

Illusory Ego Theory

Tsuji Jun

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1

Nowadays, metaphysical ideas are all completely unfashionable. When it comes to the arts (especially in literature), the fantastical, the subjective, the romantic—these are disdained even as relics of the past.

Ideas and arts that can't keep with the times should just die out!

Only the emerging proletariat grasps the key to the World to Come. The rest—the bourgeoisie, petit bourgeoisie, intelligentsia—everything about them lacks the requirements to enter. They are a class of people about to be delightfully destroyed. No matter how much they struggle, already they're ghosts of the past, cruelly wiped out from the road that leads to life.

Only the real, the scientific, and the productive take part in the glory of the future, being endowed with the qualities to live in the sprightly, healthy new world!

I don't have any interest in arguing whether or not that's the case. No, what I want to talk about is something completely unrelated—a friend of mine's recent book.

What is the ego? Ego is one of the delusions that arises from human misapprehension. Everything is relative. The universe is becoming warped. Does aether really exist? Between Marxist value and Einsteinian cost, which is the more expensive? How many sacred and inviolable things really exist in the world? — In general, these problems are extremely lofty, metaphysical problems.

In general, metaphysical speculation is something far removed from realistic value. After all, we only live but for bread. Thought's much too boundless to ever be used as a vegetable over rice. The existence or non-existence of the 'ego,' what does that have to do with our livelihoods? Rather, it's much more important that we run around wildly over city councilor elections.

What's illusory ego theory?

Illusory ego theory is a theory which states that the human ego-consciousness is the illusion of an individual consciousness appearing to the individual within the universal consciousness possessed by all people.

Everything's existence is a representation of the momentum of this universal life. The universe is in differential flow. Tsuji Jun exists inside Furuya Ei'ichi-kun, and, here and now, at the moment of writing this, the songs of frogs are intermingling, flowing into one another, in Tsuji's ear. Once, a wandering philosopher from Holland told us we're descendants of the sun. It could even be said that we once resided in the sun. However, the sun actually exists within us.

Human living was originally a purposeless life. It was a non-purposive life. It was a life lacking any sort of policy direction.

There are two types of human will. Will-to-live and will-to-act. The former is life force, or vitality, and it's the will of all animals, though even plants and minerals have it. The latter has action force, or the ability to act. The will never aims for that which it did not originally desire as its original aim. Whenever it sets up some aim for itself, fate will have always already preordained, from the very beginning of time, that it should be its aim. This 'aim,' then is really nothing more than a retroactive translation of the fate that it's received—a self-deception.

Within the realm of experience, will is guided by value. Therefore value appears to be prior to will, but this is not the case. Things of value can only be established after there is will.

2

Value is an auxiliary feeling which is attached to a structure. It's a sub-phenomenon. When a complex subject is able to sense within itself the habit-necessitated structure, it feels a pleasant feeling at being to accomplish that. The sense of value, which is enticed from this pleasant feeling, is what the subject feels. And it raises up a misapprehension as if it were some special, magnificent value which actually exists. Thus value, in exactly the same way as will, is a marionette strung along by this blind necessity.

This is the reality of all values regarding human life. Indeed, they are illusory. Values are an empty fantasy in which the illusion of subjectivity is added to the movement resulting from the momentum of that original, metaphysical, valueless, blind action.

From this, we get conclusive evidence that human life, metaphysically speaking, is both enormous and meaningless.

An exhaustive metaphysics of nihilism must pass through here.

The individual, since every individual originally is not a true individual, is not truly a unity. An individual is nothing more than the center of innumerable habits, innumerable self-commitments. But because only one of those is able to seize the strongest model, the others, though never dying out, become subservient to that one like a hen to a cock. Because of this, should temporary circumstances in any way change, those who didn't yield take flight and overthrow that dominating one. And this ordinary individual, if at that time there exist no others to regulate it, is destroyed. The individual person falls to ruin. Or there's a bankruptcy of spirit. If humans are truly in possession of a robust, eternally undying, and absolutely unified ego, such a thing shouldn't happen. But the ego is nothing more than an addition to an individual person's existence. An individual person is entrusted, according to temporary circumstances, with an egoistic inclination.

Individual things, individual organic bodies, these are not originally existences which could be counted as one thing, two things, one person, two people, etc. but are instead existences which transcend number. Since all individuated things are everything in differential flow, just as one is unable to count the number of waters in the ocean, or the winds in the sky, metaphysically speaking, even counting stars or fish is impossible. However, empirically and instrumentally, one counts these based on assumptions and provisional hypotheses.¹ Metaphysically speaking, one person, as an individual, is neither one person nor two people, rather now, like water, they have an existence flowing freely without obstacle.² They're nothing more than that flow being tightened, through habits gained over a long period of time, around a central point. But even if they never drew close to death, they would never be able to disintegrate these tens of millions of years of habit, scattering back, liberated into their innate differential flow. But if one time they open their heart's eye in silent contemplation, those long-nosed broad-eyed things could count themselves as though they had been released into the differential flow. In short, an individual person is no

¹ Both words here 假 (假) and 假 (假) really mean "assumption." The difference is that the latter kind of assumption is more substantiated than the former. One could theoretically render this 'presumptions and assumptions,' though I don't know if that really does much of a better job of expressing the semantic meaning, if not the morphological similarity between the two words.

