Ethical Foundations for the Future: China, the U.S., and Europe

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I. Introduction

The various methods of epistemology have been derived from the common human forms of coming to know and making judgments. In the West these usual forms, since the Enlightenment, include: 1) reason, 2) experience, 3) science, and 4) history. Almost never included in philosophy books (except for a few Kantians) as methods of knowing are methods such as: 5) personal intuition or insight (veridical knowledge), and 6) spiritual direct knowledge (personal revelation), and spiritual experience (mystical experience; voices, dreams, visions).

Recently Avery Dulles (2000) has proposed that some spiritual sources of knowledge are available to all of us in various ways, and indirectly to all of us from the direct experience of some of us. This fits with the philosophical work of Dallas Willard (1999), and Christopher Dawson (1994), and the theological contributions of Richard Foster (1978) on means of discerning the word or will of God in our daily lives, and more recent approaches to spiritual formation by Blackaby (1998), Curtis & Eldredge (1997), Lawrenz (2000) and Clinton (2006).

At the same time, a technical discussion is going on in philosophy as to the status of intuition. Audi (2003, 2004), using W. D. Ross and Falkenstein (2004) reconstructing Kant's Transcendental Aesthetic, proposes updated theories on the value of intuition. Audi (2004) integrates Rossian intuitionism with Kantian ethics. He anchors intuitionism in a pluralistic theory of value, leading to an account of the relation between the right and the good. In his discussion on Moore, Audi links Sedgwick's utilitarian psychological intuition to Moore's propositional intuition (p. 11). Either way, a person's intuition is linked to a specific content.

This use of critical intuition is parallel to Plantinga's method for discerning warranted belief (1993) and the older definition of truth as justified, true, belief (Oliver, 1975). Levinas (1995) developed his own explanation of intuition in linguistics. Wilson (1999) and Pust (2000) are developing intuition as a modification of pragmatism, especially Putnam's internal realism (1981). DePaul and Ramsey (1998) did an entire edited volume on rethinking intuition. An older version (Dennehy, 1986) searched intuition for a basis for certitude in a Kantian/Thomistic combination. Other work related realism to a modified phenomenology (Clinton, 1984A).

In the East there is a resurgence of writing about Confucius and, to a lesser extent the philosopher Lao Tzu. The influence from the social philosophy of their system continues to be felt in modern Chinese society, and is once again being accepted on a wider social scale (Chan, 2006; Cheng, 2006). Confucianism is presented today as a moral philosophy which had strong social action as a result of its personal ethics. The literary source of this philosophy is the *Analytics* (Confucius, 1998), where Confucius says the "natural path of life has its own duty and therefore its own harmony" (p. xxvi). The natural way of things, which is accessible to all of us, shows us how things should be (p. 61). In this way Confucianism results in a position much like a Kant/Rawls duty/rights argument based on common human intuition of the real. Since Confucius refused to discuss any explicit metaphysic or ontology, intuition is the default basis for generating personal and moral ethics. A relatively new journal is dedicated to making the Chinese contributions accessible in English: *Chinese Journal of Philosophy*.

In this paper I will relate these three strands: western philosophy, western theology, Chinese philosophy.

II. The philosophical process

We in the West teach that a realist should begin on philosophic grounds (Chisholm, 1960) with ontology (a systematic description of what is), present a world view (basic conceptual grid organized by values) as a whole, then discuss and defend the parts with warrants. Thus, the inter-related conceptual system is itself the logical starting point within a realist orientation (Clinton, 1984A).

This approach is reminiscent of, but a significant development beyond, Carnell's starting point

with the hypotheses of a rationalist system (1948). Both approaches are very different than Van Til's presuppositional approach. A realist does not start with his system as a given but as a proposal for investigation. A realist knows he never has all the truth and is always searching.

A new realist approach forces each thinker to a realization that one's person, via his values, is revealed in his writing, if any constructive work is to be done (Cooke, 1986). As a realist position this approach presents the truth of an external world, other persons, and the self and that these beings/spirits influence us; in Heidegger's terms (1962), they (the world and other persons), present themselves to us. Our physical, mental and intuitional abilities (Lonergan, 1972, 1977) reconstruct the nature of the being presented to us and the meaning of that being, using memory as well. Our understanding of the nature of being, method of finding truth, core values, and the meaning of life set our personal foundations (Plantinga, 2000). Concrete and practical knowledge is constructed from internal and external evidence, partially in isolation, partly in community (Putnam, 1981; Fiorenza, 1987).

