

Response to ‘Kant’s Concept of Happiness’ by Yuzo Hirose

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The generalised conclusion is that therefore the parts of experience hold together from next to next by relations that are themselves parts of experience (James, 1967, p. 136).

Kant’s mature philosophy is dependent on a synthetic schema or operation of ‘faculties’ of the human agent as individuated actor. His Second Critique, on Practical Reason, was anticipated with impatience by his contemporaries, who were also increasingly intolerant of the categorial subtleties of these synthetic operations, which seemed to privilege abstraction over political action and radicality.

One of these contemporaries was Johann Gottlieb Fichte, who in Kant’s native city of Königsberg published in 1792 an ‘Attempt at a Critique of all Revelation’, which was taken for a long-anticipated work on religion by Kant (La Vopa, 2001, p. 82).

It is perhaps useful, in this context, to point out an interesting inflection and dialectical gesture. Yuzo Hirose bases his account on the canonical ‘ought’ of the categorial imperative. He seeks to restore his own idea of a sensitive happiness via a ‘hypothetical imperative’ (Hirose, 2010), which, if this is to be thought of without the necessity inherent in the categorial imperative, and which arguably misreads the choice implicit in the structure of the Kantian position, also returns us from the practical to the speculative agenda that Kant was so keen to separate—for example in the Preface to *The Groundwork*, which is authorially located between the two Critiques of reason (See Bennett’s translators notes, available in the online text). Without being able to appreciate the possible contribution of Nishida and the Kyoto School of Philosophy to Kantian ethics at the time of writing, I can only suggest that Jerome Schneewind’s two-volume work on *Moral Philosophy from Montaigne to Kant*, in addition to a later text *The Invention of Autonomy*, is an authoritative contemporary treatment of these issues.

In Hirose’s first sentence he speaks of ‘following moral law’; and I hope it will not seem pedantic if I insist that we must retain the definitive article—the moral law—because in effect there is only one, or one for each rational being, which is very much the nub of the problem, throwing up both the internal disassociation of the individual actor and the rational homunculus detailing the ‘ought’; and the external situation of social or universal import. Hegel, on inheriting the unsatisfactory stasis of Kant’s ethical rationalism and its unsustainable relation to lawfulness or moral conduct, comprehensively trashes it in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Here he interrogates the indifference of Nature towards the duty intrinsic to a Kantian moral view of the world, where, on the one hand, the ‘independence of Nature towards moral purposes and activity, and, on the other hand, on the consciousness of duty alone as the essential fact, and of Nature as completely devoid of independence and essential

being' (Hegel, 1978, pp. 365-366). Hegel is able to show that action which supposes itself to be moral is instead not actual (p. 375) and that, in the conflict between morality and duty 'absolute duty ought to be expressed in the whole of Nature, and moral law to become natural law' (p. 376). Indeed in the Hegelian logical enterprise, if what is already in existence is violated by this compact or conformity between the so-called natural and moral laws (*ibid.*), the highest good itself is compromised by moral action, which would then render it superfluous: 'In the assumption that the highest good is what essentially matters, there is admitted a situation in which moral action is superfluous, and does not take place at all' (*ibid.*) In effect, the rationalism of Kantian morality dissembles as a suppression of moral action, because if morality as an implicit element 'is to be *actual*, the final purpose of the world cannot be fulfilled' (the moral consciousness finding itself simply perpetually opposed to Nature; not just unreconciled) (p. 377). Similarly 'we cannot understand how happiness is to be demanded for this moral consciousness on the ground of its *worthiness*' (p. 379). Hegel rather exposes this concern to retrieve happiness as 'without reference to morality', as arbitrary as the designation of an individual as immoral; and he claims that this designation itself is a pernicious 'judgment ..., an expression of *envy* which covers itself with the cloak of morality' (*ibid.*).

