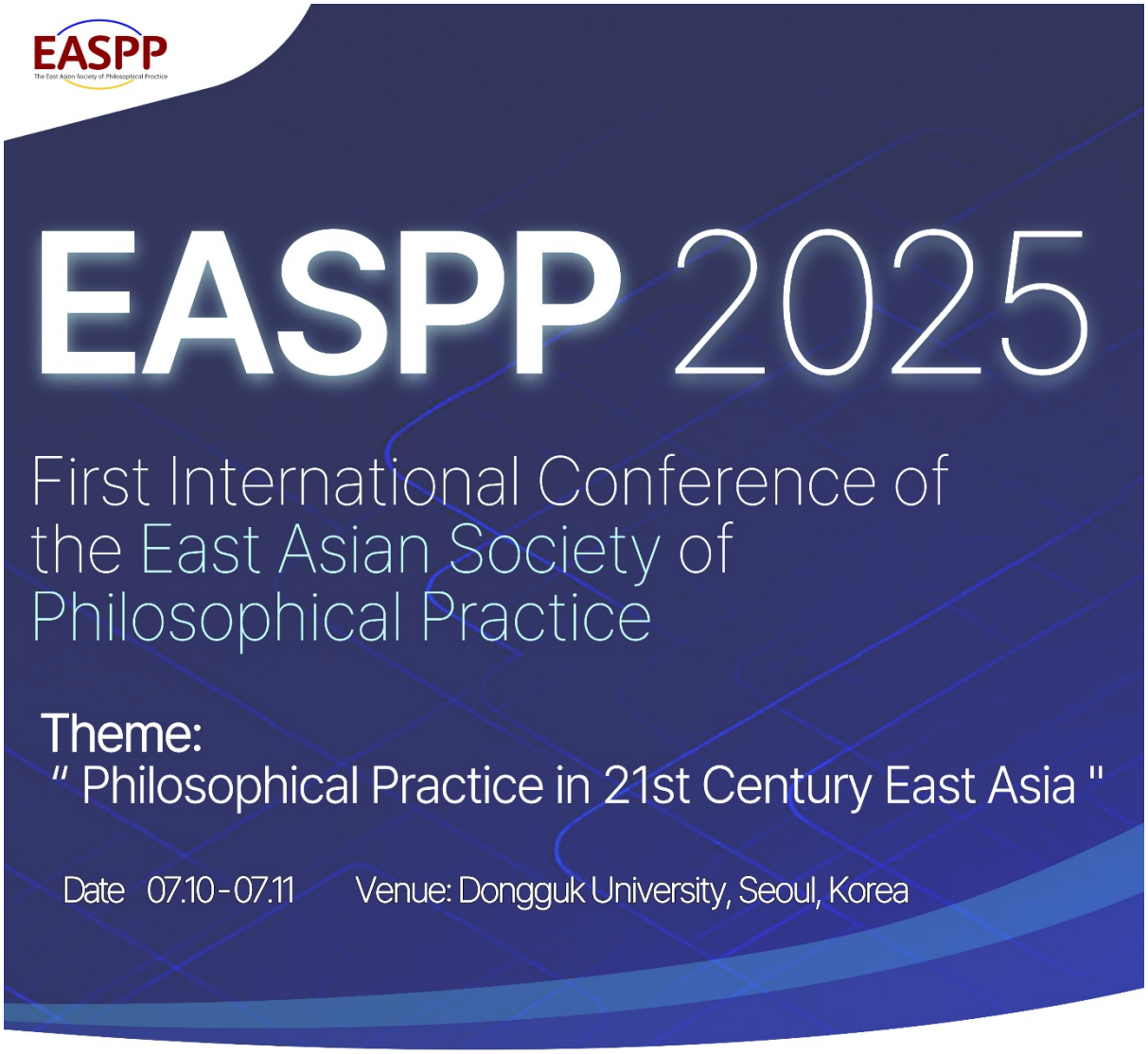


EASPP East Asian Society of Philosophical Practice

Dongguk University Department of Philosophy

Institute for East-West Thought

Nanjing UNiversity School of Philosophy

Nanjing University Institute of Science, Technology and Society

KSPC Korean Society of Philosophical Counseling

Xi'an Jiaotong University Department of Philosophy

Taiwan Philosophical Counseling Association TPCA

ACCS Asia Counseling and Coaching Society

Kyungpook National University, Institute of Humanities Studies

First International Conference of the East Asian Society of Philosophical Practice

