'* takes a distinctive orientation, diverging from the traditional reception of the term.

Arendt's political thought is inherently hermeneutical, signifying, firstly, that human beings lack a pre-given nature by which actions can be judged. Secondly, it asserts that human activity is reflexive—individuals, as creators of the world, are, in turn, conditioned by the things and deeds they create. This notion is rooted in Heidegger's assumption about the historicity of human beings. However, Arendt extends this argument beyond the realm of being and into the political sphere, demonstrating that human beings are conditioned by their activities in the world. She articulates this through three capacities: labour, work, and action. Arendt looks to the Greek polis as a model where these activities were distinct, each forming a different life-form and establishing specific relationships between human beings, space, and time. Labour, essentially centered on the pure maintenance of life, engages with the natural level of human existence, perpetuating the circular time of everydayness. In the Greek polis, labour, tasked with addressing life's necessities, was relegated to the slaves. On the other hand, work represents the activity that crafts the world of artifice — creating durable and purposeful objects. Work contributes to worldliness, sustaining and establishing the rectilinear order of time, intimately connected to the lifespan of the human being. The third mode of life that Arendt distinguishes is action and speech, fundamentally differing from the former two. While labour and work can be realized in solitude, preserving the private sphere, action takes place in the public domain, establishing the political realm as a space of appearance. Importantly, action does not necessitate or yield any material medium or artifact. The political realm constitutes the space of freedom—a canvas for the creation of historical narratives that bestow higher meaning upon human life. Unlike mere necessities of life, the political is a realm where individuals, by acting politically, exercise the freedom to achieve a form of immortality—being memorialized among others and inscribed in history. Arendt posits that the true freedom of human beings emerges

when liberated from the necessities inherent in the maintenance of life, finding expression in the shared realm with others. A human being is not born free; rather, they are born for freedom.

For Arendt, the political, as the space of plurality, is forged by free and equally distinguished citizens who contribute their unique perspectives to common deeds. This realm is the creation of the common, a process that imbues new meaning and shapes the human world. It transcends the worldliness and utility that tie human beings to the level of animality:

“Under the conditions of a common world, reality is not guaranteed primarily by the common nature of all men who constitute it, but rather by the fact that, differences of positions and the resulting variety of perspectives notwithstanding, everybody is always concerned with the same object.” (Arendt 1998, p. 58)

The human condition of labour is life itself.

The human condition of work is worldliness.

The human condition of action is plurality.

The characteristics assigned by Arendt to labour and work reveal their close connection to the conditions under which human life on Earth has been given, implicating a mode of thinking conditioned by necessity—a primarily instrumental one:

“Labour manifests itself in extremis in the form of dehumanizing automatic processes and compulsive repetitions that displace the human death; work manifests itself in extremis in the form of dehumanizing fabricating processes and instrumentalized objectifications that violate human life.” (Villa 2000, p. 97)

In contrast, action establishes the 'in between' world and shapes the space of plurality, forging relations among distinct yet equal citizens. The political realm cannot be exercised in isolation or solitude; rather, it requires the participation of individuals in shared discourse. Political speech, unlike the instrumental and necessary nature found in the household (*'oikos'*) defined by labour and work, takes on the character of action, becoming an integral part of a political lifestyle.

If we consider these three activities as distinct modes of thought, it becomes intriguing to explore their ontological interconnection in contemporary society. In the Greek polis, these activities were separated into the three parts of society. Arendt, however, does not advocate for the acceptability of slavery as a part of society. Instead, she aims to demonstrate that the logic of labour must be excluded from the political realm. This mode of life, ideally, serves as the avant-garde of human existence, where speech becomes an avant-garde form of action, not driven by practical aims but serving to expose oneself to others, creating a common world imbued with meaningfulness. In this context, the political necessitates a form of thinking untainted by pre-given motives or adherence to general principles; it constitutes free action. As political action aligns with historical narrative, its essence lies not in the material realm but in the realm of free and truthful thinking, as manifested in narrative and remembrance. Arendt underscores the Socratic

virtue of thinking, aimed at cultivating truthful citizens. (Arendt, 1977, p. 81) Thinking, she argues, is indispensable for politics, and truthful thinking is inherently motivated by freedom, in stark contrast to the practical considerations of sciences driven by instrumentalization and necessity. Action and speech converge when they presuppose an answer to the question 'Who are you?' posed to a newcomer in the realm. This answer reveals the individual both in words and deeds, highlighting the revelatory and initiatory aspects of action and speech. Notably, action without speech would forfeit both revelation and subject, underscoring the ontological tie between speech and truth, as well as being and thinking.

Arendt's comprehension of truthful thinking and the political, which bestows human existence with meaning in opposition to scientific thinking, requires closer observation. To elucidate her understanding of truth and the notion of meaning in the political, she refers to Leibniz's distinction between two kinds of truths — truth of reason and truth of fact. According to Leibniz, the only reliable truth is the truth of reason, exemplified by mathematical reasoning, which is intrinsically necessary, and its opposite is per se impossible. In contrast, the truth of fact is considered to be contingent, allowing for the possibility of opposite states of affairs.

Leibniz, following an ages-old tradition dating back to at least Plato, regards mathematical reasoning as a paradigm for thinking, assigning a higher ontological value to necessity over contingency. Arendt diverges from this tradition, asserting that if the truth of reason is universally accessible to everyone with equal cognitive abilities, the truth of fact can never be witnessed by everyone. Moreover, she emphasizes that 'the true opposite of factual, as distinguished from rational, truth is not error or illusion but the deliberate lie.' (Arendt, 1977, p. 59).

Arendt rejects the necessity of the truth of reason, contending that even mathematical truth, traditionally viewed as necessary, is a product of the human brain—natural and not universally binding. Given that the human being is conditioned by its faculties, Arendt seeks to unveil meaning and liberate thought from the necessity that conditions it. She delineates two types of human faculties: thinking and knowing, drawing on Kant's distinction between reason (*Vernunft*) and intellect (*Verstand*). Intellect, identified as the faculty of cognition and the apprehension of perception, strives to comprehend what is given to the senses.

It is manifested in sciences, in the means-end operation of the mind, and provides us with objective, factual knowledge. Reason, on the other hand, is the faculty of thinking that Arendt explicitly refers to as *thinking* in her philosophy and is foundational to her theory of the political. Reason, conceived as a reflective praxis, involves comprehension. It seeks not merely the verifiable truth but aims to understand *meaning*. Arendt describes it as the 'sixth sense' that imparts meaning to the world, complementing the insights gathered by our other five senses.

"[...] truth is located in the evidence of the senses. But that is by no means the case with meaning and with the faculty of thought, which serves for it; the latter does not ask what something is or whether it exists at all, [...] but what it means for it to be." (Arendt, 1977, p. 59)

We can distinguish that intellect operates with substantial knowledge, rooted in the evidence of the senses or rationality. On the other hand, reason, as the faculty of thought, engages in a quest for relational understanding 'in between' the given, aspiring to grasp the constellation of relations—the meaning of the state of affairs. In terms of the human condition, the pursuit of knowledge might raise questions about 'the human nature,' but it cannot lead us to what Arendt seeks—'the human condition'—providing an answer to *'Who is a human being?'* instead of *'What is a human being?'* Arendt establishes a strong demarcation between common sense (encompassing scientific rationality and practical calculation) and thinking. Common sense seeks to apprehend the given through the senses (*Verstand*) — its desire is 'to grasp,' aiming for truth *within its reach*. In contrast, *Vernunft*, or thinking, strives to explore and establish meaning not directly evident in the immediate grasp of things. It can be likened to the process of wandering and wondering, searching for explanations rather than definitive answers. These two modes manifest in two distinct types of human activity:

“Within [the] metaphors of the manual labourer and the knight-errant, the distinction is consistent. Vernunft can establish meaning while on the quest, and this establishment is its special business – a capacity denied to the Verstand of science of and of common sense.”

Arendt doesn't reject the connection between thinking and knowing; she introduces this distinction methodologically to elucidate the consequences of the prevalence and manifestation of each in the human world. Thinking and knowing are interrelated, but in the scientific enterprise, thinking assumes a specific role—operating as a means to an end. The outcome of this means-end operation is knowledge. While the end is determined by a non-scientific question—'what is worth knowing'—and although withdrawn from the world of evidence and appearances, it serves to discover better methods or more promising approaches toward the goal: reliable, verifiable, and usable knowledge:

“Science in this respect is but an enormously prolongation of common-sense reasoning in which sense illusions are constantly dissipated just as errors in science are corrected. [...] The very concept of an unlimited progress, [...] is the best documentation of the fact that all science still moves within the realm of common sense experience, subject to corrigible error and deception.” (Arendt, 1977, p. 54)

The modern world, according to Arendt (1998, p. 248), is characterized by the triumph of common sense and marked by three significant events – the discovery of America, the Reformation, and the invention of the telescope. Of these, the development of a new science that contemplates the nature of the earth from the viewpoint of the universe is considered most crucial. Arendt refers to Archimedes' *dos rnoi pou sto* (Arendt 1998, p. 262) and contends that, while we remain bound to the earth, we have discovered a way to act and think from this universal Archimedean standpoint, as if standing outside. She notes, 'even at the risk of endangering the natural life process, we expose the earth to universal, cosmic forces alien to nature's household' (Arendt 1998, p. 262).

The universal and rational standpoint of modern science has also influenced philosophy, notably introduced through the famous Cartesian doubt. This philosophical stance exemplifies modernity's inclination to challenge traditional notions of truth based on sensory experience, revelation, or reason. Cartesian doubt eroded human confidence in the world, leading to the collapse of the traditional duality between being and appearance. In this doubt, the concept that truth, in an absolute sense, exists at all was questioned. Rather than adhering to the understanding that appearances merely hide the true being, a different kind of being emerged – one that actively creates its own appearances. The modern age remains haunted by the consequences of this doubt. Firstly, because the world and senses are deemed unreliable, capable of unveiling grand illusions. Secondly, it has implications for the human condition. It became evident not only that the world was not ruled by God but that some malevolent force, enticing human beings into a web of illusion, had taken its place. The overarching uncertainty resulting from this realization led to the perception of a human being as a 'creature that harbors a notion of truth only to endow it with faculties that will never enable it to reach any truth, never allow it to be certain of anything.' (Arendt 1998, p. 277). Arendt observes that this motive has been a decisive aspect of modern morality since its emergence. What was irreversibly lost was the certainty in any truths that could be universally accepted. This loss fundamentally weakened the level of conviction, introducing latent doubt into the human mind. Cartesian thinking is grounded in the assumption that the only things the mind can be certain of are those created by the mind itself. This marked the ascent of modern sciences with a particular emphasis on mathematics, a trend that intensified in the modern age with the industrialization of all spheres of human experience. The Archimedean point in the Cartesian context shifted into the human mind itself; what was now considered common sense was actually the very structure of the human mind that happened to be common. The criterion for truthful knowledge became the appropriate play of the mind with itself. Without any doubt, this process signifies the shift and alienation of the human mind from worldliness, sensuality, and given reality. Neither God nor an evil spirit can affect the certainty that 'two and two is four.'

Interestingly, along with the new philosophy, modern science emerged with a belief in progress and immense optimism in humanity's ability to learn and think. This optimism wasn't applied to each individual but to the succession of generations capable of accumulating knowledge and advancing mankind. Arendt notes that 'Progress became the project of Mankind, acting behind the backs of real man—a personified force that we find somewhat later in Adam Smith's 'invisible hand,' in Kant's 'ruse of nature,' Hegel's 'cunning of Reason,' and Marx's 'dialectical materialism' (Arendt, 1977, p. 153).' This introduces the third mode of thought alongside thinking and scientific cognition – logical reasoning. Logical reasoning produces knowledge in the mind that is reliable to the mind—logical deductions from self-evidence and the subordination of the particular under the general. Logical reasoning can be understood as the production of this 'personalized' sphere of knowledge, creating the world of theory which, in the modern age, is applied to actual states of affairs and experiences to analyze and

predict outcomes. With each step of ever-further rationalization and functionalization of the faculties of the human mind, the human being has become increasingly alienated from the *non-functional* and *unnecessary* realms of life. This process results in a more utilitarian approach, stripping certain spheres of life of their sacredness. In this context, the feature of measurability has taken the place of the sacred, not necessarily in a religious sense.

This same structural shift has been manifested in the political, social, and economic organization of Western society based on the new understanding of humanity as a rational 'subject.' In the pre-modern world, economic and political structures were interconnected, with private property and wealth being indistinguishable and constituting the political status of a free citizen. However, in the modern world, there is a collapse of the private and public in the social domain. Historically initiated by the transformation of private property into a public concern, the rise of economics coincides with the expropriation of the private property of peasants around the time of the Reformation. This transformation fundamentally changed the understanding of wealth and property, introducing the rise of common wealth.

In the modern world, property has been detached from its sacredness and bondage to a specific place, becoming nothing more than privately consumable wealth without any further *political* meaning. This initial stage introduced a centuries-long process of the distinction between private and public that later escalated in capitalism, where wealth transformed into capital capable of producing more capital. Capital began to lead its own *personalized* life. Changes in the perception of private property do not necessarily abolish private property itself; rather, this shift implies a certain alienation both in terms of place and the meaning of wealth. Wealth and property are no longer bound to the earth, house, or a specific location; they are virtually changeable and mobile. These changes have not only deprived humans of a place in the world in a political sense but also from a home as a shelter from the outer world. Since the public has become the concern of the private, and the private the only concern of the public, it is the social realm where the only common concern is each individual's private interest, leaving no place for political action.

The real consequence of the social is that it excludes the very possibility of action that was previously relegated to the household, as the common has now become a vast *household*. Economics has attained its status as the social measurement of human activity because humans have become social beings adhering to certain patterns of behavior, representing the only way to express one's individuality, tied to what one 'does for life' and what one consumes. Logically, the social era brings about the liberation of labour as the *meaning* of human life, where one's value is solely measured by one's skill, which can be reduced to mere labour power and productivity. In modern society, thinking follows a means-end pattern, and, according to the three kinds of human activity, a kind of paradox emerges. Although alienated from his milieu, the human being thinks in terms of necessity, which has been elevated to a higher level of value. As Arendt notes, 'It is not that in the modern world there would not be poetry, philosophy, or politics, but the fact that these spheres of human activity are

reduced to satisfying human needs—those of public admiration or financial reward—and are not able to constitute the public sphere as a space in which things are saved from the destruction of time.’ (Arendt 1998, p. 57).

The three modes of life in the Greek polis are directly related to three modes of thinking and, correspondingly, to three kinds of 'discourses' in the contemporary world. In the Greek polis, thought was manifested in the political realm as speech and action; this thinking is free, without any aim, deemed 'useless' as it lacks an end or goal outside itself. Today, this mode of thinking appears to be preserved in philosophy and the arts. Instrumental cognition, on the other hand, manifested in work, created worldliness, and pursued definite aims. It produces knowledge that is practically usable, representing the technological power of scientific progress. Logical reasoning, seemingly elevated to higher reliability, actually represents the measurable brain power of a human being, comparable to labour power. In the polis, this mode of thinking was a task for slaves, representing the power of the *human animal* developed in its metabolism with nature. "The tragedy of the modern age lies in the dominance of this way of thinking, extending its influence across all fields of human expression. It functions as a prevailing mindset in the contemporary world, where the consummation and satisfaction of primal needs, such as 'making a living,' play the central role in human life, regardless of one's pursuits. The ascent of labour, which permeates all spheres of human activity in the modern age, also signifies a radical change in moral standards. As Arendt notes, these standards are 'inspired by the needs and ideals of its most important group of men, the new scientists; and the modern cardinal virtues—success, industry, and truthfulness—are at the same time the greatest virtues of modern science. (Arendt 1998, p. 17).

In the social realm, the human being is led by the mode of rational operating rather than truthful thinking. Here, scientific discourse in the form of economics, social sciences, and anthropology prevails, constituting a mere derivation from common sense and *Verstand*. Rationality, withdrawn from actual involvement in the world, appears to be an attempt at *liberation* rather than the establishment of true freedom. In the modern age, politics, reduced to predictability and statistics, has transformed into a vast administrative apparatus for social maintenance and political technologies. It strives to exclude the very possibility of spontaneous, free actions, categorizing them as deviant and asocial. This aspect reveals the latent totalization of the modern world, where a heterogeneous field of human activity has been subjected to measurable statistics and general rules. Consequently, this process naturalizes human existence to measure and predict its course in the future. The far-reaching political consequences of this trend risk leading to ideologies and principles that may undermine the true value of human beings, as witnessed in totalitarian regimes of the 20th century. Arendt addresses this question in her work 'On Violence,' noting the risk of reducing action to random events or irrelevant exceptions, a phenomenon that has occurred with the rise of social sciences aiming to theorize human experience.

“The danger is that these theories are not only plausible, because they take their evidence from actually discernible present trends, but that, because of their inner consistency, they have a hypnotic effect; they put to sleep our common sense, which

is nothing else but our mental organ for perceiving, understanding, and dealing with reality and factuality." (Arendt 1970, p. 110)

When the political transforms into the social, everything becomes predictable at the cost of the future. Governance is replaced by socioeconomic administration, presupposing 'objectivity' and usability. The modern world emerged with the prevalence of a *scientific* ideal in the socioeconomic organization of Europe. The modern age can be defined by the dominance of *scientific* thinking in socio-political organization, transforming it into a mere ideology. Scientific thinking reduces meaning to common sense structures. It is incapable of creating a world, making a *home*, or producing *meaning*. Instead, it has established a society that is predictable and measurable, trapped in the circularity of consummation. This is a society that has altered its temporality and deprived itself of the relationship with the infinite and with immortality. The modern world itself has been determined by technological and practical know-how, derived from the universal, distinguished from natural laws, and divorced from involvement in the realm of appearances:

"[...] there are, indeed, few things that are more frightening than the steadily increasing prestige of scientifically minded brain trusters in the councils of government during the last decades. The trouble is not that they are cold-blooded enough to "think the unthinkable", but that they do not think." (Arendt 1970, p. 108)

A society blinded by the rational speculations of the mind and sheer scientific development is on a train to nowhere, for it lacks the very sense that was inscribed in the origins of Europe — the sense of true freedom, which actually constitutes human beings as truly *human*. Arendt goes so far as to liken it to a desert, a world stripped of everything 'in between,' of everything 'useless' that imparts life with an untimely dimension and allows the actual construction of a world where worldliness and usefulness gain significance. The spirit of discovery, which appears to strive to extend the limits of the human world and experience, ultimately abolishes distance: 'nothing can remain immense if it can be measured, and every survey brings together distant parts, thereby establishing closeness where distance ruled before.' (Arendt 1998, p. 250).

If we distinguish between two basic modes of thought — one instrumentalized and subjected to aims, and the other free — we can see how they are connected to two modes of freedom in Arendt's thought. She refers to the two foundational legends of the Western world — Roman and Hebrew. Both legends assert that the supreme act in which 'We' was constituted as a definable entity implied that 'the inspiring principle of action is love of freedom, both in the negative sense of liberation from oppression and in the positive sense of the establishment of Freedom as a stable, tangible reality.' (Arendt 1977, p. 203). The difference and link between these two terms — negative liberation and actual, positive freedom — have far-reaching consequences for the problematic of freedom in the contemporary world. Both legends begin with an act of liberation (from slavery in Egypt and by the burning of Troy) and are narrated from the perspective of a new state of freedom acquired through the spontaneity of beginning something new. There exists an abyss between the act of liberation from the previous order and true

positive freedom, exercised without any reliable chain of causality. As Arendt puts it, 'liberation, though it may be freedom's condition *sine qua non*, is never the condition *per quam* that causes freedom – there is nothing left for the “beginner” to hold on.' (Arendt, 1977, p. 208).

The abyss that marked the beginning of true freedom has been obstructed by the reliable rationality of modern sciences, particularly starting with Descartes. Theories attempting to reconcile freedom with necessity relied on dialectical speculations, hinging solely on the abilities of the mind. The modern subject, apprehensive of the unreliability of reality, appears to be hesitating on the edge of the abyss. Creating verifiable truth in the mind, they stand before the leap into the unknown to establish positive, life-affirmative freedom. Liberation as purposeful activity presupposes acting in accordance with a certain logic and causality toward a goal, manifesting instrumentalized thinking. In contrast, true positive freedom does not follow this course of intellect; instead, it searches for its own way of being and creates its meaning. The launch of Sputnik marked a symbolic moment, signifying humanity's yearning to break free from the confines of Earth. In the age of technological thinking, characterized by an insatiable drive for discovery, humans seek a form of freedom that transcends their natural condition. However, it becomes apparent that this pursuit may be more about attempting to escape rather than establishing genuine freedom. The role of thinking, especially within scientific discourse, which tends to instrumentalize various aspects of human life, underscores the enduring presence of alienation since the inception of the modern world. Humanity is attempting to escape its own imprisonment through the wrong doors. By challenging natural limits, it poses a threat to the future and reduces life to mere survival. Indeed, the same kind of life will persist in the same kind of imprisonment even if a human being is able to create their own conditions and start living on Mars, for instance. Scientific achievements in the 20th century can no longer be judged according to common sense because scientific reality has become too alienated from the lived experience of human beings. Arendt highlights the real danger of the loss of the political, where deeds could be judged according to what they truly mean for human beings. What is at stake here is not common sense but understanding.

