

Reconstructing the Ideal in an Age of Consumerism: Boorstin, Dewey, and Niebuhr

Yoshihiro Tanigawa

Abstract

The consumption society was marked as a society of “extravagant expectations” by Daniel Boorstin, an American historian. According to him, the driving principle of the consumption is the “images” which means representations with symbolic distinctions, and they escalate egoistic pretensions of consumerism. Our sensibilities have been affected by them. And the point of his argument is that images have displaced ideals. It seems that we judge anything in the light of images.

Is it possible to have an ideal in a serious way, not in a caricaturized way? Boorstin (and S. Fitzgerald) said “No”, but John Dewey, an American philosopher who had an influence on Boorstin, said “Yes”. In *A Common Faith*, he attempted to reconstruct the idea of “ideals” as the resources for thoughts. In this paper, I will clarify the mechanism of the “idealizing imagination” proposed by him, and point out the fact that the Social Gospel inspired his theory of ideals. One can find more definite statement on ideals in *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*, written under the influence of C. S. Peirce, by placing the book in the line of *A Common Faith*. In addition, I will investigate the conditions of Deweyan ideals around his concepts of “sympathy” and “natural piety”. By reconstructing the ideal, Dewey introduced a dual finitude into his philosophy: the transcendence of unreachably remote ideals and the continuity of the self with nature and others.

This paper is intended to reveal that he attempted to reduce the “extravagant expectations”, and to achieve the view of the self in perspective, or the “self-transcendence” by emphasizing the “finite human capacity”. In the last chapter, I will compare his idea with the one of Reinhold Niebuhr.

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Natural Theology and Natural History in Seventeenth-Century England: An introduction to research on John Ray

Ryohei Nishiuchi

Abstract

As the study of the history of science progressed in the twentieth century, it has been revealed that Christianity played a great role in the promotion of scientific research.

On the basis of such studies, in this paper I will consider a field of science largely unnoted until now – natural history.

I intend to make it clear that natural history took part in the restructuring of scientific knowledge and Christian views of the world in the early modern period; this was caused by the Reformation and the restoration of scepticism, and it was one of the most important factors in building the tradition of natural theology.

First, I survey preceding studies, especially Shapiro and Jacob, and identify historical aspects where Christianity promoted scientific research

Second, I discuss historical contexts in seventeenth-century England, where there were pressing needs to reconsider knowledge and views of the world. At that time, natural history was one of the major sources of the 'design' argument typical of natural theology, which infers the being, omnipotence, and goodness of God from the subtlety and order in nature, and of the modern scientific method according to experience and observations.

Lastly, I take up John Ray (1627–1705), a father of natural history and natural theology in England, trace his life and relation to other thinkers, and go on to investigate his main work, *The Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of the Creation*.

In doing so, it will be suggested that Ray was influenced by Cambridge Platonists, such as Henry More (1614–1687) and Ralph Cudworth (1617–1688), and that he tried to restructure human knowledge of nature based not only on the authority of the classics but on observations; he presented the design argument by giving ample examples of adaptation in nature.

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Two types of Fallibilism – Reid and Popper

Takefumi Toda

Abstract

Fallibilism is an influential doctrine in epistemology today. The Scottish philosopher Thomas Reid is one of the major fallibilists. He tried to settle several first principles as our epistemic foundation by appealing to common sense. I focus especially on two of these first principles. I argue that those two first principles are problematic, as they are too weak to function as first principles. However, they reveal the characteristics of Reid's fallibilism. Further, I compare Reid's fallibilism with Karl Popper's fallibilism. This comparison will demonstrate that there is a wide difference between these two fallibilists. The former stresses the reliability of our natural faculties, while the latter stresses their imperfection. In the final section, I consider the results of this difference.

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An essay on the reconstruction of Lacanian Henology

Kenji Nobutomo

Abstract

In this article, the author tried to reconstruct the notion of henology in the text of French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. In 1970s, Lacan shifted his theoretical standpoint from “the Other” to “the One,” and corresponding to this shift, his clinical theory shifted from “the symptom” to “the sinthome.” The author investigated the roots of the henology in Lacan’s text, and pointed out that from his early writings in 1950s, Lacan used the notion of “sign,” “trace,” which were supposed to be different from his famous notion “signifiant.” In early and middle period, Lacan tried to dialectize this trace, and developed the dialect between the subject of the signifier and the subject of the enjoyment. But late Lacan tried to condense these element in relying on henological way of thinking, which was under the influence of one of his master, Étienne Gilson. The author concluded that this shift was the key for understanding of Lacan’s notion, sinthome.

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The Philosophical Examination of Attempts to Preserve Consciousness after Bodily Death

Takashi Okinaga

Abstract

We examine here the philosophical problems concerning the recent attempts in several scientific fields to preserve human consciousness even after bodily death.

One such attempt is that of “cryonics,” which tries to realize “neuropreservation” by preserving human brains or bodies at an ultralow temperature using liquid nitrogen under the expectation of future resurrection. It is based on the thought that preserving a particular brain state preserves a particular conscious state, including a person’s sense of being, or “I” as the subject who is eager to survive.