"Philosophical Practice in 21st Century East Asia"

July 10–11, 2025
Dongguk University, Seoul, Republic of Korea

Hosting Organizations
East Asian Society of Philosophical Practice
Department of Philosophy, Dongguk University
Institute for East-West Thought, Dongguk University
School of Philosophy, Nanjing University
Institute of Science, Technology and Society, Nanjing University
Department of Philosophy, Xi'an Jiaotong University
Asia Counseling and Coaching Society
Korean Society of Philosophical Counseling
Taiwan Philosophical Counseling Association
Kyungpook National University, Institute of Humanities Studies, Research Team (Korea Research Foundation Project: "Development and Efficacy Verification of Life Story Program for the Elderly and Development of Convergent Base Technology for AI-Life Story Program")



Program

July 10					
09:00 - 09:30	Opening Ceremony				
09:30 - 11:30	Main Hall: Keynotes 1 Hyehwa hall 320				
11:30 - 13:00	Lunch				
13:00 - 14:30	**Room 1** Hyehwa Hall 337 Session A1	**Room 2** Hyehwa Hall 342 Session B1	**Room 3** Hyehwa Hall 339 Session C1	**Room 4** Hyehwa Hall 303 Session D1	**Room 5** Hyehwa Hall 320 Session E1
14:30 - 14:50	Refreshment Break				
14:50 - 16:20	Session A2	Session B2	Session C2	Session D2	Session E2
16:20 - 16:40	Refreshment Break				

16:40 - 18:10	Session A3	Session B3	Session C3	Session D3	Session E3
18:10 - 20:00	Reception				
July 11					
09:00 - 10:30	Main Hall: Keynotes 2 Hyehwa Hall 320				
10:30 - 10:50	Refreshment Break				
10:50 - 11:50	Session A4	Session B4			
12:00 - 12:30	Closing Ceremony				
12:30 - 20:00	Seoul Tour Program				