“The quest for meaning is “meaningless” to common sense and common-sense reasoning because it is the sixth sense's function to fit into the world of appearances and make us at home in the world given by our five senses; that we are and no questions asked.” (Arendt, 1977, p. 59)

To find meaning is to make a home. Creating a household and satisfying natural needs is one basic organization of the milieu and everydayness, whereas making a home means finding and creating a fundamentally new status for human beings in space and time, beyond mere survival. Human beings exercise this freedom in responsibility, extended through action, transcending worldliness and everydayness. What I claim is that these three activities represent three different modes of thinking and lead us to a more reasonable analysis of the relationship between thinking, freedom, and necessity. This triad also expresses the hermeneutical structure of Arendt's thought, showing that they are not only

interrelated in the very fabric of human experience, but also that the meaning of this experience can be given only in freedom:

"The earth is the very quintessence of the human condition, and earthly nature, for all we know, may be unique in the universe in providing human beings with habitat in which they can move and breathe without effort and without artifice. The human artifice of the world separates human existence from all mere animal environment, but life itself is outside this artificial world, and through life man remains related to all other organisms." (Arendt 1998, p. 2)

Arendt's conception of freedom places her in opposition to the traditional Western view of a free agent who remains independent from external circumstances and guides his actions by his own will, where unpredictability merely implies being subject to sheer contingency. Arendt's political agent is not a "victim of circumstances"; instead, they embrace the unknown, creating meaning themselves, being truthful and responsible in their appearance. Their action becomes transformative, actively contributing to the creation of the world. Arendt's interpretation of political freedom takes on a different meaning, closely connected to necessity. She upholds the priority of the will's initiatory power over reason's demand for precedent and comprehensibility, a perspective she finds in the thought of the thirteenth-century theologian Duns Scotus. This aspect of Arendt's understanding of the "non-sovereign quality of freedom" (Villa, 2000, p. 181) alters the very concept of the political, legitimizing truthful thinking and spontaneous action in this realm:

"Events, by definition, are occurrences that interrupt routine procedures; only in a world in which nothing of importance ever happens could the futurologists' dream come true. Predictions of the future are never anything but projections of present automatic processes and procedures, that is, of occurrences that are likely to come to pass if men do not act and if nothing unexpected happens; every action, for better or worse, and every accident necessarily destroys the whole pattern in whose frame it finds its evidence." (Arendt 1970, p. 109)

It is evident that the political, subjected to the mindset of the rational, scientific ideal, loses its spontaneous dimension and, consequently, the possibility to create a temporal relation to the infinite, which is only possible when open thinking, as a search for and establishment of meanings, is present. This quest for meaning, as demonstrated, is "meaningless" for common sense, and Arendt refers to thinking as the "sixth sense," the function of which is "to fit us into the world of appearances and make us at home in the world given by our five senses" (Arendt 1977, p. 59). A society that lives solely according to practical motivations is deprived of the meaning and importance of human life. Freedom, exercised in the political realm, initially appearing as a mere, unnecessary benefit for the privileged, turns out to be the essential activity that actually constitutes the vital condition of the authentic world of humanity. In the Greek polis, wealth allowed individuals to be free for public activity. In the modern world, wealth has become a form of liberation enjoyed by individuals in the act of consumption. Since every human

activity in the modern world is tied to a reward, either in the form of money or prestige, there is no other criterion by which to evaluate one's success than sheer statistics of productivity. These two dimensions (wealth and prestige) satisfy the needs of human beings and inevitably give rise to two basic traits of society—greed and narcissism. The movement and dynamics of these drives are plainly circular and leave no lasting traces in the common world. As mentioned, there is no other meaning for these activities beyond individual benefits and advantages to "maintain life."

Arendt, in her critique of contemporary mass society, argues that common sense thinking and utility discourse have imposed their logic on all fields of human action and experience. In combination with the circularity of consumption, which has become the primary motivation for human activities, this has transformed the West into a mass of predictable beings. People behave according to traceable behavioral patterns, staring hopelessly into the future for an escape.

The changes in the West over the past century indicate an ontological shift in the relationships between the mode of thought of freedom and totalitarianism. Considering the previous analysis, it is worth asking where, in contemporary society, the realm for action and speech, not oppressed by statistically motivated structures (at least partly), is still possible. Also, where the political as a legitimate discourse of creating the common could potentially be developed. If in the Greek polis, the division line between the three modes of human existence could be distinguished in three political classes, then with modernity, we see their transformation into modes of thought as potentialities and values, present ever since the rise of Europe.

We are no longer in the Greek polis, but we can realize and actualize these ideas in new forms and discourses that protect the state of human freedom, considering the notions of meaning and being at home, taking into account the alienation and global homelessness of our times. In the contemporary world, spontaneity and the possibility for truthfulness could be preserved in education and art practices. These fields have the potential to constitute the realm of speech and action where new meanings are created and questioned; where speaking is not merely a form of communication, but rather initiates a genuine conversation about the meaningful, considering the truth and values of the ontological state of human beings.

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Two Christian-Aristotelian Ethics: The Ethics of Aquinas and Augustine vs. the Situation Ethics of Joseph Fletcher

By William O'Meara*

First, we shall examine theoretical similarities and differences between two ethics: that of a Christian-Aristotelian Ethics as commented upon by Aquinas and Augustine and that of a Christian-Aristotelian Ethics as developed by Joseph Fletcher in his Situation Ethics. The deep similarity is that both ethics find that the highest virtue is that of love. The key difference is that for a Christian-Aristotelian Ethics developed by Aquinas and Augustine there are some actions and feelings that are evil in themselves and which have no Golden Mean whereas for a Christian-Aristotelian Ethics as developed by Fletcher there are no actions which are evil in themselves. This question of whether there are actions evil in themselves is the primary reason for writing this paper. Second, we shall examine (a) the positive practice of the virtues, arguing that there is little to no practical difference between a Christian-Aristotelian ethics as developed by Aquinas and Augustine and a Christian-Aristotelian situation ethics as developed by Fletcher in the positive practice of the virtues; and we shall examine (b) the practical differences between these two ethics in deciding whether there are some actions that are evil in themselves by reflecting upon the four conditions of the principle of the double effect. The paper will conclude by favoring a Christian-Aristotelian Ethics as developed by Aquinas and Augustine.

Keywords: *Christian-Aristotelian Ethics, Aquinas, Augustine, Joseph Fletcher*

(1) Theoretical Similarities and Differences between Two Different Ethics

We first sketch some brief theoretical similarities and differences between an Aristotelian Ethics brought about by Thomas Aquinas and Augustine and Fletcher's Situation Ethics.

It is clear that both kinds of ethics are virtue-based ethics that find the highest virtue is that of love.

Alan Donagan notes that in Luke's gospel Jesus approves the Jewish scholar who affirms the two greatest commandments, love of God and love of neighbor as oneself, and Thomas Aquinas affirms that love of neighbor as oneself is, first, the self-evident principle from which, second, all the precepts of the Mosaic decalogue relating to neighbor can be derived as deductive conclusions and common principles (Donagan 1977, pp. 59–60).

First, it is self-evident that if one wishes to love one's own self by not doing things that harm one's own life and well-being and by positively doing things that affirm and develop one's own life and well-being, then one should not in those efforts do things that harm others. For if one would allow own's own self to harm others, then those others could reasonably be willing to harm that original self, and

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thus harming others would have the consequence of thwarting the protection and overall development of one's self. So just as one should not harm oneself directly and should advance one's own development, so also one should not harm others and should assist in the proper development of others.

Second, the precepts of the Mosaic decalogue can be deduced as self-evident principles from the command to love others as one loves oneself. For example, if one could promote the advancement of oneself by killing innocent persons, then one should be willing to let any others kill that original self who would be an innocent self. So, just as one would not want others to harm the self who is innocent of killing others, neither should the self be willing to harm others by killing others who are innocent of killing other innocent people. For a second example, if one could reasonably harm others by stealing their property, so also one should reasonably allow others to harm oneself by stealing from the one would steal from them. Such a choice of stealing from others is a self-defeating choice. Hence, in summary, one should not harm others by destroying their innocent loves or by taking away their property, just as others should not harm the self by killing that innocent self or taking away that self's property. So, the precepts of the decalogue dealing with our relationships with neighbors are as self-evident as the principle of loving others as one loves oneself.

Similar to Aquinas's emphasis upon love of neighbor as of oneself, Augustine has this most insightful transformation of the four cardinal virtues found in an Aristotelian ethics by the central virtue of love, writing:

So that temperance is love, keeping the self-entire and uncorrupt for the beloved. Courage is love, bearing everything gladly for the sake of the beloved. Righteousness [justice] is love serving the beloved only, and therefore ruling well. And prudence is love, wisely discerning what helps it and what hinders it (Quoted from Augustine by Haring 1982, Vol. I, 41).

Rather than considering temperance only as the wise practical guidance in the fulfilling of human bodily appetites, Augustine understands temperance also as a way of loving both self and others in their fulfilling of bodily appetites so that love never lets any appetite ruin the self or the other but rather affirms the goodness of the fulfilment of appetites in both self and others. Rather than considering courage only as the wise practical guidance of facing great dangers to our highest values, Augustine understands courage as love which not only acts to defend both self and others in facing great dangers but also acts to challenge both self and others to achieve great values. Rather than considering justice only as the wise practical guidance of rendering unto others what is due to them, namely, the protections of their basic human rights, Augustine understands justice not only as love protecting the others in their basic human rights what is due to them such as right to a basic education but also as affirming that others can be served by the self-helping others attain even higher educational goals, for example. And finally, rather than considering practical wisdom as the appropriate guidance of reason in the fulfilling of what is due though the practice of all the virtues, especially of temperance, courage, and justice, Augustine understands practical wisdom as love not only as guiding the self in avoiding harm to others and the self but also as affirming the

true, practical affirmation and realization of the intrinsic dignity of others and the self.

Fletcher comments upon Augustine's emphasis upon love in all the virtues, writing that he:

was right to make love the source principle, the hinge principle upon which all other 'virtues' hang, whether 'cardinal' (natural) or 'theological' (revealed). Love is not one virtue among others, one principle among equals, not even a *primus inter pares* (Fletcher 1966, p. 78).

Fletcher also comments favorably on the famous quotation by Augustine:

Augustine was right again, as situationists see it, to reduce the whole Christian ethics to the single maxim, *Dilige et quod vis, fac* (Love with care and *then* what you will, do). It was not, by the way, *Ama et quod vis, fac* (Love with desire and do what you please) (Fletcher 1966, p. 79).

For Fletcher, the love commanded here is neither erotic love, *eros*, nor friendship love, *philia*, but rather *agape*, the giving love which is non-reciprocal, willing the good of all neighbors, even neighbors who are enemies. The command for agapeic love is not a command to have an emotional feeling of love for the neighbor, but the command to have the attitude of one's mind and will that guides one to so act not only not to harm one's neighbor but also to affirm and assist the positive development of wisdom and love in one's neighbor. Of course, this positive help for the neighbor is not to make the neighbor dependent as a child upon the helper, but to assist the neighbor in becoming their own mature self (Fletcher 1966, p. 79).

It is worthwhile to point out the deep similarity between Fletcher, Augustine, and Aquinas on the importance of will. Just as Fletcher has emphasized that the command to achieve agapeic love is a command to the person's will, so also does Augustine emphasize the centrality of will in ethics, writing: "But the character of the human will is of moment; because, if it is wrong, these motions of the soul will be wrong, but if it is right, they will be not merely blameless, but even praiseworthy (Augustine 2014, pp. 14, 2)." The key for Augustine is that one's will is rightly ordered towards that which is truly good. As Fletcher and Augustine emphasize the key role of the will, so also does Aquinas, writing:

The will is a rational appetite. Now every appetite is only of something good. The reason of this is that the appetite is nothing else than an inclination of a person desirous of a thing towards that thing. Now every inclination is to something like and suitable to the thing inclined. Since, therefore, everything, inasmuch as it is being and substance, is a good, it must needs be that every inclination is to something good. And hence it is that the Philosopher says (Ethic. i, 1) that "the good is that which all desire" (Aquinas 2006, I-II, Q. 8, Art. 2).

So, for Aquinas, the rightly ordered will towards that which is truly good, the proper ethical development of oneself as a person, namely, the willing of self and of others as worthwhile for their own sake is at the heart of all ethical behavior.

Having emphasized the centrality of the will in ethical judgment, Fletcher goes on to consider two common objections to situation ethics are, first, that it disregards the virtue of practical wisdom, and, second that it disregards the virtue of justice (Fletcher 1966, pp. 81–84). But Fletcher affirms that situation ethics calls for adults not only to develop significant knowledge of appropriate facts and the wisdom needed practically about how to exercise *agape* in the circumstances of one's decision, but also to realize that love and justice are the same. For he writes: "We say, however, very positively, that love is justice or that justice loves. They are one and the same. To be loving is to be just, to be just is to be loving" (Fletcher 1966, p. 93). When Fletcher reflects upon justice as giving unto others what is their due, what is in accord with their rights, he affirms that what is owed in justice to any person is only *agapeic* love:

You have a right to anything that is loving; you have no right to anything that is unloving. All rights and duties are as contingent and relative as all values. The right to religious freedom, free speech, public assembly, private property, sexual liberty, life itself, the vote—all are validated only by love (Fletcher 1966, p. 95).

(2) The Key Pragmatic Question Differentiating the Two Ethics

In Chapter II of his famous book, *Situation Ethics*, when he notes a key presupposition of his ethics, he affirms that the inspiration for his book came from his graduate studies in theology when he became "a professed advocate of the Peirce-James-Dewey analysis of human knowledge" (Fletcher 1966, p. 40). Furthermore, when he concludes his book in Chapter IX, he ends with a quotation of Dewey and Tuft's book, *Ethics*, affirming that human ethics must begin with and always come back to the concrete human problems which we encounter in our experiences with others and that if a person "gets away from them he is talking about something which his own brain has invented, not about moral realities" (Dewey and Tufts 1908, p. 212, Fletcher 1966, p. 159).

In accord with the key pragmatic question of what is the practical difference between the two views, we may examine any key practical difference between an ethics rooted in the Aristotelian tradition and Fletcher's situation ethics: (a) in positive practice of the virtues, and (b) in avoiding actions and feelings that Aristotle affirms are evil in themselves

(a) *The Positive Practice of the Virtues*

We shall argue that there is little to no practical difference between an Aristotelian ethics and a situation ethics in the positive practice of the virtues. As Stephen Pope points out about practical reasoning for Aquinas's Aristotelian ethics, which Fletcher would fully agree with, that:

practical reasoning, unlike speculative reasoning, deals with individual and contingent matters, and therefore its judgements are not characterized by absolute necessity (see Aquinas 1948, I-II, 3, 6 ad 2) . They are true 'for the most part', but do not always hold. Moral principles therefore need to be interpreted with sensitivity to the particular nuances of concrete cases, not applied rigidly and mechanistically (see Aquinas 1948, I-II, 96, I, 6, Miller 1956, pp. 151–152).

We shall consider, first, Aristotle on his consideration of virtue in practical reasoning: In his ethics, he famously affirms: “Virtue, then, is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i.e., the mean relative to us, this being determined by a rational principle, and by that principle by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it” (Aristotle, NE, 2, 6). Aristotle has recognized that children and adolescents in becoming morally responsible adults will at times choose either excessive or defective actions and/or feelings but learn to correct themselves towards finding the appropriate mean between excess and defect. For example, rather than being intemperate by eating and drinking either too much or too little, adults will learn to eat and drink moderately as appropriate to themselves as a person of practical wisdom would decide. Again, for example, rather than being foolhardy by making rash decisions too boldly in dangerous situations and rather than being cowardly by merely running away from dangerous situations, people learn to become courageous by making the decision appropriate to themselves as a person of practical wisdom would decide, avoiding excess and defect in facing danger.

Even more famously, Aristotle affirms that there are some actions and feelings such as murder or jealousy which have no mean (Aristotle, NE, 2, 6). He has no development of this key affirmation. Rather, the main thrust of Aristotle’s ethics is to identify the key role that the virtues have in developing deep, lasting happiness through positive actions. For example in Books 8 and 9, almost 20% of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, is devoted to identifying and developing a rich conceptualization of friendship of virtue, the friendship between two people of virtue who strive to develop the realization of their best self, their ethical self, both in themselves and in each other.

It is obvious that for friendship of virtue there are no absolute rules of ethics for the positive practice of virtue that either Aristotelian ethics or situation ethics which would be commanded. For example, when Aristotle considers the problem of whether or not one friend should forgive another for a deep harm done to the first friend, he writes no absolute command but only advises that forgiveness may be favored when one discerns that the friend who has committed the harm to the other might yet be able to grow beyond that action and its harm towards better actions and positive growth for the friendship

Furthermore, even in the situation ethics of Fletcher which postulates only one true good, that of *agape*, that most generous love of neighbor as of oneself cannot be used to deduce every moral action in accord with it. For Fletcher writes:

Even the radical principle of enemy-love has to be qualified in the calculations of the situation; it is right to deal lovingly with the enemy *unless to do so hurts too many friends*. The enemy neighbor has no stronger claims than a friend-neighbor, after all (Fletcher 1966, p. 115).

For Fletcher, we cannot deduce from the command that we should love our enemies that we must always forgive our enemies or even always forgive our friends when they have harmed our relationship deeply. For such forgiveness of enemies and even such forgiveness of one's former best friend might possibly result in terrible harms for the one who proposes to forgive the other, whether enemy or friend.

Consequently, both for Aristotle in the positive practice of friendship of virtue and for Fletcher in the positive practice of *agape*, we may affirm that no absolute rule should be deduced for Aristotle that would in friendship of virtue require one to forgive a friend and that no absolute rule for Fletcher be deduced which would require one to forgive every enemy or even every friend for the serious harms they have committed. Aristotle, Aquinas, and Fletcher would fully agree that the positive practice of the virtues cannot be guided by absolute universal rules since the contingencies of human nature and our relationships must be taken into account as in the wise application of the maxim for our practical, moral decisions.

(b) Are There Actions and Feelings Evil in Themselves

Fletcher affirms that there is no list of commandments, that is, prohibitions of things evil in themselves, that the moral agent acting with *agapeic* love must avoid, writing:

Only one "general" proposition is prescribed, namely, the commandment to love God through the neighbor. "God does not will to draw any love exclusively to Himself. He wills that we should love Him 'in our neighbor'" [Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, 133]. . . . All other generalities (e.g., "One should tell the truth" and "one should respect life") are at most only *maxims*, never rules. For the situationist there are no rules—none at all (Fletcher 1966, p. 55).

In reflecting upon Fletcher's position, we shall argue that there are significant practical differences between an Aristotelian ethics and Fletcher's ethics by examining the four conditions of the principle of the double effect. Joseph Mangan, a Catholic moral theologian in the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition, writes:

A person may licitly [morally] perform an action that he foresees will produce a good effect and a bad effect provided that four conditions are verified at one and the same time:

- that the action in itself from its very object be good or at least indifferent; that the good effect and not the evil effect be intended [we should avoid bringing about the evil effect or at least reducing it if at all possible];

- that the good effect and not the evil effect be intended,
- that the good effect be not produced by means of the evil effect;
- that there be a proportionately grave reason for permitting the evil effect (Mangan 1949, p. 43).

Let us consider a first case applying the principle of the double effect and then reflect how what situation ethics can learn from this new case. What may a person do in choosing a life partner between two possible lovers when a person knows that the one not chosen might commit suicide?

A person may licitly perform an action of choosing one's life partner that he foresees will produce a good effect and a bad effect provided that four conditions are verified at one and the same time:

- (1) that the action in itself from its very object be good or at least indifferent; yes, free choice of a life partner is a great good.
- (2) that the good effect and not the evil effect be intended; yes, the free choice of love is intended even if we know another possible partner may do something terrible, but we don't want that terrible thing to happen.
- (3) that the good effect be not produced by means of the evil effect; yes, the evil effect of something terrible happening to a third person is not the means for two lovers committed to each other to be fulfilled.
- (4) that there be a proportionately grave reason for permitting the evil effect'; yes, the free choice of love is a great good even if something terrible happens to a third person

How would Fletcher reflect upon this solution? I believe he would strongly agree, especially with the last three conditions: (2) because the human heart and conscience acting with agapeic love should never want an evil result in another person; (3) because the human heart and conscience acting with agapeic love should not use the evil result occurring for the unchosen partner as a means to the end of love with the chosen partner but should attempt to avoid or diminish the harm befalling the unchosen partner; and (4) because freely chosen erotic love is a great good that would outweigh any negative effect upon the unchosen partner.

We can now take up a second case study of the application of the principle of the double effect, namely, the case of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. May a person or a country morally bomb with atomic weapons (this is the action) Hiroshima and Nagasaki that he foresees will produce a good effect, the likely ending of the war with an avoidance of 1,000,000 American soldiers' lives saved, and a bad effect, the killing of 150,000 to 200,000 civilian lives lost, mostly senior citizens, women, and children? The bombs were set to explode, not at ground level which would have reduced casualties but at 1,000 feet or so in the air which would greatly increase casualties.