In a similar teaching on philosophic process, Confucius taught that the method of reality coming to be in the world is by means of *tzu-jan*, translated as the "of-itself" (Mou, 2990). Hinson says a more descriptive translation would be, "occurrence appearing of itself" (Confucius, The Analytics, *Introduction*, 1998). This is similar to Heidegger (above) but Confucius goes beyond Heidegger to describe a similar process for the phenomena of all of life. "The ten thousand things [Confucian shorthand for all reality] unfolding spontaneously, each according to its own nature" (Hinson, p. xxvii). This sounds like Plato's theory of forms and creation of the world (Pippen, 1982). Muller (2003) reviews the early contributions to this Chinese recent discussion.

Confucius likewise teaches that the totality of things forms a system, united by an inner harmony and brought into perception of daily life by personal and social ritual (Confucius, 1998). Ritual combines the ideas of doing one's duty, a reverence for life, and understanding and participating in the system of being which presents this life to us (Confucius, p. 6).

III. Personal intuition

Carnell (1957) and others (Goldman, 1986) have pointed to the legitimacy of personal subjective experience within a philosophic theory. Martin (1986) gave an excellent summary of their work. But MacGregor (1973), Rahner (1978) and Pannenberg (1985) demonstrate that such a subjectivity is a necessity in any statement of philosophy. Polanyi had taught that position early (1958), well before Foucault and Derida. Wilson (1999) applies this theory to the general field of cognition.

As realists we can see fundamental directions being set from three sources: historical experience, personal human experience (Smith, 1970), and revelation. Of course, with three sources of information, we are open to the possibility of conflict between them. However, as believers in consistency we do not anticipate any real conflict of truth between the fields, other than by way of interpretations. Tracy (1981) well illustrated the use of analogy in modern times to enable us to see unitive reality. Moreland and Craig (2003) present a complete approach to a up-to-date version of philosophical thinking. None of these speak directly about intuition.

This integrative approach raises the issue of the status of talk about God and the possibility of revelation. Following Kant (transcendental unity of apperception) and Heidegger (understanding of being as an in-itself which presents itself to perceivers), if reality presents itself to us in a meaningful way, it is certainly possible to introduce the idea that if there is a God, then God is capable of revealing himself to us in a similar meaningful way through means which are relative to our experience, reason, and personal intuition or by other means of his own supernatural choice, such as visions, miracles, voices, etc.. These would not have epistemic status beyond the persons thus affected and our usual acceptance of such personal evidence.

Some philosophers have also contended that all people have an orientation toward relating to God which is worked out in their lives in their value commitments and religious practices (MacGregor, 1973, Rahner, 1968). The fact of this subjective reflective experience and personal and social objective experience is common to all humans, although the specific content and response is different for each person (Garrett, 1998). This is what theologians have called common grace. The analysis of this spiritual experience usually focuses on the biblical data, objective historical religious experience, or personal

subjective experience. There are, then, three interrelated aspects to the spiritual area of a person's life: Each person has a spirit; each person can receive spiritual impressions from other spirits; each person can be indwelt by another spirit (Clinton, 1994).

Audi (2004) description of the value of intuition goes further than either Broad or Ross. Audi presents three possible implications of self-evident intuitions. First, intuition requires self-evidence as a condition for knowledge, or second, we must have justified belief of singular as well as general propositions, or third, we can take self-evident propositions as knowable on conceptual grounds (p. 69). A special case of such a particular situation based on conceptual grounds would be an application of a *prima facie* duty.

Confucius did not present a metaphysical or theological basis for making his judgments about the unitive nature of reality and did not comment on the religious positions of his day. But he did teach that there are specific duties which all persons can know is their duty as part of the Way and that we all have a duty to follow these specific obligations (Perrett, 2003). This sounds much like a Kantian position and especially like Ross' *prima facie* duties (1930). Using Audi's reconstruction of Ross would provide an interesting foundation for discussion of public rights and duties. Ganssle (2000) has an interesting article on moral necessity in light of these modern western discussions.

More recently Youg Hyang (2005) commented on one of the leading exponents of Confucianism: "Mou (1990) regards the central idea of Kant's ethics as autonomy or self-legislation of moral agent, which is a revolt against the Christian idea of heteronomy—God as the law giver. Mou sees this idea of autonomy as congenial to Confucian ethics, which is autonomous and not heteronomous. Still, Mou does imply that Confucian ethics is an ethics of rule that focuses on moral laws, albeit ones legislated by the moral agents themselves." Hyang does not discuss the use of ritual as a category to substitute for social ethics or a contract approach.