So much for the Hegelian onslaught. Prior to examining the retrieval of a systematic notion of how to think about happiness that is useful for education—and given that Kant did not prepare or deliver a philosophical 'propadeutic' as did Hegel, so that to characterise this educational thought itself is a synthetic or syncretic process¹—I want to return briefly to Fichte and another logical gesture associated with his *Wissenschaftslehre*, the thesis that he rewrote with Sisiphan fervour. If both he and Schelling, another contemporary and key figure in the legacy of Kantian practical philosophy,² were experimenting with Idealist positions that render James' talk of Monisms (in the early part of *Essays in Radical Empiricism*) somewhat superfluous, a proposal made in the spirit of creative dialogue, that the *Anstoß* or 'stop' which logically distinguishes the Fichtean 'I' from the 'Not-I'³ and that would seem to anticipate aspects of Freudian psychology (James mentions Janet, whose mentor Charcot Freud himself studied with at the Salpêtrière): this philosophical structure, which Fichte propounded as his system, is I would suggest a definitive method of linking experience and (educative) growth, in a way that Kantian philosophy does not explicitly offer. The single possible exception to this would be Hannah Arendt's Chicago Lectures on the Third Critique, where *telos* and individual human dignity allow for a better route to a notion of educational good.

In this sense, then, what Hirose postulates about the self-harming individual or suicide disrupts what he quotes Kant as terming the 'doctrine of happiness', and which he extrapolates as the principle of happiness. It also imperils the idea of 'the sum of satisfaction of all inclinations' that he shortens to the 'sum of inclination'. If Kant's call to self-knowing, *Sapere aude!*, cannot be fully recuperated by a modern virtue ethics, neither can Kant service such an abstraction as this logical preference arising in a moral order.

AFTERWORD

In being permitted to extend and perhaps sustain the critical intentions of my colloquy on Hirose's paper, I intended to remedy the admission of unfamiliarity with Kitaro

Nishida and the Kyoto School that I make explicit in my initial remarks. For me, the scholarly signposting that both Hirose and our colleague Atsuko Tsuji were able to provide using the selected English translation of Nishida's 1911 inaugural treatise on the Good (Nishida, 1990)⁴ (styled rather as a study, or inquiry) was of inestimable practical help in gaining some appreciation of the philosophical coordinates of Nishida's text and indeed the larger enterprise of his philosophical endeavour, which has both characteristics of a ready assimilation of the panoply of Western thought and yet refuses any disengagement with a uniquely Japanese perspective on such activity. Prior to applying my resultant tentative understandings to aspects of the colloquium proceedings—in place, it is true, of any specific Kyoto School historical critique of Hirose's Kantian concerns—I wanted to signal my further intention to examine Nishida's subsequent 1917 investigation entitled *Intuition and Reflection in Self-Consciousness* (1987) with its Fichtean methodological engagements. Nevertheless this lies in the future.

First though, I must acknowledge that philosophy's grey-in-grey continues to abrade the sharper dialectical distinctions one thought to have drawn in an assumed attention to the critical project; and thus I am bound to revisit my objection to such a coinage as (a Neo-Kantian) 'hypothetical imperative' by admitting an occurrence in an earlier cited work of Schneewind (Schneewind, 1998, p. 486) where, in explicating the division between the so-called Precritical works and the architectonic of the Kantian Critical ensemble, Schneewind refers to Kant's annotations to a printed edition of his 1763 *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, wherein it is posited that a conditional and a categorical basis for 'objective necessity in action' are rendered successively as hypothetical (because individual appetites are held in check merely by the necessity of prudence) and categorical. The suggestion in further footnoted quotations from Kant's notes is that the conditional hypothesising of 'the goodness of a free action' is means-related; while practical necessity is averred to obtain categorically, as an end.

Again, Bennett's translator's notes to the Preface to the *Groundwork*, alluded to earlier, advise that 'A speculative endeavour is one aimed at establishing truths about what *is* the case, implying nothing about what *ought* to be the case', reminding us that while there is a speculative/practical pair in Kantian thought, there is no pure/practical contrast (Kant, 2008, pp. 3-4). We might go on to inquire whether there is any resonance between the (moral) hesitations of the hypothetical constraint of appetites—in the Precritical stance—and a correspondingly objective speculative method that effectively subsumes it. My sense is that there is not—and that an answering alternative to the categorical imperative is not available in the mature Kantian canon.