Email: easpp@dgu.ac.kr
Homepage: https://easpp2025.wixsite.com/philosophy

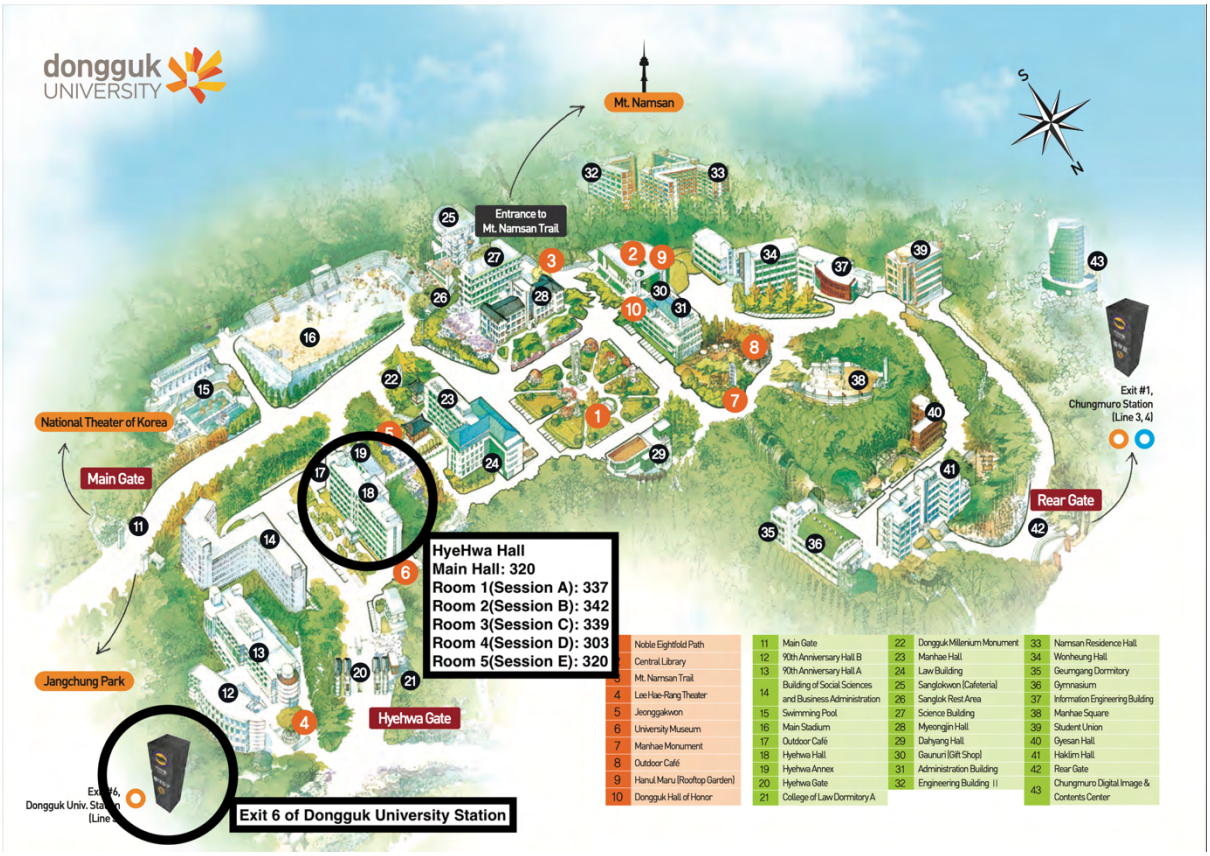
Speakers

Day One (July 10th)				
Keynotes 1: Bernard Li, Lou Marinoff, Tianqun Pan, Seunghwa Jeon				
A1	**B1**	**C1**	**D1**	**E1**
Yu-Chang Yang	Qiman Liu	Xiaojun Ding	Young E. Rhee	Zijie Lin Jialin Xu
Qi Tan	Jin Xin	Lizeng Zhang	Heeja Sung Seon Yeong Shim	Yang Chen
Yifei Hu Zhonghe Liang	XingYu Chen Jingyi Zhang	Ning Zhao	Seung-Ah Seo Hae-In Kang	Xuan Fang Yu Gao
A2	**B2**	**C2**	**D2**	**E2**
Ying-Fen Su	Rui Cao	Miaomiao Du Xiaojun Ding	Qun Wei	Yeonhee Lee Jiwon Shim
Zihan Tang	Shaojia Song	Yaokai Jin	Yuna Hur Sungeun Kim Dong-Suk Oh	Moon Hee Yoo
Zehai Sun	Mingyu Cao	Xianrui Meng	MinJu Kim Seung Hwa Jeon Jung Wan Kim	Hae Duk Kim
A3	**B3**	**C3**	**D3**	**E3**
Alex Gooch	Jiayi Xin	Chang Yang	Sang Wook Park Jung Wan Kim	Jea Mok Choi
Alex Fong	Huiyi Xu	Sirui Fu	Amy Lee	Gap Yim Jung
Shengyi Jia	Ge Lei	Jia Qin	Manyu Lee	Yongmi Jo

Day Two (July 11th)		
Keynotes 2: Chien-Chi Lu, Horie Tsuyoshi, Sunhye Kim		
A4	**B4**	
Minqiang Xu Xiaojun Ding Caifeng Xie	Fengyuan Wang	
Jie Wen	Liu Li	

Venue Information

Room	Main Hall	Room 1	Room 2	Room 3	Room 4	Room 5
Number	Hyehwa Hall 320	Hyehwa Hall 337	Hyehwa Hall 342	Hyehwa Hall 339	Hyehwa Hall 303	Hyehwa Hall 320