We can apply these four conditions to the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki:

- The first condition requires that the proposed action, doing a bombing during a war of self-defense against the aggressor is broadly speaking a good action.
- The second condition requires that the evil effect not be desired. We may say that the killing of civilians is an indirect effect of the attack upon a military base. The killing of civilians is a foreseen effect, but it is not desired in itself.
- The third condition requires that the evil effect of the foreseen loss of over 100,000 civilian deaths not be a means to the good effect of ending the war and saving perhaps a million lives of American soldiers that would have occurred during an attack upon the main island of Japan. This third condition is violated since the evil effect is desired precisely as the necessary means to the purposes of ending the war and saving many American soldiers' lives.
- The fourth condition requires that there be a grave reason for permitting the evil effect of killing of over 100,000 civilians. This grave reason is that the good effect of saving one million lives of American soldiers far outweighs the bad effect of the loss of the lives of Japanese civilians.

What could Fletcher reject and what would he accept from the above application of the four conditions of the principle of the double effect? It is clear that he would accept the second condition since no person of *agape*' love should ever delight in the occurrence of an evil effect. Such delight would be a manifestation of a heart dedicated to evil.

It is also clear that he would reject the third condition that an evil effect should never be used as a means to another end which is good. If the good effect can be achieved by another means which is good, then Fletcher would condemn using an evil effect as a means to a good effect and would accept the third condition. So only if the way to achieve the good effect is to use an evil means and only if the good effect outweighs the bad effect, then, and only then, may a person do what is usually an evil action in this case of deliberately killing some innocent person in order to achieve a good end. We are, of course, not considering the direct killing of a person guilty of a capital crime and also not considering the direct killing of an unjust attacker in self-defense.

While Fletcher himself does finally judge that at that time the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was morally justifiable, he himself notes that soon after the war with Japan ended "the U.S. Bombing Survey declared that the Japanese 'would have surrendered prior to November first in any case'" (Fletcher 1966, pp. 168 and 99). This reconsideration of whether or not the atomic bombings against Japan were truly necessary makes us realize that the justification of using an evil effect as a means to a good end must always be that using what is typically an evil action must be the only means available. This caution against using evil for the sake of good only when truly necessary must weigh heavily upon the conscience of the situation ethicist.

Let us consider a number of cases in which Fletcher justifies treating a general principle of morality as only a maxim because the situation justifies an exception

to the general moral principle. Would it be proper in each of these cases to affirm that a person is being forced to make a choice between two evils so that the result is that the person morally out of agapeic love chooses the lesser of the two evils?

- (1) Fletcher considers the case of whether a small neighborhood business person may tell a lie in order to avoid extortion of another person by some crooks? Fletcher's answer is that it is good, that is, loving, to choose the lesser of two evils, lying and harming another innocent person. Agapeic love is required to choose the lesser of the two evils (Fletcher 1966, pp. 64–65).
- (2) Fletcher considers and approves of the moral decision of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Christian moral theologian, who participated in an attempt on Hitler's life (Fletcher 1966, p. 33). Again, we can find here that agapeic love should make the forced choice of lesser evil, the assassination of Hitler contrasted with the greater evil, the continuation of Hitler's crimes against humanity.
- (3) Fletcher considers and approves the moral decision in the *Apocrypha* of Judith of lying to Holofernes and using her sex to enable her to distract him and then murder him (Fletcher 1966, p. 66). Again, we can find here that agapeic love should make the forced choice of the lesser evil, lying and seduction, in order to avoid the greater evil of the enemy of Israel continuing to live.
- (4) Fletcher considers and approves of the moral decision not to be an absolute pacifist against all wars since choosing to go to war against an unjust attacker is a forced choice of the lesser evil, a defensive war, over against a greater evil, submission to another country who would commit crimes against humanity (Fletcher 1966, p. 53).
- (5) Fletcher considers and approves of the moral decision of T. E. Lawrence to kill a murderer in the following situation: "Hamed the Moor killed Salem in a personal quarrel while they were camped in the Wadi Kitan He [Lawrence] knew that Salem's people would exact "justice" by revenge, starting an endless feud and bloodletting" (Fletcher 1966, p. 98). Again, we can see a forced choice between a lesser evil, the execution of a murderer by an unauthorized person, namely, Lawrence, over against the development of a blood feud between the Arab people whose rebellion against the enemy in World War I would have collapsed.
- (6) Fletcher considers and approves of the decision of British authorities sending women agents into Germany during World War II, a lesser evil, over against the greater evil of letting Germany realize that the German code had been decrypted (Fletcher 1966, p. 98).
- (7) Fletcher considers and approves of the moral decisions of the French Resistance during World War II such as "killing occupation officers and collaborators, sometimes even killing one of their own members in danger of arrest and exposing their whole conspiracy" (Fletcher 1966, p. 124). Alexander Miller, who interviewed the *maquis*, commented

that “if killing and lying are to be used it must be under the most urgent pressure of social necessity, and with a profound sense of guilt that no better way can be found” (Miller 1956, pp. 99–100). Fletcher reinterprets Miller by affirming that these tragic situations are not to be a source of guilt or remorse, but a source of regret because the choice required was the necessary means of avoiding a greater evil (Fletcher 1966, p. 124).

So far we have sketched an understanding of seven cases wherein Fletcher uses situation ethics as being justified through the principle of forced choosing of the lesser of two evils. Alan Donagan reflects upon this general principle and its limits, which he calls:

The principle of the least evil, and which was already proverbial in Cicero’s time: namely, *minima de malis eligenda*—when you must choose between evils, choose the least. However, as we shall see, the limits of its application have not been well understood (Donagan 1977, p. 152).

Donagan does not distinguish between negative commands such as avoid direct harm to another, for example, by not committing murder or theft, and positive commands such as do good unto others, for example, by educating them, but rather reframes these commands as having the same logical form:

In terms of permissibility, both [commands] are negative; and there are prohibitory precepts expressible in sentences of the same form as those expressing precepts about promoting goods as those expressing precepts about promoting good ends: for example, “It is impermissible for one man not to go to the help of another in serious distress, when it is in his power,” and “It is impermissible not to promote the well-being of others, according to his means.” (Donagan 1977, p. 153).

Donagan does not find the distinction between these two kinds of things which are impermissible, the first kind being those in which certain actions such as murder and theft are prohibited and the second kind such as being those which affirm the pursuit of certain good ends such as education and health, as clear as people would think. What is impermissible in the first kind are prohibited actions, and what is impermissible in the second kind are failures of pursuing good ends generally. The key difference is that the prohibition of certain actions such as murder, that is, the deliberate killing of an innocent person, is absolute but the prohibition of failure to promote such ends as education and health does not exclude various ways of promoting education and/or health as evil in themselves. There can be a variety of ways, for example, of promoting education, one way being that of a completely public education, a second way being that of a completely private education, and a third way that of being various mixes of public and private education. Any one of these ways might indirectly harm some students, but the decision to allow these harms to occur should not intend that these harms be directly intended and that efforts should be made to reduce these harms (Donagan 1977, p. 153).

So, Donagan concludes: “A fundamental principle which categorically forbids violating the respect owed to human beings as rational must condemn any plan for promoting human well-being by which that respect would be violated (Donagan 1977, p. 154).” Donagan has adopted the general moral principle that it is absolutely prohibited both in negative duties such as avoiding killing that it is impermissible morally to kill an innocent person directly and in positive duties such as pursuing the well-being of education for others that it is impermissible to kill an innocent person directly. As for a negative duty, even if another person might threaten me that I would be shot and killed if I did not obey that person’s command to shoot and kill a third person, nevertheless the moral command is that I should not shoot and kill that third person. As for a positive duty of educating others, even if the shooting and killing of an innocent person might be a way of vividly educating children that their safety and well-being are not guaranteed in life, nevertheless the moral command not to shoot and kill an innocent person overrides the use of the vivid example of arbitrary murder since there are many ways of teaching the precariousness of our lives without resorting to the use of moral outrages. An educator could simply use examples from the animal kingdom which would show the precariousness, for example, of a mother seal who strives with great effort to protect her cub seals from starvation.

Both Donagan and Fletcher do not believe that the first principle of morality can be proven. Once Donagan accepts something like Kant’s second formulation of the Categorical Imperative which he rephrases as: “*Act always so that you respect every human, yourself or another, as being a rational creature* (Donagan 1977, p. 65).” he affirms that this principle must be never violated, whether in avoiding harm to humanity or in seeking beneficial development of proper ends for humanity. Once Fletcher adopts his Christian faith in the God of agapeic love, he thereby affirms only one moral principle, the similar agapeic love of neighbor as of oneself, as Brunner has affirmed:

Only one “general” proposition is prescribed, namely, the commandment to love God through the neighbor. “God does not will to draw any love exclusively to Himself. He wills that we should love Him ‘in our neighbor’” (Quoted by Fletcher 1966, p. 55).

The consequence of Fletcher’s situation ethics is that just as one would deliberately kill over:

- 100,000 Japanese civilians including children to save the lives of 1,000,000 American soldiers,
- so also one would also deliberately kill 10,000 innocent children to save the lives of 100,000 soldiers,
- and 10,000 innocent children to save the lives of 100,000 soldiers,
- and 1,000 innocent children to save the lives of 10,000 soldiers,
- and 100 innocent children to save the lives of 1,000 soldiers,
- and 10 innocent children to save the lives of 100 soldiers,
- and, finally, even finally one innocent child to save the lives of 10 soldiers.

The vicious nature of this calculus by situation ethics is so repulsive that this author can only stand against the absolute horror of deliberately choosing to do evil in order that good may come from it. What person of agapeic love, what person whose central moral principle is respect for the intrinsic value of every human being, can deliberately choose such horrifying evil? Alan Donagan does not, and neither should Joseph Fletcher.

Indeed, Donagan considers the problem put by the atheist brother, Ivan, to the saintly brother, Alyosha, from *The Brothers Karamazov*:

“ . . . imagine that it is you yourself who is erecting the edifice of human destiny with the aim of making men happy in the end, of giving them peace and contentment at last, but that to do that it is absolutely necessary, and indeed quite inevitable, to torture to death only one tiny creature, the little girl who beat her breast with her little fist, and to found the edifice on her unavenged tears—would you consent to be the architect on those conditions? Tell me and do not lie!”

“No, I wouldn’t” Alyosha said softly (Donagan 1977, p. 36).

Having raised this famous objection from Ivan, Donagan dismisses Ivan’s thought experiment since “it is necessary to demand, in what system of nature could a deed of that kind be a necessary element in causing that outcome (Donagan 1977, p. 36)?”

However, this paper holds that Donagan’s challenge is quite easily answered. For the inevitable development and choice of capitalism as an economic system has greatly enriched humanity since its beginning in England over 200 years ago. Nevertheless, capitalism has caused profound misery at the same time. For example, the capitalist control of the practice of medicine even now in the U.S.A. has brought with it many advances in human health but at the same time caused great inequities in the different states for pregnant women and their offspring. Indeed, infant mortality and maternal health statistics vary greatly amongst the states. The suffering of innocent children is not an implausible and not an unforeseen effect of capitalism that Donagan has questioned as an implausible system of nature and human nature. The deleterious effects on women’s health and infant mortality have been known for a long time, and millions of people, claiming that they are following the best laws of economics for the advancement of medicine in general, have failed to do anything much at all to mitigate this foreseen and horrible effect. Hence, Ivan’s thought experiment succeeds in undermining Joseph Fletcher’s situation ethics that would claim to act out of agapeic love for the majority of people but at the same time would allow a person to deliberately develop a system of economics and politics that causes or allows an evil to happen to an innocent child without even a serious effort to negate and/or minimize such an evil effect.

In conclusion, first, we have examined theoretical similarities and differences between two ethics: that of a Christian-Aristotelian Ethics as commented upon by Aquinas and Augustine and that of a Christian-Aristotelian Ethics as developed by Joseph Fletcher in his Situation Ethics. We have found a deep similarity in that both ethics find that the highest virtue is that of love. The key difference is that for an Aristotelian Ethics developed by Aquinas and Augustine there are some actions

and feelings that are evil in themselves and which have no Golden Mean whereas for an Aristotelian Ethics as developed by Fletcher there are no actions which are evil in themselves.

Second, we have examined (a) the positive practice of the virtues, arguing that there is little to no practical difference between an Aristotelian ethics as developed by Aquinas and Augustine and a situation ethics as developed by Fletcher in the positive practice of the virtues. For example, both of these ethics do not morally command that every wrong against a person must be forgiven because it is practically unwise to offer forgiveness when the offender will only disregard that forgiveness and harm the forgiver seriously again. We have also examined (b) the practical differences between these two ethics in deciding whether there are some actions that are evil in themselves by reflecting upon the four conditions of the principle of the double effect. We have agreed with Donagan's defense of the general moral principle that it is absolutely prohibited both in negative duties such as avoiding killing that it is impermissible morally to kill an innocent person directly and in positive duties such as pursuing the well-being of education for others that it is impermissible to kill an innocent person directly.

We have concluded the paper by favoring a Christian-Aristotelian Ethics as developed by Aquinas and Augustine.

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Thinking through Sets: Exploring How Chinese Pictographic Language Shapes Chinese Logic

By Jinmei Yuan*

The author of this paper argues that ancient Chinese thinkers practiced an alternative logic that is significantly different from Aristotelian logic. The paper has two objectives: 1) to clarify what Chinese logic looks like; 2) to re-evaluate the wisdom in classic texts with a clear understanding of Chinese logic. The author uses two major approaches in her reasoning: an etymological approach and logic of sets. An etymological study shows that Chinese pictographic characters were created according to sets - the collections of characters. The author examines how Chinese pictographic language shapes ancient Chinese thinkers' thinking patterns and provides evidence that the habit of thinking in sets could naturally shape a practice of a primary logic of sets. Borrowing some expressions and symbols from modern Set Theory, the author demonstrates how the logic of sets was practiced by Gongsun Longzi, Confucius, Zhuangzi, as well as Chinese mathematicians in their teachings and reasoning. A theory of sets provides help with a much better understanding about reasoning methods in ancient Chinese thinkers' minds, so that one can evaluate their wisdom fairly. Understanding Chinese logic as it is provides a fruitful opening for new research in Comparative Philosophy.

Keywords: *set, etymology, membership, Chinese logic, and comparative philosophy*

Introduction

In this paper, I argue that there is an alternative logic that was widely practiced among ancient Chinese thinkers. This logic is significantly different from Aristotelian logic, for Law of Identity and Law of Non-contradiction fail to work in such an alternative logic. Membership relationships in hierarchical classes of genus and species can hardly be found, and propositions of facts are not simply verifiable as either true or false. I do not think that it is fair to assume that ancient Chinese people did not have their own logic but only linguistic clarification¹. Nor do I agree to simply bend Chinese ways of reasoning to match Aristotelian propositional logic. Logic should be a plural term, logics.


This paper carries two tasks: 1) to clarify what Chinese logic looks like; 2) to re-evaluate the wisdom in classic texts with a clear understanding of Chinese



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¹Chad Hansen claims that there was nothing that could be called logic in the classical Chinese philosophical tradition. He says, "Chinese linguistic theory focused on the question of what term to assign to things rather than on the propositional units so central to western theory of language and logic. The dominant conception was that a word had a scope or range of application, rather than referring to individuals or objects" (Hansen 1998).

logic. An etymological approach and the logic of sets are two major approaches involved in my reasoning.

An etymological study shows that Chinese pictographic characters were created according to sets - the collections of characters. These collections consist of 364 radicals, which function as primary sets or units. All Chinese characters were created and sorted according to these 364 different radicals, which are simple sketches of the images for 364 common objects, things, or activities in human experiences. Normally, a Chinese character is a member in one of those primary sets of radicals. It associates with the radical one way or another in meaning by having the radical as a part of the character itself. The meaning of the primary radical is represented by the totality of its members. For example, the water


radical, *shui*  (simplified as “ 氵 ” in modern Chinese) includes objects or


elements which associate with water, such as, river , ocean , creak

, fulfill ,² etc., and the radical  is interpreted or defined by all the members in the set of water radical.



Both Chinese radicals and characters are pictographic. This unique feature preserves not only many hidden moral codes in ancient Chinese culture, but also shapes traditional ways of reasoning in Chinese logic, such as categorizing or sorting, giving definitions, and constructing arguments. This uniqueness provides trustworthy clues for us to investigate ancient Chinese thinkers' minds. Fortunately, ancient Chinese scholars preserved the classical Chinese language, in both written forms and pronunciations, carefully. The early Chinese etymology dictionary, *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* or *Shuo Wen* 《說文解字》, by 許慎 Xu Shen (c. 58 – c. 147 CE) will be used as an etymological reference when I examine how Chinese pictographic language shapes Chinese people's thinking patterns. In *Shuo Wen*, Xu Shen not only summarized the patterns of sorting Chinese characters, but also demonstrates how Chinese characters were logically created according to the sets of radicals. More than that, *Shuo Wen* recorded the primal meanings of every Chinese character understood and used by ancient Chinese people during the pre-Qin and pre-Han eras.

²I only listed a few members in the set of water radicals as examples. These members are also pictographic. The meaning of the characters can be interpreted by looking at the images of these characters. According to *Shuo Wen*, 'River is the water which passes around Kunlun Mountains and

then goes into the ocean. , 水。出焞煌塞外昆侖山，發原注海。” “Ocean is a pond as

large as the sky. It collects hundreds of rivers and creeks. , 天池也。以納百川者。”

“Creaks are ditches which are four feet wide and four feet deep.

, 水漬。廣四尺、深四尺。” “Fulfill means overflow. , 盈溢也。” (*Shuo Wen*, Book 11, Water Unit)

The translations of sentences from *Shuo Wen* in this paper are mine.

In the introduction to *Shou Wen*, Xu Shen discusses the history before his time and notes that since the first Chinese emperor of Qin (221–206 B.C.) ordered the burning of all classic books by Confucius and other pre-Qin scholars, except farming books, a few hundred years later, people could not understand the classic texts accurately. Many interpretations of classic texts reflect this misunderstanding. Fortunately, during early Han Dynasty (about 157 B.C.–141B.C.), some scholars found many hidden pre-Qin texts between the walls of Confucius' old house. They submitted the texts to Emperor Wu of Han. Later, more hidden classic texts were found in many other places in China. These discoveries made the *Shuo Wen* project necessary. The task of Xu Shen and his followers to write *Shou Wen* was to get rid of misunderstandings of the concepts, examine the sketched images of every character, and record the original meanings used in the pre-Qin classic texts. As an authoritative ancient text, *Shuo Wen* represents some important characteristics of Chinese associative thinking during the pre-Qin era (Paleolithic age–221 B.C.) to Han Dynasty (206 B.C.–220 A.D.) from an etymological point of view. It has been serving as a rich resource for contemporary comparative philosophers to translate and understand the classic texts written by ancient philosophers such as Confucius, Laozi, and Zhuangzi. For example, Roger Ames' etymological approach to finding unmatched meanings between classical Chinese and English has sparked an active discussion in the study of Chinese Philosophy. I share Ames' concern and will conduct my etymological studies carefully when reconstructing ancient Chinese scholars' arguments to reduce the risk of misrepresenting ancient wisdom. My etymological studies in this paper will also offer clear evidence of how a language shapes one's thoughts and ways of reasoning.

Turning to the discussion of the relationship of language and thought, according to their studies on Navajo Native American languages, American linguists Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf advanced a hypothesis of linguistic relativity, also known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. They claim that the language one speaks determines how one thinks. People's perceptions are relative to their spoken language. Edward Sapir points out, "The fact of matter is that the 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group... We see and bear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation" (Sapir 1929, pp. 209–210). The founding of Sapir-Whorf research³ provides me with a useful base to ask a further question: If both sounds and images of a language are symbols that play roles necessarily in human communications, and if logics are also languages that map the thought movements in human communications, then is it possible that the language, such as ancient Chinese pictographic language, shapes the logical patterns when Chinese philosophers think and communicate? If the Chinese pictographic language provides a different way of naming and sorting,

³For detailed findings, see Whorf (1952). Also, in "Reference Module in Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Psychology, 2018," John F. Kihlstrom and Lillian Park summarize: "The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis takes two forms: that language determines thought or that language influences thought" (an online source).

then learning and thinking in this language will name and organize thoughts and reasoning in different ways.

I argue that there clearly is a logic of sets that was practiced naturally and widely among the pre-Qin and Han Dynasty thinkers. I will present what this logic looks like and explain the evidence on which I base my claim that there is a Chinese logic of sets.

I will begin by briefly introducing the meaning of sets and giving a few examples of sets that, I think, were recognized by ancient Chinese thinkers. According to Set Theory, sets are a concept of sorting members or elements as collective units. The objects that make up the set are called its elements or members. The elements of a set may be any objects whatsoever. In the West, Set Theory, as a separate mathematical discipline, begins with the work of Georg Cantor (1845-1918). The fundamental relation in Cantor's Set Theory is membership. Cantor's definition of sets holds two important meanings: 1) the criterion for membership in the set, by which any individual object can be recognized as a member of the set; 2) every member is separated from any other members in the set, so that every member can be counted only once. Cantor introduces his original concept of a set as follows: "A set S is any collection of definite, distinguishable objects of our intuition or of our intellect to be conceived as a whole. The objects are called the **elements** or *members* of S ...with regard to the objects which may be allowed in a set, the phrase 'objects of our intuition' gives considerable freedom" (Stoll 1963, pp. 2-3). Cantor's Set Theory discovers a rich field of transfinite sets, in which totality and individual objects within the whole could be plurally thought of as a unit.