Clearly the attempt to develop 'a systematic notion of how to think about happiness in human development and in an educational context' presents any systematising enterprise with—as it were—a vanishing logic (of a solipsistic variety). If Professor Koyasu's paper identifies a distinctive notion of vitality embodied within the eastern tradition, 'a notion that values the connection between nature and society' (Koyasu, 2010), it also outlines and advocates a programme for 'revitalising education for dynamic hearts and minds'. Happiness, here, is a functional component of self-renewal—of a kind that is not susceptible to 'solipsistic independence'. It seems no accident, therefore, that happiness is implicated as a socially enforced optimism; as a collective enabler. One could say that it is non-individuated in its application.

What worries me about Suzy Horton's (2010) account of the UK initiative entitled *Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning* (an initiative that could share a common progenitor to Professor Koyasu's Centre of Excellence Programme in the US self-esteem movement) is the instrumental understandings of Goleman's domains of emotional intelligence. It is surely perverse to determine that the 'art' of relationships is the axiomatic capacity to manage emotions in others; even if one would accept that this child is relatively new to recognising that others' emotions are not hers. This manipulative managerialism extends to oneself; where to master one's emotions in service of a goal allows one not only to practice self-motivation but to reach beyond paying attention to co-master creativity. Creativity in what, one may ask? Even if Horton pins down the elision of a critical distinction between a personal quality or trait, and a skill or competence that can be subsequently acquired, the inevitable dissimulation of this discourse of affect, combined as it is with an intolerance of the negative imprint of affect (as delinquency?) suggest that this creativity is itself bounded by the productive circumference of adult expectation; and like children's art itself, expires in the chill climate of that majority.

When I first read 'On the Value of Happiness in Kant's Educational Thought' I found myself caught in a circuit of what I took to be its deliberate parataxis: this is why I itemised the contents in its three-part subdivision—not to provide an index. These three levels of sectional coherence were, I felt, evidence of the struggle to develop a theme that has no consensual support aggregated on a specific text or texts—Kant's educational thought—and is moreover threaded through with a seam of implicit Idealist rebuttal of the Kantian practical philosophy from Fichte to Schelling (and now, I discover, refracted in the vernacular insights of Nishida).

The categorial riposte that I located in James, and seemed distilled in the epigraphic insistence on a non-transcendent paradigm of judgement, receives its echo in Nishida's counsel of a pure experience whose content can never be further enriched or overlaid, 'since the meaning or the judgement of experience is nothing more than the indicating of a relationship with another experience' (Nishida, 1988, p. 7). Nevertheless such a unity as this 'fact' of pure experience is disrupted by the qualitative comparison entailed, say, in the perception of a colour such as blue; so that such meanings and judgements—if they add nothing new to it—compromise its unity of consciousness. If Nishida here relies on a rather primitive sensory account of colour, the tonal chaos of a newborn child's adjustment to light (or is that the cultural depth of Tanizaki's paean to shadow, *In Praise of Shadows?*) argues for a level of experience prior to differentiation, and in terms of which multiple attendant states of consciousness subsist.

Later in the study, in the chapter entitled 'The Development of Reality through Differentiation', and where the Abe and Ives translation engages with a literal Kantian index that the *Viglielmo* version displays reluctance to embrace (setting up other resonances with substantiality) Nishida suggests that the phenomenal register is merely 'the state of reality's development through differentiation' (Nishida, 1990, p. 66). Even if one accepts the caution (see for example Schinzinger's evocative distinctions between Western and Japanese attitudes to writing and understanding philosophy [in Nishida, 1973, pp. 4-6]) that there is an inherent poetics that English-language analysis is unable to discern; one still tends to the view that the desk that Nishida gestures at—in a long tradition of empirical allegiance to the furniture of the *studium*—has its corollary in the transcendent aspects of language (i.e. Kant's noumenon), rather than any potential manifold of differentiation whereby 'a thing belongs to objectivity' (Nishida, 1990, p. 67).