Agenda

July 10th	**Opening Ceremony** Chair: Song Yi Lee (Dongguk University)
09:00-09:30	Opening Address: Young E. Rhee·Tianqun Pan, Co-Presidents of EASPP Greetings: Jaewoong Yun, President of Dongguk University Greetings: Jiwon Shim, Director of Research Institute for East-West Thought
July 10th	**Keynotes 1 (Main Hall)** Chair: Song Yi Lee (Dongguk University)
09:30-10:00	Bernard Li (Fu Jen Catholic University). AI and Philosophical Consoling: The Intersection of Technology and Human Thinking
10:00-10:30	Lou Marinoff (City College of New York). Limitations of AI, and Re-Humanization via Philosophical Practice
10:30-11:00	Tianqun Pan (Nanjing University). Philosophy is Going to the Plaza - A Brief Report of Nanjing Tea Salon of Philosophy
11:00-11:30	Seunghwa Jeon (Kyungpook National University). Development and Efficacy Verification of Life Story Program for the Elderly and Development of Convergent Base Technology for AI-Life Story Program
July 11th	**Keynotes 2 (Main Hall)** Chair: Ki-Myoung Kim (Kangwon National University)
09:00-09:30	Chien-Chi Lu (Taiwan Philosophical Counseling Association). The Development and Challenges of Philosophical Counseling in Taiwan
09:30-10:00	Horie Tsuyoshi (Osaka University). The ‘Philosophical’ Elements of Dialogue: To unravel Roles/Positions
10:00-10:30	Sunhye Kim (Kangwon National University). Schopenhauer's Eudemonism as a Difference of Life-wisdom to commensurate with a Difference of Age

A1	Chair: Chien‑Chi Lu (Taiwan Philosophical Counseling Association)
13:00-13:30	Yu-Chang Yang (Sun Yet-Sen University). Epictetus' Philosophical Healing Thought and Contemporary Philosophical Consulting Practice - Taking Philosophical Counseling for Prisoners as an Example
13:30-14:00	Qi Tan (Nanjing Agricultural University). Research on the Philosophical therapy of the Stoic school
14:00-14:30	Yifei Hu·Zhonghe Liang (Sichuan University). The Harmony of Virtue, Reason and Soul - Plato's Practical Art of Healing the Body and Mind with Virtue and Justice
A2	Chair: Lizeng Zhang (Shandong Normal University)
14:50-15:20	Ying-Fen Su (Fu Jen Catholic University). A Multidimensional Exploration of Emotions in the Chapter “Fuao” in Qike
15:20-15:50	Zihan Tang (Yangzhou University). The Concept and Practical Efficacy of Philosophical Counseling from the Perspective of Rogers' Humanistic Psychology
15:50-16:20	Zehai Sun (Xi’an Jiaotong University). Analysis of the Dimension of Philosophical Healing of the Excellent Traditional Chinese Culture from the Perspective of Philosophical Practice
A3	Chair: Young E. Rhee (Dongguk University)
16:40-17:10	Alex Gooch (Durham University). When Philosophy is the Problem
17:10-17:40	Alex Fong (Hong Kong University). Oneness as a Philosophical Practice to address contemporary issues
17:40-18:10	Shengyi Jia (Xi’an Jiaotong University). Symbolic Consumption, Instant Gratification, and Mindful Liberation: Embodied Practice Pathways within Consumer Culture
A4	Chair: Jiayi Xin (Xi’an Jiaotong University)
10:50-11:20	Minqiang Xu·Xiaojun Ding·Caifeng Xie (Xi’an Jiaotong University). Beyond Value Neutrality: Reconstructing Ethical Engagement in Philosophical Counseling Through Aristotelian Virtue Ethics
11:20-11:50	Jie Wen. How Mindfulness Helps with Insomnia: The Application of Buddhist Teachings in Daily Life