I shall borrow some symbolic expressions from modern Set Theory when discussing the logic of sets in ancient Chinese texts, such as Finite Set $\{a, b, c\}$, Infinity Set $\{a, b, c, \dots\}$; Subset $< >$, Universal Set \mathbb{U} , and Empty Set \emptyset or $\{ \}$. I shall explain these expressions accordingly in the following four sections.

In Section 1, I will prove that a "plurality thought," thought of as a unit is required when learning Chinese pictographic language, which is very similar to learning sets taught by modern Set Theory. Borrowing some expressions and symbols from modern Set Theory, I will demonstrate how an alternative logic, the logic of sets, has roots in the system of Chinese pictographic language and was widely practiced among ancient Chinese thinkers in their teachings and reasoning.

In Section 2, I shall examine the efforts to clarify memberships made by ancient Chinese logicians, such as Gongsun Longzi in the School of Name and Mohists. When these logicians discuss set identity, they clarify concepts by sorting them into different sets. In his book, *Language, Truth and Logic*, Alfred Jules Ayer says, "Philosophy is not a search for first principles," instead, "Philosophizing is an activity of analysis." (Ayer 2022, p. 27). This definition of philosophy fits well in doing Chinese philosophy. Ancient Chinese thinkers, including mathematicians, showed almost no effort to search for the first principles, but they were warmly engaged in many activities in the analysis of the relationship between a general set and the members or elements in the set.

In Section 3, I shall further explore the reasoning done by other thinkers from different schools during the pre-Qin era to the Han Dynasty. Evidence shows that

not only early logicians, but also Confucius and Daoists viewed the relationship between totality and individual elements according to the logic of sets. They employed a comment logic rule, Pointing Out, to indicate the elements in sets. Their activities of analysis were recorded in their written texts and the stories they taught. These activities clearly went beyond linguistic discussions but were guided by commonly accepted logical rules.

In Section 4, I argue that due to a good understanding of the logic of sets, ancient Chinese thinkers had higher achievements in understanding the order of elements in a set and the equivalence of two number sets. Chinese mathematicians were able to use the concept of sets to explain negative and positive integers, as well as the concept of zero creatively and effectively.

The conclusion of this paper is that it is not unusual for a practice to appear much earlier than a theory is formed. The practice of sets, with roots in Chinese pictographic language, is an example of this. To understand why and how the logic of sets was practiced during the pre-Qin and Han Dynasty, one can better understand the classic texts written by Confucius, Daoists, Mohists, and even ancient Chinese mathematicians. We want to not only appreciate the ancient wisdom, but also the beauty of the movements in ancient thinkers' reasoning.

A Plurality thought of as a Unit: Learning Chinese Pictographic Characters vs Learning Sets

A set is broadly defined as a collection of objects. According to Mary Tiles, "[T]he 'definition' of 'set' is less a definition than an attempt at explication of something which is being given the status of primitive, undefined, term" (Tiles 2004, p. 99). She then introduces Hausdorff's explication to the term "set":

A set is formed by grouping together of single objects into a whole. A set is a plurality thought of as a unit (Hausdorff 1957, p. 11).

The first and most important feature of a set is that it is a plurality thought of as a unit. To correctly understand such a unit or a set, it is necessary to shift from the classification of membership with a single order of genus and species to a plurality thought of as a unit.

Philosopher Alfred J. Ayer says, "In particular, it is worth remarking that the process of defining *per genus et differentiam*, to which, Aristotelian logicians devote so much attention, always yields definitions which are explicit in the foregoing sense" (Ayer 2022, p. 60). Set Theory was brought in as a new way to understand the relationship between totality and individual objects, and this new way overcomes some of the Aristotelian logicians' difficulties in defining memberships.

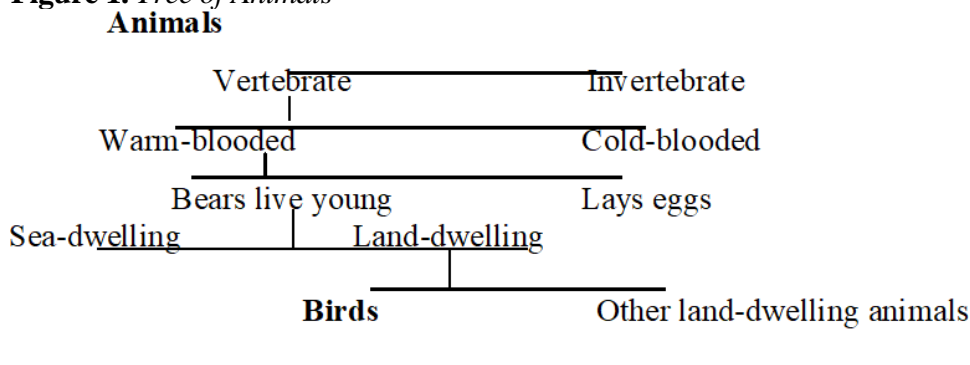
Aristotelian logic does not allow "a plurality thought of as a unit" because of the Law of Identity ("A is A")⁴ and the Law of Non-contradiction ($\sim(p \ \& \ \sim p)$)⁵. A

⁴Aristotle says, "When A belongs to the whole of B and to C and is affirmed of nothing else, and B also belongs to all C, it is necessary that A and B should be convertible: for since A is said of B and

term in Aristotelian logic can be read as essences or membership. For creating an objective language, which can be studied by anyone objectively, classical propositional logic focuses only on the membership readings. A proposition is required as to be either true or false. A sequence of such propositions forms an argument. As long as the patterns (rules) are correctly followed, one will be able to reach a valid argument. A proposition is made by a subject term and a predicate. The distributive relations between terms are determined based on a presupposed order of the “membership.”

For example, “all birds are animals” is a proposition, which can be either true or false in Aristotelian propositional logic. To confirm that it is true, its subject term must distribute to the predicate. In other words, all the members of birds distribute to the genus, “animal.” The truth value of a proposition is pre-determined by the relations of terms in the hierarchical system of genus and species. “Hierarchical” system and “genus and species” relationship are both required for deciding the truth value of a proposition. The following is an example of a hierarchical tree of genus and species in the case of defining birds:

Figure 1. *Tree of Animals*



The tree has two characteristics: hierarchical and distributive. A pre-existing order guarantees a stable position to locate a member. The prefixed relations with other members can be found in this tree of genus and species.

However, understanding the above sentence, “All birds are animals”, in terms of sets, the membership relation would be different. If all animals are in Set Animal, or Set A, and if all birds are in Set Bird, or Set B, we can say that Set B is an element in Set A, and at the same time, it is an independent set of all birds as well. We can, first of all, have the following set:

C only, and B is affirmed both of itself and of C, it is clear that B will be said of everything of which A is said, except A itself.” (Aristotle, [Prior Analytics](#), Book II, Part 22, 68a). Following Aristotelian tradition, modern philosopher, [Wilhelm Wundt](#) comes with the symbolic formulation, “A is A,”

⁵This law was practiced by ancient Greek philosophers, and Aristotle summarizes it as “No one can believe that the same thing can (at the same time) be and not be.” “The most certain of all basic principles is that contradictory [propositions](#) are not true simultaneously.” (Whitaker, CWA Aristotle's *De Interpretatione: Contradiction and Dialectic*, p. 184). After [Fargo](#), philosophers, such as Russell symbolizes it as “ $\sim (p \ \& \ \sim p)$.”

Set A $\{\alpha, \beta, \varepsilon, \dots \omega\}$ (definition: A: Animals; α : dogs, β : birds, ε : cats, ω : tigers)
 “ β ” (birds) is one of elements in the Set A. It contributes to the definition of Set A.


However, as for all birds, “ β ” can also be a subset itself as well, if we call it Set Bird or Set B:

Set B $\{\alpha_1, \beta_2, \varepsilon_3, \dots \omega_x\}$ (definition: B: Birds; α_1 : magpie, β_2 : blue jay, ε_3 : crow, ω_x : swallow)


Curly brackets, “{ }”, are used as the symbol of a set in Set Theory. A set can be either a finite set or infinite set. Three dots, “...”, are used to represent a large or countless numbers of elements within the set. An infinite set, for example, can be written as Set N $\{1, 2, 3, 4, \dots\}$ (definition: N: Number). The order differences of elements within a set does not change the value of the set, for example, Set N₁ $\{3, 4\}$ = Set N₂ $\{4, 3\}$. Of course, a set can have only one member, such as Set S $\{\text{Socrates}\}$, or have no member, such as an Empty Set $\{\}$ or \emptyset . These are basic concepts borrowed from Set Theory that I will use to re-evaluate ancient Chinese thinkers’ reasoning processes in the later parts of this paper, in addition to my current discussion on plurality of thoughts for understanding sets.

The above sets, Set A (Animals) and Set B (Birds), are both finite sets. According to the relationship between totality and individuals, a set reading of “birds” can be both a member in the Set Animal and an individual set itself. In this kind of plural reading, Aristotelian hierarchical and distributive classes of genus and species no longer serve as a presupposed order of the “membership.” The meaning of membership here is replaced by a plurality thought of as a unit.

Turning to a discussion on the logical rational in the language system of Chinese pictographic characters, as well as its basic grammars, I want to, first of

all, call an attention to the Chinese pictographic character *ji* , a set ([Han漢], XU Shen, 許慎 221 bc, Book 4, Flock of Birds Unit). The character is a sketch on which a few birds are sitting on a tree. If the tree is a domain that includes a few individual members, then the image of character *ji* represents a fundamental understanding of sets: A set is about membership. The image of *ji* shows a finite set. In the light of Set Theory, this character could be viewed as a primal way of writing a set:



A Set is $\{\alpha_1, \beta_2, \varepsilon_3\}$ (definition: α_1 : bird1, β_2 : bird2, ε_3 : bird3)






The character *ji*  has no restriction on what kind of birds are on the tree, but simply represents a collection of members. Three birds in the sketch could represent more than one member within the domain of a tree. If all of them are sparrows, the birds in the set could be sparrow1, sparrow2, and sparrow3. They are the elements that represent the meaning of a set. If the birds are magpie, blue jay, and crow, the Chinese primitive understanding of sets could be like the modern concept of Set Bird or Set B, which I discussed above:

Set B $\{\alpha_1, \beta_2, \varepsilon_3, \dots \omega_x\}$ (definition: B: Birds; α_1 : magpie, β_2 : blue jay, ε_3 : crow, ω_x : swallow)

In addition, many Chinese characters in classical Chinese can be used as either nouns or verbs. *Ji* is one of them. As a noun, *ji* means a set. As a verb, it means collecting elements or members of the set. In fact, Zhuangzi used *Ji* in both senses when he talked about knowing *Dao* in his inner chapter four, which I will discuss later.

With the above understanding of a set, I think that it would not be difficult to see the obvious fact that learning Chinese characters requires training in understanding a plurality thought of as a unit, because the genius ancestors of Chinese people created their language in sets thousands of years before the theory of sets was born. The following are a few examples which show that thinking in sets or a plurality thought of as a unit is rooted in the Chinese language:


The example of “water” radical, *shui*  and its elements, which I mentioned in the introduction of this paper, is a set, Set W or Set  and it includes a list of elements which all associate with the water radical one way or the other. The ancient *Shuo Wen* dictionary by Xu Shen records them in water unit, one of radical sets ([Han漢], XU Shen, 許慎 221 bc, Book 11, Water Unit):

Set  {river , ocean , creak  ... fulfill  } or, borrowing the symbol sings of elements from Set Theory:

Set W $\{\alpha, \beta, \varepsilon, \dots \omega\}$ (Definition: W: water, α : river, β : ocean, ε : creak, ω : fulfill)

In the above set or water radical unit, element α , river, for instance, is a member of the radical unit. However, it is also a subset itself, Set R, which includes many rivers in the Set River or Set R:

Set R $\{\alpha_1, \beta_2, \varepsilon_3, \dots \omega_x\}$ (definition: R: Rivers; α_1 : yangzi river, β_2 : yellow river, ε_3 :luo river, ω_x : huai river)

Understanding Set W and Set R requires so called “a plurality thought of as a unit.” To be clear, the character river  is an element in the Set Water and at the same time, it could be a set for many different rivers in China itself, which is called a “subset” in Set Theory.

Every Chinese character has a position in one of the radical units or is a member or an element within its primary radical set. This means that the relationship between any radical and its associated elements follows the above pattern of set and members, like the water radical and its elements. All Chinese characters, according to philologists, are divided into six categories (*liushu* 六書). Two of the six are the most important ones. They are pictographs and ideographs. I will pick up one example from each of these two major categories to explain:

The first category, pictographs, is also called as imitative drafts. According to L. Wieger, they are “rough sketches representing the object; 畫成其物, 隨體詰詘...” (Yuan 2021, p. 252). *Shuo Wen* contains 364 of these primary radicals (Wieger and Davrout 1965, p. 10). These basic pictographic radicals are building blocks or indicators for the 5,000-7,000 most useful Chinese characters in classical Chinese language. Like the water radical that I discussed above, all other radicals and their associated characters clearly share the common nature of a plurality thought of as a finite set, which gives each radical its domain like a general set, and each character has its position in the general set as one of the elements. The following is another example in *Shuo Wen* ([Han漢], XU Shen, 許慎 221 bc, Book 10, Horse Unit):

Character horse, *ma* 馬 is a radical with a finite domain, which holds many members, such as, “black horse 𠂇 *li* (α),” “one-year-old horse” “𠂇 *ju* (β).” “Examination” is written as “𠂇 *yan* (ε). It refers to the act of checking the mouth and legs of a horse.” “Stopping at a place” is written as “𠂇 *zhu* (ω),” which represents a horse tethered to a tree trunk.

Categorizing words within the domain of a radical is already close to a kind of set-oriented thinking. If we borrow some expressions from set theory again, we can have Set H (H: Horse Radical)⁶:

Set H $\{\alpha, \beta, \varepsilon, \dots \omega\}$



“Black horse,” “one year old horse,” “an examination,” “stopping at a place”...are unrelated concepts from the perspective of Aristotelian categorical propositions; they cannot be put in one category or treated as the members within a class at all. However, it is so natural for the Chinese people to treat them in one category or


within a more general set, “horse, *ma* 馬.” The rationale of doing so has to be viewed pictographically. Every member in the Set H contains a horse radical

𠂇 and associates with the horse one way or the other in human experiences. One of the attractive aspects according to Cantor’s Set Theory is that sets can be designed subjectively. Human consciousness cannot be eliminated completely when learning sets. In other words, human experiences can be involved in the process of understanding different sets. Creating Chinese pictographic characters

⁶I discussed the horse radical in my paper, “On an Alternative Logic of Knowing (知 *Zhi*) in Zhuang Zi: A Comparison of Knowing Sets to Knowing the Way” (Yuan 2021).

heavily depends on human experiences. This feature is also found in the second category of creating and learning Chinese characters.

The second category is called “ideographs,” which includes the characters that their meanings can be inferred from a combination of a few primary radicals. Many characters that hold more abstract meanings fall in this category. If 364 primary radicals are sketches of tangible things in human experiences, such as water, mountain, the Moon, the Sun, horse, sheep, human, mouth, eyes...and etc., then learning ideographs involves more subjective imagination. A simple example in the category of ideographs is: the primary radical of the Sun is written as , and the primary radical of the Moon is written as . Putting these two primary


radicals together, , it creates a new character, “brightness.” The new meaning is given by both radicals, the Sun and the Moon. When the lights of the Sun and the Moon are combined, one can of course imagine how bright it would be.⁷


In her recent book, *Ten Lectures on Chinese Character and Chinese Culture*, Ning Wang confirms, “Chinese characters are ideographs. They were created according to original meanings. By putting two or more radicals that already have accepted meanings together, ancient Chinese people created new words...Not only are the parts pictographic, but also the rationale of creating new words refers to ideographs” (Wang 2019, p. 39).

Using ideographs, Xu Shen demonstrated more complicated functions of set-oriented thinking when Chinese ancestors created and practiced with Chinese pictographic language. Their practice of sets was long before Set Theory was born. Yet, with the principles and discovery of modern Set Theory, one can re-evaluate the ancient thinkers’ contributions and appreciate their wisdom objectively. According to Set Theory, the fundamental relation is about membership. In many cases, an object or an element can be a member of (or occur in) both Set A and Set B. Such a relation is called “intersection” and is written as $A \cap B$ (it read as “the intersection of A and B”). It is defined as the set composed of all elements that belong to both A and B. For example, a white horse can be a member in the Set H (Horse) and Set W (White), for a white horse can be a member of horse and a member of color white simultaneously, therefore, we can say Set $H \cap$ Set W (there is an intersection of Set Horse and Set White). During the pre-Qin era (Paleolithic age–221 B.C.), Chinese logicians were profoundly interested in the discussion of $A \cap B$ issue, such as Gongsun Longzi’s famous claim: “A white horse is not a horse,” which I will discuss further in the next section. At this point, I am maintaining that the strong interests those logicians had at that time in discussing the intersection of two different sets benefited from the advanced thinking of sets when studying communication with Chinese pictographic language and are beneficial to current discussions in Set Theory too.



⁷Henry Rosemont says, “[T]extbook examples of this category of ideograms are *ming*, which combines the pictures of the sun 日 and moon 月 together to signify the Chinese word for ‘bright’, 明” (Rosemont 2019).


Let's look at two characters,  *mei*, beauty and  *shan*, goodness.



They both are ideographs with abstract meanings. *Shou Wen* says, “Beauty  means having a delicious taste. It goes with the radical sheep and the radical big. Among six different animals, sheep are the main source of formal meals. Beauty and goodness share the same meaning. 美，甘也。从羊从大。羊在六畜主給膳也。美與善同意。” ([Han漢], XU Shen, 許慎 221 bc, Book 4, Sheep Unit).


Shuo Wen also says, “Goodness  means auspicious. It goes with the radical sheep and the radical praising loudly. Goodness and beauty share the same meaning. 善，吉也。从誩从羊。此與義美同意。” ([Han漢], XU Shen, 許慎 221 bc, Book 3, Competitive Speech Unit).


Beauty is an aesthetic concept. Goodness is an ethical concept. When Greek philosopher Plato teaches that the good is the beautiful, he says clearly, “Virtue is a kind of health, beauty and good habit of the soul.” (Plato 2010, p. 13). The Form of beauty and the Form of goodness share their connotation in the soul. It is interesting that when ancient Chinese people talk about beauty and goodness, these two concepts do not associate with the soul but a tangible object, sheep. A big and fat sheep represents beauty and having a sheep and praising it loudly means goodness. In ancient China, sheep is the main contribution when worshipping


ancestors. So that both characters,  *mei*, beauty and  *shan*, goodness associate with sheep pictographically. In addition to the elements beauty (*b*) and


goodness (*g*), as a primary radical of set, Set  or Set S (sheep) also includes


other elements, such as “ *gao*, baby lamb (*l*),  *qun*, a herd of sheep







(*h*),  *qiang*, a herdsman in the western border (*m*).⁸ Therefore, the Set


 or Set S (Sheep) is:



⁸*Shuo Wen* says, “ *gao*, baby lamb, going with the sheet radical. 羔，羊子也。从羊。”





“ *qun*, a herd of sheep, go with the sheep radical and the pronunciation goes with *jun*.




群，輩也。从羊君聲。” “ *qiang*, a herd man in the western border. 羌，西戎牧羊人也。” (*Shuo Wen*, Book 4, Sheep Unit)



Set  {lamb , herd , herdsman ...beauty ,
goodness  } or Set S {l. h, m,...b, g}.



Every element in the Set  or Set S has a part associating with the radical sheep, which is a sketched image of a sheep. None would overlook this feature.




However, the character goodness  is also an element in the unit or set , which is a sketch of two persons with big mouths, talking competitively. *Shuo Wen* says:

, talking competitively. It goes with two speech radicals, *yan* . Everything associated with competitive speeches falls into this unit or primary radical set. The pronunciation of the character  is *jin*, as same as the character competition, , 競言也。从二言。凡誾之屬皆从誾。讀若競。” ([Han漢], XU Shen, 許慎 221 bc, Book 3, Competitive Speech Unit).


Hence, we have to look at another set, Set  or Set C (Competitive Speech). Set C also includes goodness (*g*) as one of elements, as well as other members, such as  *jin*, competition (*c*) and  *yuan*, accusing (*a*)⁹:


Set  {competition , accusing  ... goodness  } or Set C {*c*, *a*...*g*}

In the above radical set, every element contains the radical  *jin*. Since character  *san*, goodness is a member in both Set S (Sheep) and Set C (Competitive Speech), there is an intersection, *g*, existing in both sets. Borrowing the expression from Set Theory, we can say that Set S \cap Set C. Character

⁹Shuo Wen says, “ *jin*, local language. It means chasing each other, going with the radical of competitive speech. It is an image of two persons running. , 彊語也。一曰逐也。从誾，从二人。” “ *yuan*, accusing with hatery. 讞，痛怨也。”

goodness (g) is not the only character which exists in more than one radical set. Many ideographs share this feature since they are made of more than one radical.

To sum up, both characters, beauty and goodness, are associated with the radical sheep  by having the primary radical as a part of these characters.

And in the case of  *san*, it associates with two primary radicals and shows an intersection of two sets. This fact proves that a plurality thought of membership is not an unfamiliar field for ancient Chinese thinkers.