If we admit, nevertheless, that Nishida's purpose is to demonstrate the vacuity of an abstract notion of subjectivity (so that a stricter and truer subjectivity can result, in terms of which the Good can be configured) one may yet be inclined to persist with a doubt about the starting point of pure experience, and his account of the reality thus guaranteed, if the sole method of effecting this cardinality of the real is via its occurrent fracturing in the process of differentiation.

That this sounds like a Hegelian problem (the difficulty of a systematic beginning evinced in the *Phenomenology*, rather than the motifs of contradiction and infinite opposition *per se*) is amplified further when, in a key passage from Part III of the study, concerned with the Good, we are told that 'personality' is an activity; and one that refracts 'the unifying power of the universe' (p. 131). While this passage operates to negatively define personality (pp. 130-131), the better to attend to its implications for the self, that self in its truest immanent condition, is empty of impediments to the universalising draw of personality's orientation toward the Good. If 'the good is the actualisation of personality' (p. 142)—both translations concur on the slightly less Hegelian 'realisation' as an alternative—then we are able to bring to the fore a critique of Nishida's study in attending to the use of 'personality' in an inter-cultural recuperation of the Good.

The idea of personality does not commit Nishida to the individuated particularity of persons as subjects that a twentieth century reader might expect. It enables the legacy of foundational Greek thinking about the purpose of an individual human life (albeit human life as determined by rather specific categories of value) to be connected to a universal purpose, without the detour into explicit problems of that subjectivity as properly other and fully individual.

This puts a somewhat different complexion on the Jamesian/Hegelian notion of pure experience (depending on whether it is understood as a philosophical psychology or phenomenology of the self as its self-knowing in history). In assuming the Kantian moral law to ascribe 'absolute value' to the human personality (Nishida, 1990, p. 133; Nishida, 1988, p. 142), Nishida does not fetishise this value beyond its social validity. One might say that whatever kind of absolute value he intends in his consideration of Kant, it acts to obscure rather than expatiate on the difference between morality and ethics.⁵

The foregoing anticipates a resumption of the conference dialogue on happiness and personal growth, and Hirose's contribution framed by his Kantian scholarship. If I have left this theme unattended by further resolution, it is because the implication of that theme flows in an alternative direction to what I find, with all the pleasures of discovery, are intermittently in view in the philosophy of Kitaro Nishida. I wish to thank, once again, my fellow conference participants for that gift.

NOTES

- 1 I acknowledge but disallow the 'compendious manual' of Jasche's edition of the lectures on Logic, first published in 1800.
- 2 Much of what Hirose is concerned to explore in section 4 is echoed and perhaps supported in a modified Kantian way in Schelling's early text *Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism* (1795), particularly the Eighth and the beginning of the Ninth Letter. See for example Schelling (1980).
- 3 'The striving of practical reason is based on the "demand that everything should conform to the I", but this already presupposes the recognition that there is a "disparity" (*Ungleichheit*) between the I and the Not-I. Instead of the purely reciprocal mutual determination of theory by which the I and the

- Not-I are made finite, practical reason asserts a one-sided determination in which the I is infinite and the Not-I finite. Yet the infinitude of the I involves a striving that does not yet possess causality but seeks it. Here it is not some external X that produces a check (*Anstoß*) on the activity of the I but an inward sense of a disparity between striving and capacity' (Makkreel, 1994, p. 14).
- 4 While this translation was preferred by others for close reading in conference session, I have felt it worthwhile to consult throughout an authoritative alternative, in service of a guidance that renders the fluid thought stream while (perhaps) offering less anchor-points in terms of a contemporary philosophical erudition. I trust the variable referencing can be accepted on this basis.
 - 5 Notwithstanding the four chapters on ethical theories included in Part III.

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