B1	Chair: Tianqun Pan (Nanjing University)
13:00-13:30	Xingyu Chen·Jingyi Zhang (Xi'an Jiaotong University) Role-Playing Games as Self-Technologies for Identity Reconstruction
13:30-14:00	Qiman Liu (Peking University). Remedying Self Alienation in AI Linked Bodies: Philosophical Practice for Digital Intelligence Cyborgs
14:00-14:30	Jin Xin (Nanjing University). Teacher Authority vs. Children Autonomy: Conflict and Reconciliation of Critical Thinking in Confucian-Context Philosophy Education for Children
B2	Chair: Yu‐Chang Yang (Sun Yet-Sen University)
14:50-15:20	Rui Cao (Nanjing University). Digital Hoarding Through Philosophical Lens: Existential Challenges and Cognitive Transformation in Technological Society
15:20-15:50	Shaojia Song (Nanchang University). An Attempt to Explore the Problem of the Meaning of Life from a Multidisciplinary Perspective with Philosophy and Psychology as Theoretical and Practical Foundations, Taking Architecture as an Example
15:50-16:20	Mingyu Cao (Zhejiang University). Urgently Addressing the Inner Fire: A Study on Anxiety in the Era of Compressed Modernity and Performance Pressure
B3	Chair: Lou Marinoff (City College of New York)
16:40-17:10	Jiayi Xin (Xi'an Jiaotong University). Beyond Human Counselors: Evaluating the Role of Large Language Models in Philosophical Counseling
17:10-17:40	Huiyi Xu (University of Chinese Academy of Sciences). The Technological Turn in Emotional Practice: Virtual Comfort and the Possibility of Humanistic Healing in AI Companionship
17:40-18:10	Ge Lei (University College London). Philosophy for Children and the Digital Challenge: Rethinking Critical Thinking Practice (Online)
B4	Chair: Yifei Hu (Sichuan University)
10:50-11:20	Fengyuan Wang (Nanjing University). Caring-Counseling: Zhu Xi's Learning Theory and Philosophical Counseling on Learning Anxiety
11:20-11:50	Liu Li (Xi'an Jiaotong University). Harmony between Emotion and Ritual: A Philosophical Therapy Theoretical Model based on The Book of Rites

C1	Chair: Alex Fong (Hong Kong University)
13:00-13:30	Xiaojun Ding (Xi'an Jiaotong University). Aligning AI with Confucian Wisdom: LLM-empowered Philosophical Counseling Agent for Mental Health
13:30-14:00	Lizeng Zhang (Shandong Normal University). The Temporal Wisdom in Zhou Yi from the Perspective of Philosophical Counseling
14:00-14:30	Ning Zhao (Shanghai University). Time Anxiety in the Accelerated Society and the Philosophical Therapy of Wang Yangming
C2	Chair: Xiaojun Ding (Xi'an Jiaotong University)
14:50-15:20	Miaomiao Du·Xiaojun Ding (Xi'an Jiaotong University). Rational Resilience Argumentation(RRA): A Philosophical Framework for Self-Healing in Depressive States
15:20-15:50	Yaokai Jin (Zhejiang University). The Modernity Implication of the "Chun-qiu-san-shi"
15:50-16:20	Xianrui Meng (Anhui University). Care as the Foundation: The Integration of Daoist Philosophy into Contemporary Psychotherapy
C3	Chair: Horie Tsuyoshi (Osaka University)
16:40-17:10	Chang Yang (Chinese University of Hong Kong). The Reaction of "Wen" in the Perspective of Practical Learning - Centered on Li Gong
17:10-17:40	Sirui Fu (Xi'an Jiaotong University). No-Mind Revolution in Modern Counseling: Integrating D. T. Suzuki's Zen Wisdom and Japanese Philosophical Practice for Spiritual Healing
17:40-18:10	Jia Qin (Tianjin Foreign Studies University). Contemporary Philosophical Practice in the Horizon of the Syncretism of Confucian, Buddhist and Daoist