Another typical attempt is to upload consciousness into a computer. We should question whether complete information about a person and their memory makes “I” and allows for a person to continue to live in the computer, or uploading that information does not actually preserve “I” and it disappears with the decomposition of the brain. The former concept represents the belief that conscious states are informational states. The latter is a classical materialistic viewpoint, which is the thought sustaining cryonics.

Concerning informational preservation of “I,” we examine the standpoint of “connectome,” which regards the informational connections of neurons as “I.” According to this viewpoint, if the informational states or memory of “I” is preserved, “I” will be also preserved, regardless of the decomposition of brain and body. This preservation attempt is called “transhumanism” by Sebastian Seung. However, information does not seem as substantial as the human brain. Therefore, Seung claims that “information is the new soul.” This standpoint aims at preserving “I,” which is eager to preserve its selfhood and therefore is enclosed in itself.

However, is it possible to accomplish this aim of preserving “I” as an enclosed selfhood, if the “I” or the material brain state can be discarded and only the informational state is vital to this preservation? Because it is not until the selfish “I” is made to be disclosed and opened that sharing “my” memory or information with other computers or with other persons is carried out. Thus, this disclosure is indispensable to the uploading of “my” consciousness.

If preserving “my” informational state is no less important than the preserving “I” itself, then “I” must transcend my closed selfhood. This result is different from Seung’s purpose of “transhumanism,” which aims at the eternal preservation of “I” as selfhood. Thus, it is not until the initial motive of the preservation of “I” is sublimated that the purpose of that motive can be completed. Therefore, to complete this initial attempt to preserve “I,” we need to be “trans” humans, literally.

Birth and Structure of Consciousness as a Function of an Organism

Yoshiyuki Sato

Abstract

Consciousness is a function of an organism; it is a function that has evolved, and by considering it a function of an organism and focusing on the form of consciousness that supposedly is its earliest form, I intend to elucidate a posteriori its essential attributes.

In the first section, I criticize B. Libet's thesis, which states that my behaviors are decided by unconscious neural processes before I become aware of the decision. If my behaviors were decided by unconscious processes, both my consciousness and brain regions producing consciousness would be useless. Nature would have eliminated such useless brain regions. But the existence of my consciousness shows that it should increase my behavioral adaptivity. Therefore, free will as a function of consciousness makes behaviors not seemingly but truly more adaptive than unconsciousness does, and hence, it is a crucial function of consciousness.

In the second section, I criticize Chalmers' zombie argument. I suppose a kind of "pseudo-zombies," which, like Chalmers' zombies, have no consciousness but behave as human beings do; however, unlike Chalmers' zombies, my pseudo-zombies do not have the same brain regions that produce consciousness in humans. I show that the evolutionary birth of the pseudo-zombie might be far more likely than that of Chalmers' and that the pseudo-zombies are more evolutionarily adaptive than human beings as they are relieved of the burden of their brain regions that produce consciousness. If pseudo-zombies had existed, they would have driven out us. But in fact, it is not they but we that are on earth. Thereby our existence nullifies Chalmers' assumption that zombies without consciousness can act like us.

In the last section, I maintain that for free behaviors to increase their adaptiveness, consciousness should not be isolated but be supported by other mental functions such as perception, memory, and synthesizing, which make behaviors appropriate to the circumstance. Therefore, we must study consciousness not by itself but in organisms as a whole.

Furthermore, I speculate as to how consciousness was born in brain evolution, which, according to me, might have been born as a kind of bypass of unconscious input-output processes.

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Heidegger on the Way from Onto-Historical Ethnocentrism to East-West Dialogue

Bret W. Davis

Abstract

Some scholars may still wish to debate whether Heidegger was the greatest Western philosopher of the twentieth century. Most all will agree, however, that among those who make the short list for this distinction, Heidegger not only committed the most egregious political error but also, at least in the 1930s, was the most unabashedly ethnocentric thinker of the lot. Heidegger often asserted that Germany, as "the land of poets and thinkers," had a central world-historical role to play in any possible recovery from the technological nihilism of the modern epoch. And yet, it is also arguably the case that, among the greatest of twentieth century Western philosophers, Heidegger demonstrated the most sincere and sustained interest in clearing the way for a radical dialogue with East Asian thought. East Asian students and scholars were among the first to show interest in his work, and he reciprocated by conversing with them and reading translations of texts from the Daoist and Zen traditions in particular. "From a Conversation on Language (1953/54): Between a Japanese and an Inquirer" is not only a noteworthy indication of this interest, it is also widely acknowledged as one of his most important texts. The ensuing question that I pursue in this article is this: How are Heidegger's entrenched ethnocentrism and his profound interest in East-West dialogue related? While neither can be wholly confined to one or another period in his thought, I will show how, starting in the late 1930s, Heidegger begins to recover from the most ethnocentric period of his thought, and how he starts thinking of his reflections on the Western history of being as a preparation for what in 1953 he came to call "the inevitable dialogue with the East Asian world."

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