Set Identity: Exploring Ancient Chinese Logicians' Efforts to Clarify Memberships in Different Sets

Scholars in the field of Comparative Philosophy have many discussions on how ancient Chinese thinkers tried to find the proper associations among the myriad things (*wanwu* 万物), and their relationships with *Dao*. Finding a proper association seems to be one of the main tasks in a Chinese traditional way of reasoning. Some philosophers argue that the associations can be found according to ancient Chinese thinkers' personal experiences, while others think that the associations relate to the presupposition that everything is changing in Chinese Philosophy. In this paper, I also discuss associations. I shall focus on the membership of sets, which is rooted in the special nature and structure of Chinese pictographic language. When I suggest viewing how objects, things, relations, and *Dao* are associated with one and the other from the perspective of sets, I want to avoid an existing problem in reading ancient texts: if we simply use the concepts in our own languages to translate classic texts, it could end up interpreting ancient Chinese thinkers' thoughts with our own, and their original wisdom is lost.

This problem was pointed out by comparative philosopher Roger Ames in the 1990s. If it is the fact that the above two major philosophical concepts, beauty and goodness, in the tradition of ancient China could be understood so differently from that in the Platonic tradition, if even modern Chinese people do not associate concepts of beauty and goodness with sheep necessarily anymore ¹⁰ as their ancestors did, then we encounter the problem that Ames points out. Some Chinese key concepts have no matching words in English. Ames' concern affects many other philosophers who study unfamiliar texts from Chinese culture. In his paper, "Philosophy as Hermeneutics Reflections on Roger Ames, Translation, and Comparative Methodology," comparative philosopher Steve Coutinho summarizes Ames' claim and impact as follow:

Roger Ames has a radical claim: The ancient Chinese cultural and philosophical traditions do not share what some might take to be our universal concepts and methodologies. If we insist on imposing them, we misread the texts altogether. We

¹⁰Although when writing these two characters, Chinese people still need to write the sheep radical, hardly any learners of the language would ask why.

find only our familiar presuppositions reflected in them and fail to allow the texts to philosophize in their own distinctive voices.

The problems become most pressing when attempting to engage with ancient texts through the medium of the English language. Even within a single language, synonyms are rarely, if ever, exact counterparts, so we should not expect to find terms that have identical meanings in languages and cultures that are historically, geographically, and linguistically distant. (Coutinho 2021, p. 69)

Knowing the difficulties involved in engaging with ancient texts, my effort in this paper is to present a new interpretation of ancient Chinese thinkers' wisdom. Fortunately, Chinese pictographic characters preserve a rich cultural heritage. And Xu Shen's *Shou Wen* preserved these cultural codes systematically. It turns out that an etymological study is necessary when engaging with ancient texts in the pre-Qin times when discussing Chinese philosophy and logic. By doing so, one reduces his or her dependence on the medium of either English or modern Chinese, for the sake of avoiding the initial misunderstanding that traditional Western philosophy or modern simplified Chinese characters project onto ancient Chinese philosophy.

What I want to explore further is that if learning Chinese pictographic characters in the pre-Qin era involves a practice of a plurality thought of as a unit, or in other words, if typically, learning and writing Chinese pictographic characters in classical Chinese involves a necessary practice of thinking in sets, which is formed while one learns these characters at a young age, then with such a thinking habit, a logical question to ask is: is it possible that ancient Chinese thinkers used their logic of sets to structure their reasoning process and arguments effectively?

My efforts in this and the next sections include three steps. Firstly, I will analyze what kind of relationships ancient Chinese logicians tried to clarify during the pre-Qin era. Secondly, I will explore the original meanings that a key Chinese character or concept carries. I will explain how and why pre-Qin philosophers, such as Confucius, followed the logic of sets when giving definitions. Thirdly, I will follow the possible logical patterns that ancient Chinese thinkers in the pre-Qin era might have used and let the classic texts themselves reveal such an alternative logic of sets, so that an appreciation of the profundity of Chinese philosophy can be reached.

Firstly, I start with a discussion on one of the major tasks that ancient Chinese logicians carried out. Both Gongsun Longzi (320-250 BCE) in the School of Names and Mohists are interested in clarifying logical relations. They are viewed as ancient logicians in China for that reason. Let us look at what kind of relationships or memberships they try to clarify in their teachings. The following is Gongsun Longzi's famous argument: "A white horse is not a horse." (*Bai ma fei ma ye*. 白馬非也).

"Horse" is that by means of which one names the shape. "White" is that by means of which one names the color. What names the color is not what names the shape. Hence, I say that a white horse is not a horse.

...

If one wants a horse, that extends to a yellow or black horse. But if one wants a white horse, that does not extend to a yellow or black horse. Suppose that a white horse were a horse. Then what one wants [in the two cases] would be the same. If what one wants were the same, then a white [horse] would not differ from a horse. If what one wants does not differ, then how is it that a yellow or black horse is sometimes acceptable and sometimes unacceptable? ...Thus, it is evident that white horses are not horses. (Ivanhoe and Van Norden 2005)

Considering that plural thinking of membership and understanding of an intersection of two sets were familiar skills that those pre-Qin thinkers gained from learning Chinese pictographic language, the impacts of Chinese classical language in shaping Chinese logic could fit in the situation, as anthropologist-linguists Edward Sapir and Michel Breal have discovered:

Language is forced to select...In every country, ancient and modern, language has supplied the instrument and the prime material of instruction. This universal agreement is natural...Language is a transition of reality, a transition in which objects figures already generalized and classified by the labor of thought (Sapir and Breal 2023, pp. 102–109).

With respect to linguists' discoveries, one should be able to see the fact that the primary method of thought in doing reasoning among ancient Chinese thinkers was via a logical thinking of sets. What Gongsun Longzi was talking about, in fact, is how to separate two different sets. One is the Set Shape of Horse, or Set H. The other is the Set Color of White, or Set W. He made it very clear that in Set H, it can include the horses with different colors as members or elements, including a white horse. However, in Set W, only a white horse can be included as one of the members, not the horses of other colors. Gongsun Longzi presents two sets:

Set H $\{w, y, b \dots x\}$ (Definition: H: the Shape of Horse; w : white horse, y : yellow horse; b : black horse; x : any other color of horse)

Set W $\{w \dots x\}$ (Definition: W: the Color of White; w : white horse, x : any other object with color white)

The above two sets, Set H and Set W, share intersection, namely, Set $H \cap \text{Set W}$. The intersection is "white horse." "White horse" can be both a member of Set H and a member of Set W.

The ancient Chinese logicians had strong interests in separating different sets. They were not sophists, but the thinkers who loved to play their own language game according to their own rules. More examples can be found in the Mohists' teaching. Taking the following three statements as examples, in the Mohist logic text *Xiao Qu*, Mohists say:

a) 獲之親人也, 獲事其親非事人也.

Jill's parents are *ren* (people), but Jill's serving her parents is not serving *ren* (people). (*Xiao Qu*, 11) (Tiles and Yuan 2015)

Understanding the above statement from a perspective of sets. The statement is evidently talking about that there are two sets, and they are not identical sets, although they have an intersection:

Set J $\{f, m\}$ (Definition: J: Jill's parents, f: Jill's farther; m: Jill's mother)
 Set P $\{a, b, c, f, j, m, \dots, x\}$ (Definition: P: People; a: Amy; b: Bob; c: Cathy;
 f: Jill's farther; J: Jill; m: Jill's mother; x: anyone else)
 Therefore, Set J \neq Set P, although Set J \cap Set P.

Similarly, the following two statements from Mohists represent the same logic pattern:

b) 其弟美人也, 愛弟非愛美人也.
 Her younger brother is a handsome man, but loving her younger brother is not loving handsome men. (Xiao Qu, 11) (Tiles and Yuan, 2015)

Representing the above statement in sets:

Set H $\{b, c, d \dots x\}$ (Definition: H: Handsome Men; b: younger brother; c: Charles; d: Danny; x: any handsome man)
 Set L $\{b\}$ (Definition: L: Love; b: younger brother)
 Therefore, Set H \neq Set L, although Set H \cap Set L.

c) 盜人也, 杀盜非杀人也.
 Robbers are people, but killing robbers is not killing people. (Xiao Qu, 11) (Tiles and Yuan 2015)

Representing the above statement in sets:

Set P $\{a, b, c, d, r \dots x\}$ (Definition: P: People, a, Aaron; b: brother; c: Charles; d: Danny; r: Robbers x: anyone else)
 Set K $\{r\}$ (Definition: K: killing; r: Robbers)

Therefore, Set P \neq Set K, although Set P \cap Set K. In addition, robbers can be a subset itself. It can be treated as an element in the Set P (people), at the same time, it can have its own members in the Set R (Robbers) if there are more than one robber. The membership involved in the above three statements are not propositional but about how to distinguish different sets.

Before discussing how widely the logic of sets was practiced among the pre-Qin thinkers, I must clarify one of the problems that falls into Ames's category of misleading due to translation. If one reads the affirmative and negative statements, such as "a white horse is a horse" or "a white horse is not a horse" in classical Chinese, there is hardly a possibility to confuse them with Aristotelian

propositions. However, Classical Chinese does not have a “to be” structure.¹¹ Using the copula “to be” to serves as the connecting link between subject (S) and predicate (P) of a proposition is added in when translating these Chinese statements into English sentences, according to English grammar. The add-in copula “to be” is necessary, however it often gives readers a fake hope that one might be able to find similar propositional patterns and rules in Chinese logic. The original affirmative and negative statements in classical Chinese in fact follow the following patterns:

SP *ye* (affirmative pattern) and S *fei* P (negative pattern)

“SP *ye*” is a pattern for the statements like:

“*Bei ma, ma ye.* 白 馬 馬 也” (A white horse is a horse).

Confirmative character, *ye* 也 is an image of having intercourse, according to *Shuo Wen*. A white horse is a member in Set Horse. A member and a general set are associated. The image of *Ye* confirms that this member falls into the domain of the general set. There is no need for a copula “to be” for the Law of Identity. The membership relation between subject (S) and predicate (P) is not genus and species, but a member or element and a general set.

“S *fei* P” is a pattern for the statements like:

“*Bei ma fei ma ye.* 白 馬 非 馬 也” (A white horse is not a horse.)


Negative character, *fei* 非 is an image of fences and a ditch that block the Set of White Horses mixing with the Set of Horses. *Ye* at the end confirms that they are different sets because the set identity of two sets is not equivalent. One is a subset (White Horses) and the other is a general set (Horses). *Fei* negates that one subset equals a general set. There are different members in each of these two sets. Therefore, Set W \neq Set H, even though a subset “white horses” does exist in Set H (Horse).

Totality and Individual Elements: The Practices of Logic of Sets among Ancient Chinese Philosophers

While learning Chinese radicals and characters, language learners must have a logical understanding of the totality and individual objects to master this pictographic language. If language shapes one’s way of thinking, then thinking in

¹¹Even *shi*, 是 (to be) and *bu* 不 (not so) in modern Chinese are not necessary. A. C. Graham says, “In Classic Chinese, there is a radical difference between the nominal sentence with the final *ye*h negated by *fei* and the verb sentence negated by *pu* [*bu*]. This difference by no means coincides with that between sentences with or without copulative ‘is’ in English, since we use the copula with predicative adjectives, which in Chinese are translatable by verbs.” (Graham 1978, p. 26)

Chinese pictographic language could naturally shape the practice of the primary logic of sets in reasoning. Pre-Qin logicians did summarize a few rules for grasping the totality and individual elements in a set. This practice can be found in other schools too. Solid evidence of practicing the logic of sets was found in many pre-Qin thinkers' writings. Due to limited length of this paper, I shall mainly focus on demonstrating how Confucius and the Daoists practice logic of sets. They are two major schools during the pre-Qin era.

In his "On Pointing at Things" (指物論; *Zhiwu Lun*), Gongsun Longzi introduces one of popular rules in reasoning, pointing out,  *zhi*, which is a hand radical (left part) pointing out the core meaning. The right part of 指 *zhi* is “旨,” means “meaning.” *Zhi* serves as both a verb and a noun in classical Chinese. As a verb, *zhi* means pointing, as a noun, *zhi* mean core meaning.¹² A. C. Graham says:

We have plenty of evidence as to how pre-Han philosophers used the word *chih* [*zhi*], both as a verb (“point out”) and as a noun (“what is being pointed out”); they applied it not only to the gesture of pointing but to the meaning of discourse and the meanings of word. (“universal,” “quality,” “logical class”) is wrong-headed in principle (Graham 1978, p. 458).


A. C. Graham translates *zhi* as pointing. However, he immediately says, “One is convinced that if only one could identify what the writer meant by the word *zhi*, everything he says would fall into place” (Graham 1955, p. 282). In Chinese logic, the rule, *zhi* 指 was emphasized in the *Later Mohist Canons* and used by many other philosophers in different schools during the pre-Qin and pre-Han eras. such as Confucius (ca. 551-479 BCE).

Gongsun Longzi claims, “Every object is in nothing but sets. However, a set cannot identify the set itself...The identity of a set is not a tangible existence in the world. The tangible elements in the set are objective existences in the world. 物莫非指，而指非指.....指也者，天下之所无也；物也者，天下之所有也.”¹³ If, as I suggest, looking at Gongsun Longzi’s discussion on logical rule *zhi* from the perspective of sets, what he says could convincingly fall into place. Intuitively, a set is a collection of objects, and the set identity can only be defined by every member in the set. *Zhi* as a noun (“what is being pointed out”) is the core meaning of the set or is about the set identity. *Zhi* as a verb is an action of pointing out the members which associate with the set as elements within the set. Plurality of thought as of a unit needs both because the meaning of a set is demonstrative in the process of time. Pointing out the members or elements in a set is the way to pursue a clear understanding of the general set and its relationship with the elements.

¹²A. C. Graham summarized that the word 指 *zhi* has three main functions: 1) Noun, “finger”; 2) Verb, “point out one form another”; 3) Noun, “meaning,” the direction in which discourse points, its meaning or drift, the main point in contrast with details or side issues (Graham 1978, p. 458).

¹³The translation is mine. There are different translations on these claims. My translation is based on an understanding of Gongsun Longzi’s logic of sets.

Taking Confucius' way of teaching his disciples virtues as an example, he rarely gave definitions to his ethical concepts. Instead, he pointed out one after the other examples of virtuous conduct to demonstrate what he meant. In this sense, I claim that Confucius taught his disciples with the set-oriented thinking. A full investigation of Confucius is beyond the topic of this paper. Within this limited space, I will use one example from the *Analects* to illustrate that thinking in sets was a common practice in the pre-Qin era. When Confucius teaches his disciples

the practice of being filial, he uses the classical character of *xiao*  which shows an image that a son supports the elder from the bottom while an aged man sits at the top. Ames correctly translates *xiao* as: filial conduct (Confucius et al. 1999), because the primary image of *xiao* is about a type of conduct. *Xiao* is one of the core virtues in Confucius' *Analects*. When Confucius teaches this core virtue, instead of giving a universal definition, he points out several examples of performing filial conduct to illuminate the concept of being filial:

Meng Yizi asked about filial conduct (*xiao*). The Master replied: "Do not act contrary." (*Analects* 2.5).

Meng Wubo asked about filial conduct (*xiao*). The Master replied: "Give your mother and father nothing to worry about besides your physical well-being." (*Analects* 2.6).

Ziyou asked about filial conduct (*xiao*). The Master replied: "Those today who are filial are considered so because they are able to provide for their parents. But even dogs and horses are given that much care. If you do not respect your parents, what is the difference?" (*Analects* 2.7).

Zixia asked about filial conduct (*xiao*). The Master replied: "It all lies showing the proper countenance. As for the young, contributing their energies when there is work to be done, and deferring to their elder when there is wine and food to be had-how can merely doing this be considered being filial?" (*Analects* 2.8).

...

Reading the above quotes in *Analects* from the perspective of sets, one can see that when Confucius did his logical reasoning, he pointed out one after the other filial conduct (element) in *xiao* (a set of collection of "filial conducts") to help his disciples identify the virtuous *xiao* or the way of being filial. No definition is given to what is *xiao*. The repeated applications of filial conducts reveal the set identity of *xiao*. The way of being filial is understood as following:

Set X

Xiao, A son supports the elder (X),

(Definition: X: *Xiao*; α : Do not act contrary; β : Give your mother and father nothing to worry about besides your physical well-being; ε : respect your parents in addition to providing food to them; ω : young works, parents drink...) (Yuan 2017)

Pointing Out Filial Conducts in the Domain X

X is $\{\alpha, \beta, \varepsilon, \omega, \dots\}$

It seems that Confucius' disciples grasped what the meaning of being filial was in the real world where they lived in without any difficulties, and they learned the virtue via the repeated applications or exemplary filial conduct. Confucius also taught other virtuous codes, such as, *Ren* authoritative contact, *yi* sense of appropriateness, *he* harmony... with the similar logical approach.



Since character *xiao* 小 holds a clear demonstrative meaning, like beauty, *mei* and goodness, *san*, which I discussed in the section one, although *xiao* is a more abstractive notion than horse or sheep, Confucius successfully demonstrates the meaning of *xiao* by pointing out a list of filial conduct. It is like understanding Set Horse by pointing out every individual horse in the set.

During the pre-Qin era, more metaphysical concepts, such as *Dao* 道, the world 天下 *tianxia*, myriad things 萬物 *wanwu*, nothingness 無物 *wuwu*, etc. were actively discussed by Daoists and other thinkers. A. C. Graham points out that Chinese philosophers used the rule “Pointing Out” again and again in their dialogues and debates¹⁴. They used this rule to separate one element from the other and one relation from the other. It is a popular rule in Chinese logical reasoning. Engelfriet also points out: “A Chinese term for “demonstration”: The term, *zhilun* 指论, “discussing by pointing out,” was meant in a literal way: arguing something with the help of a model or diagram” (Engelfriet 1998, p. 150).

Philosopher Jean-Paul Reding suggests understanding Gongsun Longzi’s discussion on *zhi* together with his notions of the world, *tianxia* 天下 and *fei zhi* 非指. Reding suggests translating *fei zhi* as “points at things that do not exist in the world” or “the pointing is at nothing.” He says, “[I]f even the pointing at nothing is a pointing at something, then every pointing is indeed at something. Nothing is also something, otherwise we could not say anything about it.” (Reding 2002, pp. 200–201). Although I disagree with Reding to label Gongsun Longzi’s statements as propositions, I highly appreciate Reding’s approach and believe that it can be fruitful if one takes the pre-Qin notion, the world *tianxia*, as a universal set and “the pointing is at nothing” as an empty set, when evaluate how Daoists practiced the logic of sets. Borrowing the expressions from Set Theory again:

Universal Set is written as: \mathbb{U} : A set of all possible values.

Empty Set is written as: $\{\}$ or \emptyset : A set can be within any other sets without changing values.

¹⁴In my paper, “The Role of Time in the Structure of Chinese Logic” (*Philosophy East and West*, January, 2006), I list the following examples of the discussion about “*zhi*, Pointing Out” among Chinese scholars:

A. C. Graham says, “Gongsun Long in Name School, Zhuang Zi in Daosim and other Chinese philosophers all have discussions on the rule, ‘Pointing Out.’ Gongsun Long says: ‘且指天下之所兼。天下无指者，物不可谓无指也。’ Moreover [the pointed out] meanings are collected together by the world. That nothing within the world is the [pointed out] meaning is in the case of things; it being inadmissible to pronounce that nothing is the meaning.....” (Graham 1978, 462).

Sun Zi, a pre-Qin philosopher in the field of the philosophy of war, says: “故知者为之分别，制名以指实。Therefore wise men made divisions and distinctions on behalf of them and instituted names in order to point out objects” (Graham 1978, p. 458). Zhuangzi says: “周，偏，咸三者，异名同实，其指一也。These three, *zhou*, *pian*, and *xian*, are different names for the same object; their pointed-out meaning is one.” Yan Shigu (581-645), a linguist of the Sui Dynasty says: “指谓义之所趋，若人以手指物也。Meaning refers to what the sense runs to words, like a man pointing out a thing with his hand” (Graham 1978, p. 459).

Taking Zhuangzi as example, Zhuangzi's famous writing, inner chapter two, "The Sorting Which Evens Things Out" is a poetic and philosophical essay which is full of interesting stories without deductive steps to lead a conclusion. Having read the essay, most likely, one must agree that Zhuangzi did find out the sorting which can even things out in his own way. Zhuangzi talks about different sounds, the difference between subjective words and objective meanings, between *zhi* and *fei zhi* (pointing at something and pointing is at nothing), relativity of time (today and yesterday), the gap between death and life, variance in sizes of large and small (mountain and the tip of an autumn hair), this and that, beginning and ending, *you* 有 and *wu* 無 (existence and no-existence), relative standards, transformation between Zhuangzi and a butterfly...etc.

Reading this essay from the perspective of logic of set, Zhuangzi's "The Sorting Which Evens Things Out" is a logical reasoning based on the framework of thinking in sets. Robert Stroll says, "The essential point of Cantor's concept [of set] is that a collection of objects is to be regarded as a single entity (to be convince as a whole)...With regard to the objects which may be allowed in a set, the phrase 'objects of our intuition or our intellect' gives considerable freedom." (Stoll 1963, pp. 2–3). This freedom allows sets to be designed freely, and a subset can be either an individual object or a relationship. For any such a pair of objects to appear as elements of a particular set, one can treat the pairs as entities. Or, in other words, one can treat these relationships as individual elements. This is what Zhuangzi does. A. C. Graham says, "Chuang-tzu never does say that everything is one...always speaks subjectively of the sage treating as one" (Graham 2001, p. 56). Zhuangzi lists several stories about opposite relationships and treats them as subsets in *Dao*.