D1	Chair: Seunghwa Jeon (Kyungpook National University)
13:00-13:30	Young E. Rhee (Dongguk University). AI Life Story Model for Elderly People: An Embodied Cognitive Approach
13:30-14:00	Heeja Sung·Seon Yeong Shim (Kyungpook National University). Successful Aging through Life History
14:00-14:30	Seung-Ah·Seo·Hae-In Kang (Kyungpook National University). Emotional Expression and Sociocultural Context in Korean Elderly Life Narratives
D2	Chair: Heeja Sung (Kyungpook National University)
14:50-15:20	Qun Wei (Keimyung University). Multi-Physiological Signal Measurement Technology based Smart Stethoscope for Personal Cardiovascular Health Monitoring
15:20-15:50	Yuna Hur (Korea University)·Sungeun Kim(Busan University of Foreign Studies)·Dong-Suk Oh (Kyungpook National University). Synthetic Data Generation Based on Generative AI Technologies
15:50-16:20	MinJu Kim (Daegu University)·Seung Hwa Jeon (Kyungpook National University)·Jung Wan Kim (Daegu University). Development of an NLP-Based Lexical Retrieval Training Module for Older Adults with Mild Cognitive Impairment: A Preliminary Study
D3	Chair: Miran Lee (Daegu University)
16:40-17:10	Sang Wook Park·Jung Wan Kim (Daegu University). A Case Study on User Experience (UX) and Adaptability in the Use of an AI-Based Computerized Cognitive Rehabilitation Program
17:10-17:40	Amy Lee (Kyungpook National University). Ego Integration in Elderly Women through Narrative Therapy: A Life History Study Based on Narrative Humanities Counseling
17:40-18:10	Manyu Lee (Kyungpook National University). Guiding AI Storytelling with Narrative Reasoning: A Life History Approach

E1	Chair: Alex Gooch (Durham University)
13:00-13:30	Zijie Lin (Beijing Normal University)·Jialin Xu (Renmin University). Philosophical Practice for Older Persons in East Asia: Unfolding Life Philosophy via Narrative Interview
13:30-14:00	Yang Chen (Xi'an Jiaotong University). Caring Healing: care robots and the Dignity of Older People
14:00-14:30	Xuan Fang·Yu Gao (Nanjing University). Reconstructing Meaning in Philosophical Practice: A Phenomenological Exploration of the Lebenswelt of Individuals with Schizophrenia
E2	Chair: Yucheon, Kim (Dongguk University)
14:50-15:20	Yeonhee Lee (Gyeongsang National University)·Jiwon Shim (Dongguk University). Rethinking Patient Autonomy through Positive Liberty: Voluntary Hysterectomy in the Era of Posthuman
15:20-15:50	Moon Hee Yoo (Dongguk University). Mapping the Adoption of Neuroscience in Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Scoping Review
15:50-16:20	Hae Duk Kim (Dongguk University). A Subjectivity Study for the Systematic Approach of University Coaching
E3	Chair: Eun-Young Lee (Kyung Hee University)
16:40-17:10	Jea Mok Choi (Yeungnam University). Inherent Counselling Techniques Based on Wang Yangming's 'Liangzhi'
17:10-17:40	Gap Yim Jung (Semyung University). Symbiosis and Healing
17:40-18:10	Yongmi Jo (Yeungnam University). The Self-healing Method found in Toegye's Hualinshimbang

July 11th	**Closing ceremony** Chair: Xiaojun Ding (Xi'an Jiaotong University)
12:00-12:30	Message from EASPP Tianqun Pan (Nanjing University) Young E. Rhee (Dongguk University) Student Excellent Paper Awards Ceremony Closing address Jiwon Shim (Dongguk University)

Keynotes 1

Bernard Li (Fu Jen Catholic University)

"AI and Philosophical Consoling: The Intersection of Technology and Human Thinking"

1. Introduction: Connecting the Past and the Future

In an age dominated by rapid technological progress, humanity is increasingly hungry for meaningful reflection on life, existence, ethics, and personal crises. Philosophical counseling, as an ancient but still vibrant practice, meets this need by helping people deal with life's complex issues through philosophical dialogue.