Huang disagrees with Hyang's conclusion. He says it is better to take Confucian thought as a virtue ethic (2005, p. 11), like the older Greek ethic or a Christian ethic. He refers to Cua:

the strongest advocate of Confucian ethics as virtue ethics is Antonio Cua. Cua claims that throughout its long history, Confucianism has stressed character formation or personal cultivation of virtues, *de*. Thus, it seems appropriate to characterize Confucian ethics as an ethics of virtues," as it has a "focus on the centrality of virtues" (2005, p. 73).

If Confucianism is a virtue ethic then it follows the patter of duty based on intuition as a practical means of finding and living one's duty in life (Song, 2002). This fits with Audi's third form of intuitive knowledge based on conceptual grounds.

IV. Kant, the Role of Intuition and the TUA

Conceptually, it is necessary for there to be some unifying sense within human experience for the experiences of life to have either personal or social meaning. This conceptual necessity of a unified self (as opposed to an actual unified self) has been defined by Kant as the transcendental unity of apperception (TUA). This conceptual self, thought Kant (1965, pp. 135-160), is the only way to account for 1) daily experience via the senses, 2) memory, and 3) common human experience (Ameriks, 1982). This TUA is the foundation for all analytic and synthetic reflection. The TUA applies to a theoretical starting point for experience, and does not apply in the same way to actual individuals and their knowledge of themselves (Clinton, 1984C).

But we can know, both via intuition and reflection, that we actually have such self-consciousness, identity and real knowledge of self, the world and others. This actuality for each person is not the TUA, but what Kant calls a unity of consciousness: "There can be in us no items of knowledge, no connection or unity of one item of knowledge with another, without that unity of consciousness which precedes all data of intuitions, and by relation to which representation of objects is alone possible" (p.107). The intellectual experience of a self making sense of life, he describes as synthesis. "Synthesis in general is the mere result of the power of imagination, a blind but *indispensable function in the soul*, [my italics] without which we should have no knowledge whatsoever, but of which we are scarcely ever conscious" (105). This function is not blind, and it is not only imagination (see Lonergan's analysis of perception and learning, 1977). Walsh blends together these two senses of the self, the theoretical (TUA) and actual

(consciousness), when he concludes, "All thoughts, feelings, experiences are thoughts, feelings, experiences of a subject, a unity of apperception" (in Edwards, 1967). This goes beyond the conclusion Kant was willing to draw. The importance of time, one of the fundamental categories of existence identified by Kant, is not used by him in the transcendental analysis of personal self-awareness (Clinton, 1994).

Philosophers since Kant have continued to deepen the investigation of the status of knowledge claims and of the claims to ontological existence of a self, other beings (Copp, 2002), the world, absolutes, and God (Craig, 1988; Thompson, 1980). This discussion of consciousness and the function of synthesis relate directly to the issue of intuition. For example, Frege's theory asserts that conceptual representations of referents are *present to us* as senses (perceptible entities in our experience, then in our memories), not just as meaning in thought or discussion, and that the senses include a mode of presentation of the referents to us as both concrete (direct reference) and abstract objects (see the discussion in Salmon, 1983 and Clinton, 1983). This realism constructs both a way of thinking about external reality interacting with us as subjects and a way of reflecting about that reality. Frege's theory, or something like it, is necessary to establish a bridge between our concepts or ideas and a real world. Can we accept the idea of senses as perceptive of existing abstract entities? This sounds like Heidegger's recapitulation of pre-Socratic Greek understanding of reality as presenting itself to us. Does this actually preserve the needed unity between ideas or concepts and the empirical entities they present to us? It might; but this position does not commit us to modern versions of foundationalism, nor does it close that door (Grenz, 2000).

Heidegger responded to Kant's ideas in his *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* in 1929 (two years after *Being and Time*). Heidegger wanted to demonstrate the necessity of an ontological analytic of *Dasein*, and clarify it in relation to the question, What is man? (1971, introduction). This led to Heidegger's move in 1949, and in keeping with Kant's categories, from rational analysis, which keeps us in metaphysics, to poetic expression of reality, intuitively and concretely expressed, in keeping with his perception of the nature of reality as presenting itself to us and being known intuitively prior to being

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known through reflection (1971). This keeps the medium of discussion on the same level with the item under discussion, in this case, Being. In his dialogue *On the Discussion of Detachment* (1959) he indicates that we must wait and think, but not fall into the trap of logic. The hard part is to "stop deceiving ourselves" (p. 140). This leads to Heidegger's culminating idea of the unity of all knowledge and being, or of being and becoming, in the experience of the self with its own *ousia* and *alethia* (Vick, 1971).