Utilizing an expression of an ordered pair set from Set Theory: $\langle x, y \rangle$, the above list of relationships can be written as following: $\langle t_1, p \rangle$ (t_1 : tubes of men, p : pipes of Heaven); $\langle s, o \rangle$ (s : subjective words, o : objective meanings); $\langle z, f \rangle$ (z : *zhi*, f : *fei zhi*); $\langle t_2, y \rangle$ (t_2 : today, y : yesterday); $\langle d, l \rangle$ (d : death, l : life); $\langle b, e \rangle$ (b : beginning, e : ending); $\langle m, h \rangle$ (m : mountain, h : hair); $\langle y, w \rangle$ (y : *you*, w : *wu*); $\langle c, b \rangle$ (c : Chuang-tzu, b : butterfly)

Zhuangzi intends to demonstrate that "Heaven and Earth are the one meaning, the myriad things are the one horse. 天地，一指也；万物，一马也。" (Graham 2001, p. 53). How could it be possible that myriad things are the one horse? A legitimate explanation is from the perspective of sets. Heaven and Earth, as *Tianxi*, have one meaning, which is *Dao*. Objects, actions, relations, and so on, between Heaven and Earth are members of the Universal Set *D* (*Dao*). It does not matter whether it is an individual horse, a subset of autumn hairs, or many subsets of different relations, they are all elements within the Universal Set *D* (*Dao*). Elements can be different, but as an element, it simply functions as one of the members in the set. A subset of relationship or an individual horse, or myriad things, in the sense of a member in the set, they have no difference. They are simply one and another element. All these members or elements represent the identity of Universal Set *Dao* together. Pointing to a horse is pointing at a member in the Set *D*, and is pointing at *Dao* simultaneously. Pointing at myriad objects,

things, or relations is pointing at one and another member in the Set *D*. Pointing out these elements, we also point at the Set *Dao*. It does not matter whether it is a finite or an infinite set, “a set is completely determined by its members” (Stoll, 1963, p.3). So does the Universal Set *Dao*. In the sense of sets, Zhuangzi’s above claim stands solidly.

\bigcup Set *Dao* can be expressed as:

\bigcup Set *D* $\{\alpha, \beta, \gamma, \delta, \varepsilon, \dots\}$, “ $\alpha, \beta, \gamma, \delta, \varepsilon, \dots$ ” are myriad things or relations which associate with *Dao* as elements or members. They are parts of *Dao*, and represent *Dao* in a way that elements represents the general sets.¹⁵ As elements of the Set *Dao*, myriad things weight indifferently from another element, horse. In “The Sorting which Evens Things Out”, Zhuangzi presents *Dao* as:

\bigcup Set *D* $\{ \langle t_1, p \rangle, \langle s, o \rangle, \langle z, f \rangle, \langle t_2, y \rangle, \langle d, l \rangle, \langle b, e \rangle, \langle m, h \rangle, \langle y, w \rangle, \langle c, b \rangle, \dots H \}$ (Definition: *H*: horse)

Zhuangzi does not only discuss *Dao* and myriads things, but also teaches people how to be with *Dao*. Zhuangzi employs the concept, 集虛 *jixu*, an empty set, which he uses when he talks about knowing *dao* in his inner chapter four. Evidence shows that, in the pre-Qin era, ancient thinkers understood that “Every pointing is at something, and yet the pointing is at nothing” (Reding 2002, pp. 201–202). “[T]he pointing is at nothing” implies that an empty set can be pointed out as an element. On one hand, it is a fact that Zhuangzi discussed the empty set much earlier than Set Theory was born. However, his concept of *jixu* empty set did not gain enough attention. On the other hand, because of the guidance of Set Theory, we can study Zhuangzi’s wisdom with a better understanding by borrowing the symbol of Empty Set $\{\}$ or \emptyset from Set Theory.

According to Set Theory, an empty set can be a member of any sets. When Zhuangzi teaches about knowing *Dao* and myriad things, the first practice in his “Sorting which Even Things Out” is to practice “loss I” or make “I” an empty set. This is an effective way to explain how one disappears in the Universal Set *Dao* when he/she is with myriad things indifferently in *Dao* as an element of an empty set. If an empty set can be within any sets without changing the values of those sets, then the Empty Set I: \emptyset can be in either a subset, a general set, or the Universal Set *Dao*:

Set *H* $\{h_1, h_2, \dots, h_x, \dots\} \equiv$ Set *H* $\{h_1, h_2, \dots, h_x, \dots, \emptyset\}$ (Definition: *H*: horses; *h*: an individual horse)

\bigcup Set *D* $\{\alpha, \beta, \gamma, \delta, \varepsilon, \dots\} \equiv \bigcup$ Set *D* $\{\alpha, \beta, \gamma, \delta, \varepsilon, \dots, \emptyset\}$

Therefore, for Zhuang Zi, losing the self “I” is a way to be with *Dao* and to understand *Dao* together with myriad things indifferently. In his own words, let

¹⁵Starting from Laozi, Daoists never give *Dao* a definition as the most general concept in an hierarchical structure of classes of genies and species. All Laozi said was “The nameless was the beginning of heaven and earth” (Lao Tzu, et al. 1963, p.5). *Dao* is great!

“the frame made to be like withered wood, the heart like dead ashes.” “This time I had lost my own self” (Graham 2001, p. 48).

Logic of Sets and Etymological Approach: Discovering the Achievements of Ancient Chinese Mathematics

To discover the minds of ancient thinkers is like exploring an unknown universe. Logic of sets is a modern device that I use to analyze and evaluate ancient texts. This etymological study is similar to archaeological research, which is based on discovered artifacts. Cultural codes preserved in Chinese characters help me investigate how the ancient language shaped the minds of pre-Qin and pre-Han thinkers. In concluding this investigation, I will not only summarize the significant functions of these two approaches in doing Comparative Philosophy but also reveal new discoveries from ancient wisdom with the assistance of Set Theory and etymological studies.

First, it is a fact that language is one of the few resources that can be called upon as a means of preserving cultural heritages and bringing ancient wisdom to us. However, as the Chinese language has undergone significant changes over the past several thousand years, so has the culture. Chinese people today no longer think in classical Chinese. Hence, misunderstanding can easily result when translating classical texts into modern Chinese or other languages, such as English. Some ancient wisdom could easily be lost in time. My set-logical approach helps my efforts to uncover this wisdom. Like many other theories, Set Theory appeared much later after people in China and the West have employed sets in their lives and thinking. Yet, with the assistance of the theory, when re-evaluating ancient Chinese thinkers' teachings, new ways of understanding them are made available.

For example, when reading Zhuangzi, modern readers can easily sense the beauty of his writings, but hardly understand the logic that supports the flow of his thoughts. Zhuangzi has a famous story about monkeys and a monkey keeper in his work, “The Sorting Which Evens Things Out”:

A monkey keeper handing out nuts said, “Three every morning and four every evening.” The monkeys were all in a rage. “All right then,” He said, “four every morning and three every evening.” The monkeys were all delighted. Without anything being missed out either in name or in substance, their pleasure and anger were put to use (Graham 2001, p. 54).

This is a fun story to read, and I read it myself when I was a child. However, why did Zhuangzi write this story? How does it help to prove his main argument that there is a way of sorting which can even things out? One might remain unclear on these sorts of questions until interpreting with the aid of sets.

If there are two sets, Set M (three nuts in the morning and four in the evening) and Set E (three nuts in the evening and four in the morning), this story in fact is about two number sets. It says:

The Set $M \{3, 4\} \equiv \text{Set } E \{4, 3\}$ (Definition: M: morning; E: evening) (Yuan 2021)

Set Theory tells us that changing the order of elements in a set does not change the value of the set. In fact, Zhuangzi could have been the first person in the world to employ, unknowingly, the equivalence of two number sets. He was using present mathematical understanding that the different order of elements in a set has nothing to do with the value change of the set. By switching the order of two numbers, one can obtain the equivalence of two number sets.

Zhuangzi's story implies that viewing the world from the perspective of *Dao* or Universal Set *D*, many differences might be caused simply by subjective feelings, such as how monkeys reacted on the number sets, Set *M* and Set *E*. The monkey story interpreted in this way fits in and supports Zhuangzi's argument in the whole essay. If the Daoist way of sorting is to sort objects, things, or relations in sets, then this sorting can even things out by viewing objects, things, or relations as elements in *Dao* or Set *D* indifferently. "[T]hings however peculiar or incongruous, the Way interchanges them and deems them one... Only the man who sees right through knows how to interchange and deem them one" (Graham 2001, p. 53). For man can lose himself and be an Empty Set *I*, as a feelingless element (ash or wood), to be with myriad things in the Universal Set *Dao*. I believe that even today, Zhuangzi's Monkey story can still serve as a good example when teaching the order of elements in a set and the equivalence of sets in today's classroom. The image of painting Zhuangzi as a romantic Daoist is no longer accurate. Zhuangzi also displays his ability and wisdom in understanding the order of numbers in sets mathematically.

Secondly, I suggest the importance of including etymological studies when interpreting pre-Qin and pre-Han thinkers' writings. Logic is a language which can display the core structure of thought. However, thought also needs to be expressed via natural languages in human communications. The task of studying ancient Chinese thinkers' minds overlaps with both ancient logic and classical language. Fortunately, Chinese pictographic language carries rich historical information and practical meanings in the characters, which were carefully recorded in *Shuo Wen* for the purpose of keeping the correct meanings used by ancient sages and ancestors in classic texts. *Shuo Wen* is thus one of the most important sources for etymological studies.

Each language has its own history. The changes and reformations from classical Chinese into modern Chinese during the past three thousand years have resulted in the fact that that classical Chinese is no longer a living language. The original meanings of many key concepts or characters have either changed or lost in modern Chinese. Neither modern Chinese nor any other language can trustfully convey the meanings in classical Chinese texts. Using the concepts or words in modern Chinese to interpret ancient texts, even if what we say makes sense to us, doesn't follow that this is what was intended by these ancient thinkers. This is the danger of losing ancient wisdom, as Roger Ames warns us. Hopefully, an etymologic study such as this can help represent ancient thinkers' wisdom as it

was intended or at least more accurately. The following example illustrates my point of view in this regard:

Western Set Theory is an approach employed by mathematicians when dealing with the infinity of numbers. An integer is a whole number (not a fractional number) that can be positive, negative, or zero. According to Set Theory, the set of integers is represented by the letter Z. An integer is any number in the infinite Set Z:

$Z \{ \langle \text{all negative numbers} \rangle, 0, \langle \text{all positive numbers} \rangle \}$

For instance:

$Z \{ \dots -3, -2, -1, 0, 1, 2, 3 \dots \}$

Before to conclude this paper, I would like to present in more detail how ancient Chinese mathematicians explained the continuity of numbers. If classical Chinese language shaped the way ancient thinkers thought, then it would be natural for ancient Chinese mathematicians to have achieved a high-level understanding of integers in sets without even realizing it.

As I discussed earlier in this paper, some Chinese characters can function as both nouns and verbs. Confucius' *Xiao* is a noun and a verb. As a noun, it refers to a set, and as a verb, it denotes the actions of filial conduct. Similarly, Zhuangzi's *Ji* in his concept *jixu* is both a noun and a verb. As a noun, it refers to a set, and as a verb, it denotes to the actions of accumulating emptiness (*xu*). Chinese thinkers' understanding of sets is linguistically associates with the actions of pointing at elements in the sets. It is also the case that the ancient Chinese mathematicians' notion of number 數 *shu* is both a noun and a verb. As a noun, it means numbers or the set of numbers. As a verb, it denotes the action of counting numbers.

The character of number, *shu* in its classical written form is 數. The right radical 攴 *pu* is an image of a hand holding a stick. The left radical of *shu* is 婁 *luo*. According to *Shuo Wen*, *luo* is an image that a woman holds a curtain. A woman radical 女 is at the bottom of the sketch of a curtain. In ancient China, most curtains were made of bamboo strips. The sunlight can go through the slots between strips and create bright spots, which is called “麗廔 *lilou*, bright slots” according to the explanation on *shu* in *Shuo Wen*. *Lilou* can be seen. They are created by many little holes on the curtain and seen as bright specks. There are also dark slots at the place bamboo strips block the sunlight. The dark slots can be seen too. They are many dark specks. Both bright and dark specks on the curtain can be counted, assume that *shu* is about counting integers. The hand radical, *Pu* 攴, as a matter of fact, is an image of a hand holding a stick to count those bright and dark spots on the curtain. So that *shu* is an action. Counting numbers is to point out objects or elements in a set of integers. According to *Shuo Wen*, the left radical *luo* 婁 holds the meanings of numbers, counting numbers and emptiness.

The image of the curtain makes emptiness one of the meanings or elements that are rooted in Chinese concept of *shu* 數.¹⁶

Understanding the concept of numbers in modern Chinese language does not differ that much from that in the West. However, an etymological study shows that there are significant differences in understanding the concept of numbers between ancient and modern times. The ancient understanding of number shaped how ancient Chinese mathematicians formed their approaches to mathematics. The core meanings held in the character *shu* can explain why difficult concepts such as negative members and zero did not trouble ancient Chinese mathematicians as much as they did the mathematicians in the West.

It might surprise many mathematicians and philosophers that one of ancient mathematicians, Liu Hui 劉徽 (fl. 3rd century CE), introduces positive and negative numbers in his *The Nine Chapters on Mathematical Art*, *Jiuzhang Suanshu* 《九章算術》 by employing colors red and black. *The Nine Chapters* (the 10th–2nd century BCE) is one of the earliest applied mathematics books that summarized the contributions in the pre-Qin and pre-Han eras. When explaining integers, Liu Hui took advantage of set-oriented thinking, a habit built through learning Chinese pictographic language. He did something unfamiliar to western mathematicians by offering two different colors to introduce positive and negative numbers. With these two colors, Liu Hui clearly distinguished positive numbers (or natural numbers) from negative numbers. He says:

正算赤，負算黑。Zheng suan chi, fu suan hei.

Using red rods to count positive numbers. Using black rods to count negative numbers (Liu 1993, p. 420).¹⁷

According to the original pictographic definition of *shu*, numbers, both bright and dark specks on the curtains are what one can count with a counting stick. So, if we go with the Chinese way of thinking of numbers, colors red and black can be associated with numbers smoothly. They are simply a different way to say brightness and darkness.

¹⁶Shuo Wen says, “支，小擊也。[注]手部曰。擊、支也。Pu, Xiaoji ye. [Note]Shou Bu yue:ji,pu ye.

凡支之屬皆从支。Fan pu zhishu jiecong pu. Pu, hitting with a stick softly. [Note] it represents the unit of hand radical. Hitting is a hand activity. Characters associate with hands all fall in the unit of hand radical. (Xu Shen & Duan, 2003, Book 3, p. 122)

Shuo Wen says, “婁，空也。从母。从中女。Lou, Kong ye.Chong mu,cong zhong lu.[注]凡中空曰婁……凡一實一虛、層見疊出曰婁。……故婁之義又爲數也。此正如窗牖。麗廡之多孔也。Lou means emptiness. It has a female radical at the lower part, a standing woman in the middle. [Note] Whenever there is an emptiness in the middle, it is lou...Whenever solid materials and emptiness are next to one and the other, between the overlapped parts will have an empty spot shown in the middle, that is lou...Therefore, the another meaning of lou is number.¹⁶ This is exactly like a curtain, when the sunlight goes through many empty holes and create many bright spots, it is called as lilou 麗廡 (Shen 2003, p. 624).

¹⁷Translation is mine.

To do counting, counting sticks are basic mathematical tools. Chinese people have been using rods to count numbers since the oracle bone period. What Liu Hui suggested was to dye counting rods into two different colors. He assigned the color red to Set Red and let it be the set of positive numbers. For example, when one gains something, he or she picks up red rods to count. Therefore, Set R is a collection of all the red rods, which one uses to count positive numbers. Red rods can be added one after the other endlessly, and they are all members of Set R. Similarly, he assigned color black to Set Black or Set B, and let it be the set of negative numbers. For example, when one owes others something, he or she picks up black rods to count. Therefore, Set B is a collection of all the black rods, which one can use to count negative numbers. Black rods can be added one after the other endlessly, and they are all members of the Set B.

Now we have:

Set R {all positive numbers} = Set R {all red rods}
 Set B {all negative numbers} = Set B {all black rods}

Liu Hui's ideas are clear and simple. Colors help to visualize abstract concepts, such as positive and negative numbers, and make them more concrete. Although Liu Hui did not specifically discuss the number zero in *The Nine Chapters*, when he introduced positive and negative numbers, the existence of zero seems too obvious to be overlooked or avoided in Chinese history. The part of meanings in *shu* number comes from the radical *lou*, which means emptiness. With little empty holes on the curtain, bright specks are shown. Since ancient time, Chinese mathematicians have represented zero by leaving an empty space, a blank, a gap to represent zero, or by drawing a small empty circle to represent number zero. Zero clearly has a position in the line of integers.¹⁸

To summarize Liu Hui's understanding of integer as following:

Z {<the color for all negative numbers>, <∅>, <The Color for all positive numbers>}

Or, for instance,

Z {...-3, -2, -1, 0, 1, 2, 3...}

Without counting out all rods infinitely, Liu Hui's color sets and the empty set indeed help us understand integers one way or the other from a unique perspective.

Conclusion

To sum up, language is a creation, but it is not a random one. Chinese pictographic language was created according to sets evidently, and the creators of such a language followed a primitive logic of sets without addressing it in the

¹⁸In his book, *A History of Chinese Mathematics*, Jean-Claude Martzloff discusses the evidence of zero in Chinese Mathematics and reports that empty spaces, gaps, and circles were used to represent zero in Chinese history. (Martzloff 1997, pp. 104-108)

format of a theory. One's language shapes one's ways of thinking. Using Chinese pictographic language to think opens a unique path to pursue truth, goodness, and beauty. For instance, as discussed in this paper, pursuing truth or understanding *Dao* in Chinese *Daoist* tradition can be a process of losing oneself in the nature and becoming an empty set within *Dao*, together with myriad things between heaven and earth. Being a part of *Dao* or an element in Set *Dao* turns out to be a possible way to understand *Dao*. Goodness in Confucian tradition is not defined by words but by activities or actions of performing a certain type of ethical conduct. Pointing out different types of good actions required by different virtues is like assigning different individual elements into different general sets. This is Confucius' way of teaching moral behaviors to help his disciples go through the process of person-making. Beauty as an aesthetic feeling overlaps with the nature and goodness. The characters of beauty *mei* and goodness *shan* were created with an intersection, which is the core meaning shared by both beauty and goodness. This intersection is the radical sheep. Empirical judgement of beauty and goodness allows that eating and food play significant ethical and aesthetical roles in Chinese culture and tradition. Subjective imaginations and plurality thoughts are inseparable from the understanding of beauty and goodness. Even the mathematical beauty of numeracy is not the product of purely abstract thinking, instead, it can be associated with colors empirically. These unique features of knowing the world are attractive and deserve further research.

Findings from my investigation disapprove the claim which denies the existence of Chinese logic. Evidence demonstrated in this paper shows that ancient Chinese thinkers understood memberships, totality, and individual elements in sets, and they practiced the logic of sets in their reasoning. The wisdom they offered to us is not only poetic but also logical. Findings from my investigation prove that although the notion of set is simple, thinking in sets is very different from the Aristotelian understanding of memberships in a totality. Chinese pictographic characters provide linguistic sources for studying such an alternative logic in the minds of ancient Chinese thinkers.

An etymological study can help clarify ancient wisdom more accurately than interpreting ancient thoughts with our own concepts. When we understand Chinese logic as it is, fruitful discoveries from ancient wisdoms can be found. Understanding Chinese logic as the logic of sets provides a fruitful opening for new research among Chinese and the Western philosophers. Logic of sets could serve as a base to open a healthy discourse for a mutual understanding between Chinese and Aristotelian traditions.

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The Problem of Returning to the “Things Themselves” in the IR Theorisation: Phenomenology’s Possible Use in the Study of the Pre-Theoretical, Immediate Givenness of the IR Phenomena and Events¹

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International relations constitute a purely intersubjective field. Its actors, objects and meanings have no self-standing “objectivity” in a narrow sense. As such, the IR theorisation for conducting studies on the IR phenomena and events lacks the anchor of the independent objectivity which the positive sciences enjoy. The IR theorisation consequently relies on its own preceding world-views, interpretative frameworks and narratives, which become genetic acts, creating an ontological complication. In doing so, the IR theorisation tends to bend, alter and occasionally omit the pre-theoretical, immediate and intersubjective givenness of the IR phenomena and events. Also, the theory’s narrative on the phenomena and events needs to include the narrative of their genesis, which are imposed upon their immediate, therefore post-genetic givenness, causing a temporal distortion. Still, there might be a possibility to study them as they are given, avoiding these complications. The Husserlian phenomenology provides this endeavour with fundamental concepts and tools that are related to intersubjectivity, temporality and access to the immediacy of the givenness of the phenomena and events. However, the Husserlian phenomenology itself has also a tendency to relapse into the complications of theorising, in particular due to its “genetic” proposals. Yet, these are “remediable” under the light of the Heideggerian criticism on the matters of intersubjectivity, temporality and the nature of the immediate, “innerworldly” givenness. In other words, the phenomenology, with contributions of the Heideggerian phenomenological-ontology, may effectively provide the IR studies with ways to approach the IR phenomena and events in their pre-theoretical, immediate, intersubjective, authentic givenness.