² In the original text, this is written 假 (假) (假). As far as I can tell, this is either a mistake or a pun on the phrase 假 (假) (假). Replacing the first two characters with the name of a Buddhist patriarch Bianrong (page in Chinese; unfortunately there aren't any English language resources on his life).

more than a representation, an apparition³ of the whole universe, at a pointed tip where the flow of power which circulates around them crashes like a wave upon the shore. Therefore, the individual is exactly alike with the universe.

I'm now not just a useless parrot of Furuya Ei'ichi-shi. I'm someone who had already surrendered, some 10 years ago, to the Buddhist view of reality. And [reading] Furuya-kun's previous work "A Criticism of Euckenian Philosophy," has occupied one of those 10 years.

I had an interest, of course, in the writings of Furuya Ei'ichi-shi, but more and more, I began to harbor greater curiosity in him as a character. However, his silence over the past 10 years had caused me to be doubtful, again and again, even as to his existence. But coincidence finally led me to be tied together in friendship with him. I learned that he's come to complete, by immersing himself in his work for a diligent 10 years, two wonderful creations—"Philosophy of Circular Logic," exceeding over 1.000 pages, and "Illusory Ego Theory," spanning approximately 600.

I am neither a student of metaphysics, nor a devotee of Marx. I'm someone who never so much as read through the history of philosophy. However, Furuya-kun's book "A Criticism of Euckenian Philosophy" has, for some reason, bewitched me such that I've given it several repeat close readings. He's a most wonderful poet—a philosopher not at all a mere formal logician or academic lecturer, whose work is dry and flavorless.

His new book "The New Worldview on Circular Logic; and, Illusory Ego Theory" is the essence of his philosophy, and to this extent reading it would be sufficient for someone to know his thought.

Our times are indeed materialist times. It's a golden age of utilitarianism and historical materialism. In these times, Furuya-shi, emerging like a great metaphysician Don Quixote, spewing 10.000 glowing flames for his metaphysical desire, is truly my secret pleasure.

Metaphysical speculation may be some useless thing. Whether the universe is triangular or quadrilateral, whether or not the ego is an illusion, perhaps nothing is necessary besides living. But regardless of necessary or unnecessary, humans nevertheless are organisms capable of metaphysical speculation.

Perhaps there are indeed more lectures on Western Philosophy and commentaries on Eastern Thought than one could ever need. But there are few people who express their truly original ideas, have practical flesh and blood experience with them, and make good use of them in their daily lives.

Thought is simply concept. No matter how materialist the thought may be, it is, after all, conceptual. And, in the exact same way that the Bible is of no use whatsoever to the starved man, neither is Marx's Capital.

³ The word apparition here, 幻影 (kagezuke), is a word meaning 'a temporary form taken by a god or Buddha when communicating with humans.' The word was chosen in reference to apparitions of Mary within various Catholic traditions, to attempt to reflect the religious connotations of the word. It differs from the word translated as representation, 代表 (daihyō), by one character.

3

The idea that philosophy and art are unnecessary to human life is no different from the idea that tobacco and booze are unnecessary. If we take arguing the necessary⁴ and unnecessary to its extremes, we might even say that human life itself is unnecessary. What is it that we even live for? Is it for the state? For our parents? Loving women? Liberating the proletariat? Art? Booze? Capitalists? There exist innumerable aims to live toward. But we must not live for our own egoistic [drives] alone.

I'm writing this now, for example, for the sake of Furuya Ei'ichi-kun. Writing in the hope that his work will be read by as many people as possible. I'm writing this for the sake of a friend, for the sake of expressing love for that friend.

However, I can't really be confident whether or not it's really for Furuya-shi. After all, occasionally, because someone like me is carrying a lantern, Furuya-shi's true worth may instead be damaged.

In any case, according to Furuya-style thought, the fact that I'm writing this is a result of an inertia decided on from the beginning of time. So it wasn't really written by me, nor did Furuya-shi write it. No, it was written by DADA.

A General Note on Translation

The Japanese term 誤解 is translated in some places as 'misapprehension' and in other places as 'illusion.' This was done in part for semantic reasons, and part for stylistic reasons. Etymologically/morphologically, it's a Chinese two-character compound roughly meaning '[taken in the] wrong sense.' This is why I've favored the term misapprehension over illusion, since 'illusion' tends to have a much more (to my ear) misty, vague connotation, which is not necessarily/exclusively the sense in which I've seen it used in Japanese, though illusion has been used in cases where misapprehension would be stylistically awkward, such as in the title of the work.

The term 慣性 is translated as 'habit,' 'momentum,' and 'inertia.' Inertia is probably the most accurate word for translating the term, but as it's used in both the sense of personal inertia/habit and as a physics term, I found it somewhat difficult to express this polyvocality in English, which as far as I know does not have a similarly broad term.

⁴ The Japanese word for 'necessary' is 必要 (必要). In the manuscript version, it's rather written (possibly mistakenly) as 必要, which is visually similar, but the first character, meaning 'certain, invariable' has been replaced with a character meaning 'heart, mind.'

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was published posthumously in 1970. Judging from publication dates mentioned in the text, it's
possible to narrow down the date it was written somewhere between ~1924 and 1926.

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