Heidegger modifies the Greek notion of a self or a personal being and describes the self as an entity which is present-to-self and present-in-the-world, and therefore as present-to-others. This is a somewhat static sense of being, but Heidegger balances this with the idea of the self in action, that is, praxis, which brings in the element of time.

Lonergan (1977) is much more detailed and precise than Kant was able to be. If we begin to analyze the objects before we are clear on the nature of the perceptual acts, we will continue to confuse the issues of self, time and beings. Therefore, the case for the existence of the self is critical to the development of a case for the existence of other people and the world and to any planning or action.

One of the points needed in an argument for the proper role of intuition is a means of attaining content knowledge of the self and the world. Given a self and a world as logically adducible, there is still no actual content in Kant or Lonergan and thus nothing to use for analysis in any kind of phenomenological or teleological argument (although perhaps some kind of cosmological argument would have better ground. Fiorenza, 1987). The closest Lonergan comes to giving this argument is his step in which differentiation of the real takes place through insight and conceptualization (McKinney, 1987). If we have a real self which is the one having the insight, then we also have a real world which is presenting the perceptions. This is similar to Kant's use of imagination, but, in light of post-modernism, this approach needs to be supplemented by a systematic consistency method (Henderson, 1998) based on a phenomenological analysis of existence (as in Popper, Carnell, Collins, Rahner and MacGregor). This was best done, so far, by MacGregor (1973).

This would bring us to the point of establishing a case for the existence of the self in time, and consistent through time. This could be extended for knowledge of other people, the world, and God; anything which enters into our perceptual experience (Clinton, 1994). This would have the philosophical grounding to avoid either skepticism or presuppositionalism and would have given us knowledge of the real self and a real world, not as pre-rational foundations but as reflectively identified from inter-subjective experience of being in time. It does not yet address the effect we have on time.

If I understand Craig's (2003) argument in the more recent *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, he has changed to not only supporting absolute time but also to seeing time as a necessary element in the interaction of human persons. If this is true, Christians can apply a similar sense of the relations of God. The interpersonal relations of the three persons of the trinity, the joy expressed in their fellowship, the wonder of the creation as the designated place for the ongoing life of the second person, all contribute to an understanding of some sense of sequence present in the experience of God, by necessity. Further, the move from natural knowledge to middle knowledge to true knowledge in the mind of God (2003, p. 582) either implies a logically necessary movement, and therefore a real movement sequentially in the knowledge of God, or the whole doctrine of middle knowledge is not needed and we fall back into hard determinism.

Time, as spiritual, existential and intellectual sequence, not as history, is a necessary element of being, even God's. Our individual experience of time, on which we reflect intuitively and collectively, gives us a common field which we often call history. This is not the same as God's time experienced by the three persons. I am not presenting the argument (based on the interpersonal experience of the three persons - on a common ground as the analysis above for us humans) for this position here; rather I am seeking to sketch the picture of reality which is presented to us every day. This movement of thought from Lonergan and Putnam to Craig is needed to make sense of our everyday experience. DeRuyter (2005) says values are at the heart of this common human experience.

Implications

As believing Christians we are 'given' God, Christ, revelation, as well as real selves influencing

time and space and being influenced by them, and a real world (Malik, 1980). With the promise of a present fellowship shared between all of us as believers, and with God (I John 1), the issue of time becomes vital to the realities of life in the created world (Tooley, 1987). We are agents making changes in the nature of reality as it unfolds. As such we are responsible. As persons in the world we are also being acted upon by God and by other people. A soft compatibilist's or libertarian view of freedom and responsibility are both possible and may, depending on the argument, be coherent with scripture. As individuals standing among people in the world, we need to demonstrate the truths of these realities influencing us and call for authentic action based on realistic values (Clinton, 1984B). This can be done by furthering the work on theistic realism of Collins, McGregor, David Clark, myself and others. Including discussions on the nature and effects of time keep the dynamic aspects of all these discussion.

V. Conclusion

Western realism, using a variety of methods, including intuition, reaches many of the same conclusions about the nature of reality and proper descriptions of rights and duties as did Confucius in ancient China. Chinese writers today, especially the ones evidenced in the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, use Kant as a touchstone with the West because of his approach to morals and ethics via intuition. I think they will find that Kant's Groundwork for any future metaphysics also fits with many of the symbolic approaches and ritual (duty based) practices of Chinese philosophy. This ties Confucian ethics to the post-Kantian tradition found in Broad, Heidegger, Ross, Lonergan, Craig, and Audi.

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