Keywords: *phenomenology, international relations, international relations theory*

Introduction

International relations studies reside on co-constituted and co-assumed actors, objects and meanings without direct correspondence in the “objective” reality. In contrast to the matters of the positive sciences, this is a purely intersubjective field with no self-standingly present, independently existing objects. Here, the co-constitution and the co-assumption of them replace objectivity in narrow sense. No one has ever “seen” a State or a nation. Agency or agent exist only through

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appresenting an entity -a State, a nation, a governmental institution, an intergovernmental or a non-governmental organisation- which also are co-constituted/co-assumed. And yet, the non-objective, not self-standingly present IR actors, phenomena and events do “exist”, add meaning to and thus expand and shape, to a considerable extent, the lived-in reality. The study of their nature and their interaction therefore becomes legitimate and necessary.

Such a study requires the *discovery* of the common denominators among manifold events, logical *and* empirical patterns from which a defining framework for the field as well as explicative bases/proposals for other real/possible events emerge. Still, such a framework may not emerge without fundamentals brought or adopted by the researcher: The discovery is not a passive, purely receptive state but an intentional act. Some *precise* thing is searched for *according to something* that precedes and defines the study. The study, at least at the first glance, needs theorising.

Positive sciences deal with things that are objectively, independently, self-standingly present. Theorisation in this sphere has correspondence in objective, independent, self-standingly present things, be they accurately or inaccurately interpreted. The validity of a theoretical construct may be determined through this correspondence that may be accessed to, observed and assessed independently from the construct itself. As regards the IR field, however, its purely intersubjective nature brings complications of its own into the effort. Here, the intentional act of theorising is, to an extent, “liberated” from the limiting and self-imposing independency of the objectivity and operates in the quite vaguer intersubjectivity of the otherwise non-present things, which is much more open to interpretation of the researcher at a fundamental level. As an example, the nature, substance and behaviour of the State is much more open to proposals that would define the fundamentals of its study in the field of the interstate interactions than those of a physical thing in the study of a physical event or phenomenon. As such, the lack of the independent, self-standing anchor of objectivity changes the nature of theorising, makes it assume a *genetic function* in order to *create* explicative and interpretative frameworks for actors, events and phenomena that are co-constituted and co-assumed with no self-standing existence. Theorising in the IR sphere thus becomes -at least relatively- more open to the researcher’s preceding, subjective world-views (*Weltanschauungen*) and to filling these frameworks with according narratives on the phenomena and events (see Husserl 1970, pp. 130–132, 379–383)

On the other hand, if the IR actors, phenomena and events lack an objective ground, they exist as “given” intersubjectively in the immediacy of the everyday life, also shaping it through being added to and thus expanding the lived reality. Their “being given” as such temporally differs from their *genesis*. In this sense, their givenness is *post-genetic*. However, the theoretical effort in the field may be but *genetic*, in order to create its own fundamental definitions for its own interpretative/ explicative frameworks. In consequence, theorising in the IR field does not only need to produce fundamentals as world-views, but also to carry the *genetic* frameworks into the narrative of the post-genetic time, therefore to take the immediate, lived givenness of the phenomena and events as *malleable* material.

The multiplicity of the IR theories and their narratives stems from the multiplicity of the pre-postulated world-views and their being carried into the post-genetic temporality of the givenness of the events and phenomena. Here the lack of an independent, self-standing objectivity ensures the IR theorisation's alienation from the immediate givenness. By pre-postulating a world-view, The IR theorisation inherently lacks access to its subjects in a non-genetic way, "as they appear/ are given". It therefore alters the givenness, not only because of lacking the anchor of objectivity in narrow sense but also because of the immediate consequence of this lack, which is the *relative* immunity to the intervention from an independent reality ground since the IR theorisation replaces it, to an extent, in assuming its own world-view and in making its own fundamental definitions.

Furthermore, the IR theory's narrative on (temporally) specific events and phenomena creates a temporal distortion, as the preservation of the theory's consistency in the study requires it. Here the theory juxtaposes its own narrative of the *genesis* of the actor, phenomenon or event upon the immediate, lived, therefore *post-genetic* givenness, which does not necessarily equate to its narrated "genetic moment".

How these ontological and temporal problems appear in the current IR theories? On which bases it might be possible to study the IR phenomena and events pre-theoretically, in their immediacy of givenness?

The first section of this paper shall be reserved to a brief description of the forms that these problems take within the theoretical constructs of representative nature, to be followed by the main proposals of the Husserlian phenomenology and the Heideggerian "phenomenological ontology" on the matters of the intersubjectivity and the givenness. In the first sub-section, as "representative examples", the realist/structural realist theorisation and the constructivist understanding of the intersubjectivity as related to the IR field shall be debated, and a parenthesis shall be opened for the post-structuralist approaches' de-centering. In the second sub-section, the Husserlian understanding of intersubjectivity shall be debated as to its "relapses" into the complications of the theorisation despite the Husserlian phenomenology's search of the pre-theoretical. Here, Heidegger's notions of *Mitsein* and *Mitwelt*, which are *inherent* to the *Dasein* or the *Dasein*-like entity/IR actor in its *post-genetic* givenness, shall be put forward in order to describe the nature of the intersubjectivity as related to the IR phenomena and events.

The second section shall attempt to answer to the second question above. In the first sub-section, we shall propose the phenomenological/phenomeno-ontological notions and tools for a pre-theoretical IR study, in order to discern and describe the phenomena and events in their immediate givenness. These will be the universal and in particular the eidetic reductions for putting into perspective the theoretical attitude as attitude, the construct as construct and the narrative as narrative in order to display the phenomena's and events' *generic way of presenting themselves*, yet in accordance with the particularity of the givenness at hand. However, these Husserlian concepts shall be debated in the light of the Heideggerian terms for intersubjectivity in order to deal with Husserl's overemphasis on the consciousness (of something) instead of the immediate

givenness (of something), which causes the Husserlian relapse into the general theorisation’s *genetic* function and even temporal distortion.

The temporality of the givenness shall be debated in the last sub-section, as *conditio sine qua non* of meaningfully achieving a pre-theoretical description of the purely intersubjective phenomena and events. Temporality shall complete the ontological grounds reached through the reductions. Here the Husserlian concepts of retention-protection, recollection and anticipation shall be explained and opted for their practicality in our proposed IR study, yet following a debate and subsequent re-evaluation under the light of the Heideggerian temporal concepts (the three “extases”) in order to deal with the Husserlian “relapse” in the temporal field. The Husserlian terms shall thus be grounded on the mutual inherence of the “things” and the *Dasein* (or the *Dasein*-like entity/the IR actor) within the framework of the latter’s being as *being-involved-with*.

The Ontological and Temporal Problems of the IR Theorisation

Representative Examples to the IR Theorisation’s Fundamental Complications

The IR theorisation follows two *general* routes at the ontological level: One resides on a general, if not total, assumption of “objectivity”, the other takes into account the intersubjective nature of the IR field. There also exists a third “way” which opts for a generally critical approach toward both. The realist/ structural realist approaches constitute a good example to the first one, as they take the power-relations as the objective “substance” of the IR and narrate on this basis. The second route may be exemplified by the constructivist thought, where the theorisation takes the intersubjective nature of the IR field into account but defines intersubjectivity as a product of social/ psycho-social processes and proceeds into a narrative in accordance with them.

In the realist/ structural realist thought, international (interstate) interactions become explainable on the basis of power-relations, which define threat and interest (Morgenthau 1948, pp. 137–157, Waltz 1979, pp. 114–128, 165–167, Liska 1962, pp. 26–27, Walt 1987, pp. 17–50, Snyder 1997, Fedder 1968, Schweller 1994). Their *preceding* proposals/ *a priori*s are employed on the *malleable* substance of interstate interactions in building their narratives of causality. As such, they eclipse the immediate givenness of the phenomena and occurrences, “fitting them” into the framework brought by the theorisation, transforming them into the parts of the narrative. Other approaches stemming from more or less similar fundamental proposals add to the narrative by postulating a community based on a supposedly “objective” interdependence (Keohane and Nye 1989, Nye 2002) -even quantifying the interdependence through transactions as indicators (Deutsch 1957)- or introducing the institutional “identity” -next to the state as actor- as a self-preserving and promoting “entity *pour soi*” (Keohane and Martin 1995, Keohane 1988, Wallander and Keohane 1995). The narrative therefore consists of “filling in” the theory’s postulates with the specific, given, “lived” phenomena and events *in accordance with* the former. In other words, the

theoretical postulates become the ontological/genetic ground of the phenomena and events within the narrative.

Here, it should however be noted that the realist/structural realist understanding of the IR is *assumptive* on one fundamental issue in transcendence of its own “objectifying” nature: The state *is* the *subject* of the international politics. In contrast to the constructivism for example, the ontology of the state is not deliberated upon. It is not *among* the main debates of the theoretical construct such as those about power-relations or the (anarchic) nature of the international environment. It is not “explained” like them but it provides them with ground, it precedes them. In other words, the state-actor’s immediate and intersubjective “givenness” constitutes the basis of an otherwise objectifying, explicative theorisation. The alignment with the pre-theoretical, immediate givenness at the fundamental level of “subject” asserts itself onto the subsequent narrative. This is also observable in the structural realist polarity terminology (Waltz 1979) as the intersubjective reference to multi-or-bipolar shape of the interstate environment *precedes* its objectification through the parameters brought by the theorisation.

To the second route one may give the constructivist thought as an example. Whereas the realist/structural realist thought allows some perspective as regards the pre-theoretical, “given” state of the interstate politics, it is difficult to state the same for the constructivist thought *despite* its seemingly more rigorous ontological effort. The intersubjective nature of the IR field constitutes the fundamental constructivist proposal (Onuf 1989, pp. 35–64, Onuf 2013, pp. 3–20, Wendt 1999). Yet this very proposal becomes the *object* of the constructivist theorisation with re-design/ alteration as consequence. Here the intersubjectivity becomes the “social construct” to be studied through sociology/socio-psychology, therefore the malleable material of a preceding theoretical attitude. However Wendt drew attention to the “legitimacy” of referring to a constructed entity as “actor” (Wendt 1999, pp. 193–245), the study concentrates on the social dynamics in their “construction” of their “object”. This makes the constructivist narrative more “comprehensive” in detriment of the immediacy of the givenness in the IR field, as it does not repeat the “omission” of the realist/structural realist thought. While emphasising the intersubjective nature of the IR field, the constructivism tends to *replace* the realist parameters with social/ socio-psychological dynamics without altering the narrative-building. In other words, the constructivist theorisation repeats, at ontological level therefore more comprehensively, the altering/ creating tendency of the realism, this time not assuming objectivity but redesigning intersubjectivity in accordance with its preceding proposals.

How does the *temporal distortion* appear in the two main routes of the IR theorisation? As regards the realist/ structural realist understanding, the distortion is more limited for two reasons: Firstly, the realist axioms of “survival”, “anarchic environment”, “power as means and as aims at the same time” tend to devise a quite uniform state-actor akin to the microeconomic agent (see Waltz 1979) where the genesis of the *individual* state-actor is reduced to its relationship with these axioms. Secondly, the structural realism’s differentiation between the theorisation of international politics and the theory of foreign policies –based on the actors’ *internal compositions*– further mitigates the distortion since the theory limits itself

to the first through its “systemic” approach and transfers the individualities of the state-actor that are incompatible with it to the vague sphere of the second, which answers the question why the actors “*similarly placed in a system behave in different ways*” (Waltz 1996). This arguably artificial separation of the state-actor’s individuality from the research field reduces the state-actor’s as well as phenomena’s and occurrences’ geneses (of which the subject is the state-actor) to a few parameters that are acceptable in the delimited study field of the theory. As an example, the alliance and the security-community as forthcoming phenomena and occurrences on which the realist/structural realist school particularly concentrates its attention, find their explanation first and foremost through the pre-defined parameters of the international environment and of the uniformised state-actors’ power-relations. Here the temporal distortion is mitigated since the geneses’ imposition onto the post-genetic immediacy come forth only secondarily: The vague area of the actors’ “internal compositions” constitute a middle ground that absorbs the theory’s genetic imposition upon the theory-incompatible, post-genetic, individual givenness.

However, for the constructivist thought, the geneses’ imposition upon the living/lived actuality, therefore the temporal distortion, is much more immediate. The intersubjectivity in this thought, therefore the phenomena and occurrences pertaining to the intersubjective field of the IR, stem from the social/socio-psychological/communicative processes. As such, the theory covers what the realist/structural realist thought rather “assumes” on the one hand and what it “evades” by transferring to the sphere of the “internal compositions” on the other hand. Consequently, the constructivist narrative resides on defining the geneses in every subject of study, assuring that the actuality of a phenomenon or occurrence fits to its precedingly defined/narrated genetic foundation, at the least *eclipsing* the post-genetic, immediate nature of the givenness. This includes narratives of a state-actor’s foreign policy or an intersubjectively “constructed” entity’s such as an alliance/security community where the genetic acts, the dynamics and the process of its construction, become “perpetual” (see Wendt 1999, pp. 201–233, Kratochwil 2011a, p. 161, Kratochwil 1989, pp. 24–25, Kratochwil 2011b, Adler and Greve 2009, Kratochwil 2018, Pouliot 2008¹, Adler 2008²). As such, the post-genetic givenness is submitted to its narrated genesis, the living/ lived actuality is submitted to a theoretically devised past and re-shaped accordingly, not being dealt with as the givenness in its own temporality but as the temporal continuation of the preceding narrative.

The current IR theorising’s “ontological problem” therefore engenders a “temporal problem” in the study of the immediately given phenomena and occurrences, which is the imposition of their genesis, the theoretical construct’s narrative about their coming-into-being, upon their givenness. As an intentional act inherent to it, the theory “explains” its object in every lived moment of its givenness in accordance with its “substance” as it had already defined, more intensely in the constructivism and in a more mitigated form in the realism/structural realism. As such, the theoretical attitude risks to distort its subject’s

¹The reduction of the lived-in givenness, to “the social practice that precedes common identity”

²Security-community and its spread as a (social) community of practise.

actuality (or past-actuality), its immediate givenness (or its immediately given state in the past), as it needs to fit it into its construct which is founded not only on *the* past but on *a* past moment, specifically on the subject's coming-into-being and the occurrences which made it come-into-being. The genesis –and the theory-proposed substance- does not necessarily equate to the givenness in a purely intersubjective field: This does not mean to deny the linkage of what is immediately “given” to its past genetic moment either, yet that linkage, the “genetic reference” is but inherent to givenness itself at the moment when it is “given”. However, the act of theorisation needs to reverse this temporal feature in attributing, through the construct it devises, its genetic narrative, to the living/ lived, *post-genetic* moment of its subject. The temporal distortion consequently adds to the re-designing/ altering facet of the theorisation within the intersubjective field of the IR.

Lastly, it should be noted here the existence of an *attempted* “third route”, which is the post-structuralism's critical approach to the “metanarrative”, which becomes itself an attitude *equivalent* to theorisation with its alternative and equally selective *a prioris* through which the de-centering is performed *as a narrative* with similar complications. Here it is not easy to state that the existing “anti-narrative” attitude in the IR field resolves the ontological problem of the IR theorisation. The post-structuralist understanding has its preceding, pre-determinedly critical – almost moral- position in deconstructing the narrative, with the result of building an alternative one, if not as construct then certainly as consequence of “attitude” which but repeats, from another angle, the redesign/the alteration of the immediate givenness of the IR phenomena and occurrences. Not only the narrative but also the givenness becomes the malleable material of the de-centering/ deconstruction here, since the “attitude” acts upon it (see for example Bartelson and Teorell 2018, pp. 218–232, Ashley 1984, Ashley 1996, Der Derian 2009, pp. 43–62, Bartelson 1995). This critical, anti-narrative understanding of the IR consequently produces the temporal distortion as well, since its equivalent-to-theorising and equivalent-to-genetic approach repeats the theorisation's very substance through a critical attitude, also bending the givenness in line with its own preceding “critical” world-view, also creating a (critical) narrative, therefore also imposing its own genetic formula upon the post-genetic, immediate givenness.

Phenomenology's and Phenomoneological Ontology's Dealing with the Problematic of Intersubjectivity

Then how to deal with the intersubjectivity and the intersubjective givenness? What is intersubjectivity which characterises the IR field?

As mentioned before, the constructivist theorisation takes the intersubjectivity as the lived “reality” produced through social/ psycho-social/communicative dynamics and processes. Here the genetic mechanism and the constant reproduction of the intersubjective knowledge/recognition are depicted. This understanding of intersubjectivity is directly or indirectly supported by the works of Schutz, *despite* his notion of the *fundamental awareness* of the intersubjectivity, and certainly of Habermas' communicative action (Habermas 1987, Schutz 1967, pp. 198–201, 229–236).

As such, the intersubjectivity and the intersubjective recognisance of things are not directly taken into consideration but are dissected with the aim of revealing their genetic mechanisms. Neither this theoretical approach nor the study of the intersubjectivity’s genesis are “erratic” by nature. However the theory’s tendency to impose itself to the study of the *immediacy* of the intersubjective knowledge, to the living moment of the givenness, engenders the ontological and temporal problems we have described within the previous sub-section. The pre-theoretical and post-genetic givenness of a phenomenon and/or an event is then taken into the sphere of a preceding theoretical construct that pre-defines, in accordance with –by nature- selective *a prioris* of the researcher, and is explained in line with the *genetic* proposals of its coming-into-being. The study’s product appears as a narrative of the givenness which differs from its meaning in its living immediacy, because of the study’s extension of the preceding theoretical construct toward the immediacy of the given phenomenon or event. The narrated meaning thus replaces the immediate one and the genetic construct is temporally juxtaposed upon the post-genetical time of the givenness.

This does not mean that the givenness is independent of a genetic reference. The givenness is meaningful only as it incorporates a reference to its substance which needs to have the element of its coming-into-being. However this is an *appresentation* (On the Husserlian notions of *appresentation* and *apperception*, see Ferencz-Flatz 2012; Dwyer 2007) of the givenness of its past-self, therefore of its substance at the time of its coming-into-being, which is temporally and ontologically not identical to its immediate self. The appresentative character of the genetic reference of the immediate givenness shall be debated, briefly, in the next section. Yet it should be noted here that the study of the intersubjective givenness in its immediacy needs to be aware of this temporal and ontological separation between the genesis and the post-genetic appearance, where the genetic reference can be but a component of the meaningfulness of the living experience of the phenomenon or event. This component, therefore, needs not to be privileged over the immediacy of the phenomenon or event, but be dealt with as is, in ontological and temporal terms within the totality of the givenness.

The phenomenology proposes tools to overcome the complications of the theoretical attitude in order to return to the “things themselves”. These tools are the reductions and the temporal grasp of the givenness, in order to make possible a descriptive study of the consciousness of the things that are dealt with. We shall debate them in the next section. At that stage however, it is useful to state that the phenomenology studies subjectivity/intersubjectivity as related to things-with-meanings through putting into perspective the mental acts/processes that make them appear as they appear. The purely intersubjective nature of the IR field requires such a study in order to put the assumption, the theoretical attitude/construct, the preceding world-view and the temporal distortion in perspective to make the IR phenomena and events accessible “as they are”, in their intersubjective, immediate givenness and temporality.

And yet, Husserl’s understanding of the intersubjectivity becomes questionable when it faces his phenomenology’s ultimate endeavours. It resides, first and foremost, on *not* devising a world-view that would precede the access to “the

things” that would alter their givenness. Still, Husserl also makes a genetic narrative of the intersubjectivity in particular in his Vth Cartesian Meditation. The narrative is based on communicative processes at the very fundamental level of the experience of the Other and of its irreducibility to mine-ness, to proceed into the intersubjectivity (Husserl 1982, pp. 92–105, 108–116, Husserl 2001a, pp. 27–29, 63–87, 382–383).

Husserl’s late work, the *Crisis*, however it attempts to define a transcendental and pre-given intersubjectivity, remains “communicative” as to its genesis and focuses on the genetic process of co-constitution of the givenness rather than dealing directly with the substance of what is “given” (Husserl 1970). There, the intersubjectivity belongs to the immanence of the subject *apparently* as pre-given but this pre-givenness is still a kind of “communicative heritage” (Husserl 1970, also see Gander 2017, p. 138), therefore does not radically differ from the building schema of the intersubjectivity of the *Cartesian Meditations*.

In both cases, the Husserlian phenomenology seems to have built, despite itself, a preceding world-view of genesis for the intersubjectivity. Thus it distances itself from the immediacy of the intersubjective givenness, as it subsequently needs to export the intersubjectivity’s genetic narrative to the given thing at hand, forming *the given things’s* genetic narrative accordingly. An important example to this tendency is his “personalities of higher order” which includes the State in the *Cartesian Meditations*. There, the intersubjectivity of “personalities of higher order” is described *only* as a genetic process, again eclipsing their living, immediate, post-genetic givenness or subduing it to the preceding genetic narrative (Husserl 1982, pp. 128–135). As such, the Husserlian intersubjectivity “relapses” in two different fashions into the ontological and temporal problems of the theorisation, on a similar line with the constructivism in the IR studies. Still, as to its tools and terminology, the Husserlian phenomenology remains central to this paper’s proposal about the conduct of the IR studies, again for reasons to be given in the next section.

Then what may be proposed about the nature of the intersubjectivity, if the Husserlian version, if adopted in our field of study, would tend to repeat the problems of the IR theorisation?

The Heideggerian phenomenological ontology’s approximate terms for the intersubjectivity, the being-with (*Mitsein*) and the with-world (*Mitwelt*), define a fundamentally, existentially *interactional* state-of-being rather than a genetic process (Heidegger 1996, p. 117). As inherent to being, the intersubjectivity precedes any possible narrative of its own genesis or co-constitution (Heidegger 1985, pp. 238–239, Heidegger 1996, pp. 111–112, Heidegger 1982, pp. 266–267). The intersubjectivity thus appears as the pre-form, pre-content yet “common” innerworldliness of the *Dasein* and *Dasein* is not even equivalent to a particular subject, “ego”, but expresses a state-of-being, naturally “inauthentic” even, opening itself to authenticity only temporally, -toward future self- (Heidegger 1985, p. 248, Heidegger 1996, pp. 111, 302, also Mansbach 1991). In this sense, the intersubjectivity as *Mitsein* and *Mitwelt* is not something produced through/ *a posteriori* to a specific experience of the subject (encounter with the Other) but it appears as the *Dasein*’s pre-given, immediate mode of being (Heidegger 1996, p. 116, pp. Heidegger 1985, p. 238), to the point that *being-alone* gives the *deficient*

mode of, therefore referring-to the *being-with* (Heidegger 1996, p. 113, Heidegger 1985, p. 239) and not vice-versa.

The Heideggerian understanding of the intersubjectivity thus places the validity of the intersubjective world, therefore that of the intersubjective knowledge/recognition at the innerworldliness and everydayness of the conscious being at a pre-theoretical and pre-genetic level. As such, it does not need to juxtapose upon the immediate givenness of phenomena and events a co-constitutive act or process to “make it” meaningful, as meaning is immediate and inherent to the intersubjective givenness, which makes the givenness possible at the first instance.

On this basis, the immediate givenness of the IR phenomena and events may be separated, ontologically and temporally, from the complications of the (IR) theorisation. Furthermore, a phenomenological study of the purely intersubjective IR field may be conducted without the Husserlian genetic narrative akin to theorisation, which contradicts with the very endeavour of the phenomenology in ontological and temporal terms.

Back to Things Themselves in the IR Studies

The first section was centred on why the IR studies, as they operate in a purely intersubjective field, would need to make an effort to return “to things themselves”, in particular face to the complications of the IR theorisation. This was not because of the inaccuracy of particular theoretical constructs, but due to the nature of theorising within the intersubjectivity. Then the nature of the intersubjectivity itself has been debated in the said section and the need to overcome the disharmony between the Husserlian phenomenology’s aims –which coincide with our aims in the field of the IR studies- and its understanding of the intersubjectivity which tends to relapse into the fundamental complications of theorising. Here we proposed the Heideggerian approach to the intersubjectivity as a fundamental approach to the intersubjectivity, for the reason that it focuses on the immediate, innerworldly, pre-theoretical nature of the givenness as inherent to being itself and offers ground for the study of such a study also in the IR field. Still, the conduct of such a study needs tools and conceptualisation that would not “relapse” on the ground of the mentioned complications of theorising. How one may approach the givenness as givenness without a preceding world-view and a self-imposing genetic narrative? How one may describe the immediacy of givenness while avoiding the temporal distortion, therefore describing the givenness *in its temporality*? These questions shall be dealt with in the following sub-sections.

The Reductions

Universal and eidetic reductions constitute the phenomenology’s tools in approaching the consciousness -of things- and in doing so, in approaching the givenness as is given to consciousness -intersubjectively- (Husserl 1983, pp. 57–59, 220–221, Husserl 1982, pp. 71–81, also Brainard 2002, pp. 68–74). With the term universal reduction, it is meant the suspension –and not erasure-, the

bracketing of the naive believe in the self-standing- existence of the world-as-experienced, which equates to the “natural attitude” in Husserl’s terms (Luft 1998, Luft 2004, Husserl 1983, pp. 51–59, Brainard 2002, pp. 68–74). This means being able to put into perspective, layer by layer, the beliefs as beliefs, assumptions as assumptions, predications as predications, emotions as emotions (Husserl 1983, pp. 211–233, Morriston 1976). This also includes bracketing the theoretical attitude as theoretical attitude (Husserl 1970, Appendix VII, pp. 379–383), as the reflective effort to attribute a meaningful framework to the things being encountered in the world and in attributing meanings to them individually or in conjunction with one another. The universal reduction aims at making visible the immanence of the subject who acts/experiences/ attributes meanings, where these fundamental “mechanisms” as well as their *objects* are, as noetic-noematic (Kersten 1973) unities and thus “nothing is lost” through this reduction. *Ipso facto*, it also means that the immanence is the field of theorising, narrating *as well as* of the narrative itself in “transcendental” terms, whereas the objects and occurrences of the world constitute their “transcendent” counterparts (also see Zahavi 1997). At the first glimpse, this may be seen as the validation, from an unexpected angle, of theorising as to its genetic and even temporal aspects or as the invalidation of the possibility of the non-immanent yet intersubjective and immediate givenness of a “transcendent” phenomenon or event. Even with Husserl’s transcendental intersubjectivity of the *Crisis*, the givenness becomes meaningful-therefore-possible only immanently, its meaningful appearance is *generated* immanently, where intersubjectivity itself belongs.

This reduction returns us to Husserl’s egology problem, where *solus ipse* is attempted to be overcome firstly in the *Cartesian Meditations* where the “otherness of the other” is declared to be *irreducible* to mine-ness with admittedly little justification (on the genesis of the “monadological intersubjectivity”, Husserl 1982, pp. 92–105, 108–116, Schnell 2010) and secondly by the *Crisis*’ pre-givenness of the *transcendental* intersubjectivity where *solus ipse* is made, in a way, “collective” and not overcome. However, the universal reduction is highly important as what it primarily is, a method of putting into perspective³ the acts of the mind in dealing with the encountered, the given. In a field of pure intersubjectivity where the anchor of the self-standing objectivity is lacking, this becomes indispensable (see also Marion 1998).

What is however more interesting and useful for our purpose is the *eidetic reduction*. This is related to the study of the experience of *something*, of the actor, phenomenon, occurrence, by reaching to its “generic way of presenting itself, its *Erscheinen*” (See Taminiaux 1988, p. 62; also Bernet 2016, Heidegger 2005, pp. 210–211, Marion 1998). In the intersubjectivity of the IR, this “generic way” becomes the specific entity’s, phenomenon’s, occurrence’s intersubjectively meaningful, immediate appearance/ givenness which is not preceded, pre-defined or generated by the theoretical attitude and construct. The bracketing here would mean putting into perspective the *a priori* genetic narrative of the object, phenomenon, event, actor with its theoretical attitude, construct and its preceding

³And as such making them discernible.

Weltanschauung as well as the ensuing temporal distortion. However, this Husserlian reduction should be understood differently from the Husserlian understanding(s) of the intersubjectivity and therefore, of the givenness, not simply for the sake of our study but for avoiding Husserl’s impasses as regards the genetic (constitutive) act in the immanence which borders *solus ipse*, be it purely egological or defined-as-collective (transcendental intersubjectivity) and quite ironically, themselves being depicted as “generated”, therefore *a posteriori*, which is no different than importing the constructivist approaches into the sphere of the subject’s immanence.

On the other hand, as is in the case of the universal reduction, the eidetic reduction as a method is indispensable for putting into perspective the preceding genetic elements, including the theoretical attitude and its narrative as they are related to the immediate givenness of the phenomenon or event. Yet, it becomes workable with only when the intersubjectivity is taken as the Heideggerian *Mitsein* and *Mitwelt* that are inherent to innerworldly everydayness, therefore differently from the Husserlian egology or transcendental intersubjectivity that are confined to the intersubjectivity’s own genesis and its “generating facet”.

Now how to describe, through the eidetic reduction, the intersubjective givenness of an IR phenomenon or event? What is our immediate study object’s, a phenomenon, an actor or an event, “generic way of presenting itself”? In Husserl’s thinking, it is the consciousness, through experience, for example, of a particular chair as it is given, in connection with the *generic* “chair” (Taminiaux 1988, pp. 59–62). Here the consciousness of what is given meaningfully appears with that basic, immanent, noetic-noematic act. Here the question is no other than the “purity” of this process itself, replicating Husserl’s concern: Does the “grasp” of the (IR) phenomenon, actor or event, reflect, after all, its givenness as is or do in this very process a preceding world-view, “theoretical” therefore genetic and temporally distortive attitude come into play? As a purely subjective act, it would remind of the *solus ipse*. In terms of the transcendental intersubjectivity, it would be the manifestation of importing theorisation with all its aspects into the “immanence”, also in temporal meaning since Husserl anchors this to historicity in the sense of a communicative heritage. In other words, the heritage of a world-view and ensuing acts of bestowing meaning to the givenness, again akin to constructivism, would be made “immanent”, whereas they are by nature “constituted” *beforehand*, as the transcendental intersubjectivity itself was constituted beforehand according to Husserl. On the other hand, the integration of the Heideggerian understanding of the intersubjectivity to the eidetic reduction would ensure its workability for reaching to the “thing itself”.

Still, for the sake of purity, don’t we suspend through this reduction, where the intersubjectivity is *Mitsein* within *Mitwelt*, all the meaning bases that should in fact precede the immediate givenness of the phenomenon, actor or event? What then would remain of the study object to describe meaningfully? What is then the “thing itself” that we wish to reach through the eidetic reduction, as we also distance ourselves from the Husserlian framework?

Along with the Heideggerian understanding of the intersubjectivity, the meaning should perhaps be looked for within the immediacy of the givenness and

not within the processes of bestowing it to what is encountered, which would repeat the ontological and temporal complications we have described before. The inherence of the *Mitsein* and of the *Mitwelt* to the innerworldly, everyday being of the *Dasein ipso facto* bypasses the *genetic* processes that are devised both by the IR theorising and the Husserlian thought. The givenness appears here as a part of the *Dasein's* being-in-the world, in fact becomes *possible* as such, its immediate meaning becoming an integral part of how the *Dasein* exists (Heidegger 1985, pp. 303–304, criticising the Husserlian understanding of intentionality on that point). Something's being given is synonymous with the *Dasein's* being-involved-with it, it is possible in this involvement, as such is part of the *Dasein's* immediate existence *with* the immediacy of the givenness. As such, the givenness, already, *en soi* “intersubjective” as *Mitsein* and within *Mitwelt*, is not bestowed a meaning but is meaningfully inherent to being in its immediacy, innerworldliness, everydayness. The genetic act of theorising, but also the noetic-noematic processes, *operate a posteriori* to the already meaningful, pre-theoretical givenness as *a prioris* and distances it, at different degrees, from “itself”. Therefore, the eidetic reduction's aim becomes suspending these processes, not to build a narrative on how they “generate”⁴ the givenness.

Then how may it be possible to speak of the study object's *generic* way of presenting itself? Does not the “generic” state precede the givenness of the particular phenomenon, actor, event, as prerequisite to their recognisance, therefore its meaningful appearance? Or may the generic state of the thing, still a prerequisite, be inherent to and simultaneous with its immediate givenness?

Here it may be useful to refer to the first section's debate on the genetic reference of the givenness. The *appresentation* of the genetic reference of the given thing is of the same nature with, if not necessarily identical to, its generic state. The *appresentation* is from the immediate givenness toward the “immanence” and not from immanent noetic-noematic processes toward the “transcendent” as a *genetic* act of experiencing. On the contrary, what the givenness inherently -and according to itself- appresents, generates a noetic-noematic process. This therefore precedes them, ontologically/“genetically” as well as temporally. The “meaning” as such appears with the givenness, precedes other, *subsequent* processes that are based on a world-view, a theoretical attitude and construct that build narratives with the complications we described. The immediacy of givenness is also the immediacy of what it appresents, in line with the immediacy of the living, actual, innerworldly “intersubjectivity” that is “immanent”. In other words, it displays the Heideggerian *Mitsein* and *Mitwelt* in the Husserlian phenomenology's terms, *preceding* the genetic and as such the noetic-noematic processes based on the otherwise “pre-postulated” yet “made immanent” data and attitudes which produce theorisation and narrative. The eidetic reduction's usefulness reside here, with the condition of the strict pursuance of Husserl's motto of the “disinterested/indifferent spectator attitude” (Averchi 2015), in a way to include this differentiation within his immanent processes, therefore as a “Heideggerian” criticism and possible correction of Husserl himself.

⁴In the sense of bestowing meaning.

Lastly, it should be noted that the givenness is “individual”. The individually given thing, such as the “war in Ukraine” *appresents* its own “generic state” within the lived, inherent-to-*Dasein* intersubjectivity as *Mitsein* and *Mitwelt*. As such, the said individuality, the war in Ukraine, is given in a meaningful way directly, pre-theoretically, intersubjectively. Here the generic state is inherent to and limited by the individual, immediate givenness of the event or phenomenon. It precedes as such any genetic act *and source*, as the individuality and the immediacy of the givenness imposes this *ontological* and *temporal* differentiation between itself and genetic acts which are but subsequent. Consequently, we may state here that the appresentation of the generic state is inherent to/delimited by the givenness’ individuality and immediacy within the *Mitsein* and the *Mitwelt*, and constitutes the aim of the eidetic reduction in the pursuit of returning to “things themselves” in our proposed study.

The Temporality

The eidetic reduction is related to the ontological part of our study, to the search of the “what” of the given phenomenon, event or actor in *Mitsein* and *Mitwelt*. Still, it may but give a “picture” of an otherwise “streaming” display which has preceding and upcoming parts. The temporality of the phenomenon, the event, the actor needs to be dealt with in line with its immediate givenness, in order to make the phenomenological description possible.

Husserl’s main concepts on the temporality (of the consciousness of something) are the retention-protention, recollection and anticipation (Husserl 1964, pp. 39–50). Here, his example of a music piece bears importance. The piece is not experienced through the isolate givennesses of the individual notes. A note is “given” with the previous one being retained and the next one being continually expected in “protention”. This “temporal thickness” is inherent to the experience, the consciousness of the thing. The basic temporal thickness of the immediate givenness may thus be depicted through the retention-protention (also see Carr 1991, pp. 40–45, Kortooms 2002, pp. 177–179; Rodemeyer 2006, pp. 73–176). On the other hand, Husserl does *not* see the recollection and the anticipation as elements that are *inherent* to the temporal “now” which is described with the retention-protention (Carr 1991, p. 24, Marion 1998, pp. 77–97). The recollection and the anticipation become here –almost- self-standing acts, which are attached to the present time through a subsequent ego or collective act. This appears to be the (at least under-debated) case *despite* their being *intentional* acts and Husserl’s statement on the *nature* of the intentionality as where the subject (ego) lives in its purity (see Bernet 1994, Husserl 2001b, pp. 94–97, 347–349). We shall return to these points later.

The Heideggerian understanding of time consists of the three *extases* of the *Dasein*: Having been, dwelling-with and to be-with (Heidegger 1985, pp. 238–239, Heidegger 1982, pp. 266–267, Heidegger 1996, pp. 111–112). They temporally express the being-as-*Mitsein* within the *Mitwelt* in a state of involvement-with as mentioned before⁵. As such, the *Dasein* is depicted as temporally “merged” with

⁵As such, “having been-with” would be more correct, in accordance with the two other extases.

the innerworldly, immediate givenness at a very fundamental level, as it is the case in ontological terms. The givenness, in other words, provides the *Dasein* with its temporality as well as its substance. Equally, the *Dasein* in its being-as-*Mitsein* and its *being-involved-with* in the forms of the three temporal *extases*, makes the givenness possible-as-givenness.

On the other hand, our proposed IR study is not centered on the “life of the *Dasein*” but on returning to “things themselves”⁶ in a descriptive manner. It is certainly legitimate and in fact necessary to focus on the IR actor as a co-constituted/*given Dasein-like* entity in its being-as-*Mitsein*. This would provide our proposed IR study with a more elaborate descriptive ground for example about the nature of the states’ interactions on the Heideggerian ontological/temporal bases. And yet, it depicts only another angle of approach to the same ontological/temporal ground of study, a change of focus, from the “things themselves” to the “actor” in its being-involved-with the “things themselves”. The Heideggerian time terminology could be more operable when the study’s focus is on the “actor”-in-interaction. When, however, the same IR study deals with the “things themselves”, the phenomena and the events in their immediate, pre-theoretical givenness, the Husserlian time-terminology may prove to be more useful as it focuses on the “things” due to its more experience-oriented nature. The Heideggerian terminology would otherwise require a continuous return to the *Dasein/ Dasein-like* entity and the description of *its* “being-involved-with in *Mitsein*” within the study, rather than the givenness of the thing which the *Dasein* is involved-with. Still, the Husserlian time-terminology needs to be re-evaluated in our proposed IR study in accordance with the Heideggerian emphasis on the mutual inherence of the “things” and the *Dasein* through the latter’s being as being-involved-with as *Mitsein* within the *Mitwelt* to be able to describe, in temporal terms, the givenness in its pre-theoretical, immediate, intersubjective state.

Now returning to the Husserlian terminology of the temporality in this light, it becomes necessary to think of the recollection and the anticipation in their relationship with the retention-protention, which is the very temporality of the “immediate” givenness. The recollection and the anticipation may not be considered as *independent* intentional acts *when* they are related to something’s retentional-protentional actuality (also see Rodemeyer 2006 for a separation between recollection, “far-retention”, “near-retention”). Here, once again, the Husserlian concept of appresentation emerges as the descriptive phenomenon of this relationship. In dealing with the givenness, we had previously debated the ontological aspect of the appresentation. In a way, here appears the appresentation’s temporal aspect, also on the basis of the inseparability of the ontology from the temporality. Our previous example of the genetic reference that should be inherent to and appresented by the givenness in its immediacy finds here its “inseparable” temporal expression.

Consequently, the givenness’ “temporal thickness” needs to extend from the simple retention-protentional actuality toward the recollection and the anticipation (see also Rodemeyer 2006, pp. 12–13 on defining the anticipation as reverse-

⁶IR phenomena and events.

recollection), as in the case of the genetic reference. The *appresentation* constitutes here the mechanic of the extension. Here the recollection and the anticipation may not be free and self-standing acts, they are defined by the substance of the immediate/retentional-protentional givenness and by the intersubjectivity as *Mitsein/Mitwelt* of the “past” and the “future” as related to it. The “recollected” and the “anticipated” are incorporated, through appresentation, to the retentional-protentional actuality. This equates to the full temporal expression of *the immediacy of the givenness*.

Lastly, a fundamental difference between the recollection and the anticipation should be noted. The recollection is linear: It is the appresentation of the “relevant” past which is intersubjectively and already “happened” in relationship with the immediacy of the givenness⁷. As such, this extension toward the past is also subject to the eidetic reduction in order to put into perspective the theoretical/genetic attitude and the subsequent narrative. On the other hand, the anticipation is *horizontal*: This is the appresentation of a horizon of contingencies that are “likely” to happen in relationship with, therefore *delimited* by the immediacy of the givenness. These are eidetically reducible to a limited horizon on that basis, putting into perspective the theoretical/ genetic attitude and the subsequent “predictive” narrative.

Conclusion

Phenomenology aims at defining a “rigorous science” for studying the things as they are given to consciousness, as the consciousness grasps them. Husserl formulates this endeavour as “back to things themselves”. The researcher aims at reaching clarity in approaching the phenomena, objects and events. This means being able to describe and to distinguish the mental processes of the consciousness of something. From here stems a challenge, that is *returning* to “things themselves”, since they are constantly blurred by the fundamental/natural/spontaneous human attitude toward the world, which is assumptive and naive on the one hand and genetic/constitutive on the other as it bestows meaning, from its assumptions or world-views that precede the givenness. The said challenge requires therefore an “unnatural” attitude and tools. A *phenomenological attitude* is put forward “against” the *natural attitude* that includes the theoretical one. The reductions are devised for displaying the layers of consciousness toward the original givenness (and consciousness) of something. The intersubjectivity and the temporality are dealt with as the grounds of the givenness with and within the common world. As such, the phenomenology emerged as a particularly useful -if not indispensable- way of studying the phenomena and events of *purely* intersubjective nature, since it proposed ontological (and temporal) grounds in a sphere where the study objects, in contrast to those of the positive sciences, have no correspondence in the objective reality which are accessible independently.

Such a purely intersubjective field is that of the IR. The IR theorising displays the fundamental complications of the natural/ theoretical attitude, which are the

⁷Therefore retentional-protentional actuality of the givenness.

assumption of a genetic function and the subsequent temporal distortion. Yet the Husserlian phenomenology occasionally hampers itself by relapsing into these complications as well, mainly due to its “genetic” interpretation of the intersubjectivity. Still, the Heideggerian proposals on the intersubjectivity with impacts on the reductions and the temporality constitute remedies to the relapse and enables the phenomenology to pursue its aims of returning to “things themselves” at least in the field of the IR.

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