At the same time, artificial intelligence (AI) has become a transformative force in almost every field, from healthcare to finance, from education to entertainment. So what happens when we combine the deep reflection of philosophical counseling with the powerful computing power of artificial intelligence? This intersection opens up new frontiers for mental health, ethical reflection, and personal growth, both hopeful and controversial.

Through ten in-depth chapters, this article explores the dynamic relationship between AI and philosophical counseling, with an in-depth analysis of their synergies, challenges, ethical issues, and future potential.

2. Understand philosophical counseling

(1) Origin and evolution

Philosophical counseling is not psychotherapy, although in practice there is sometimes some overlap between the two. It is derived from Socratic dialogue and is designed to help individuals explore fundamental questions about meaning, value, and existence. Philosophers like Socrates, Epicurus, and the Stoics pioneered this approach, emphasizing the pursuit of understanding through critical thinking rather than emotional catharsis.

Philosophy is the original meaning of the pursuit of wisdom, since it is wisdom covers not only the wisdom that can be experienced by knowledge and experience, but also contains the wisdom that people can experience, but beyond the knowledge and experience, no matter what kind of wisdom it is, it is related to spirituality, spiritual issues are not easy to reflect in the content of general counseling, but it is not uncommon in philosophical counseling, especially when it comes to value issues, it will encounter spiritual problems.

Since philosophical counseling is the object of value-based discussion, it is especially important to confront spiritual issues such as the special spiritual experiences of individuals who are considered abnormal or sociopathic by certain psychiatric or social personality types.

As early as the ancient Greek period, many philosophers began to use philosophy as a spiritual substance, such as Pythagoras (570-469B. C.): "The rational part of the soul is immortal", Protagoras (481-411B. C.): "Man is the measure of all things: the measure of the existence of the being, and the measure of the non-existence of the non-existent." , Socrates, 470-399b. C.): "The soul has no good and no evil, it operates where the wild heart is directed, and wisdom begins with curiosity." Aristoteles (384-322b. C.) "There is no better act of happiness than all imagination in God than pure thought, and the closest thing to this happiness in man's behavior is perhaps the activity most closely related to thought." and Epicurus (Epicurus 374-270B. C.) said, "Philosophy has a cure for mental illness; In this sense, philosophy is seen as a cure for mental illness." Wait; In the Middle Ages, philosophical applications were mainly used as speculation and applications in religion and life, especially in the development of life ethics. For example, Augustinus Hippomenes's: "Faith is to believe what we have never seen, and the reward of this faith is to see what we believe, who knows the truth, that is, the light, who knows the light, that is, the eternal, which only love knows." St. Thomas Thomas Aquinas, (c. 1225-1274): "God alone satisfies man"), after the Renaissance, in the case of I. Kant. Kant, 1724-1804), philosophy became purely speculative and the applied nature of Greece and the Middle Ages, and because after the middle of the eighteenth century, after the gradual separation of psychology and philosophy, philosophy seemed to have become more and more distant from the idea of application, and it was not until the eighteenth century that the application of philosophy was restored.

(2) Contemporary practice
In modern times, philosophical counselors apply philosophical theories and reasoning tools to guide clients through existential problems, ethical dilemmas, and personal crises. Unlike therapy, the goal of philosophical counseling is not to "cure", but to promote understanding and self-awareness, and to establish a value system.

3. Understanding Artificial Intelligence
(1). Definition of AI
Artificial intelligence refers to machines designed to simulate human intelligent processes, such as learning, reasoning, problem-solving, perception, and language understanding. From Narrow AI, which specializes in specific tasks, to exploring Agi, the capabilities of AI are expanding.
Artificial intelligence is the science and engineering of enabling computers or machines to simulate the intelligent behavior of human beings, and its core is to "make machines do intelligent tasks that originally need to be completed by humans".

(2) AI These tasks typically include:
a. Perception: For example, computer vision and speech recognition
b. Comprehension: including language comprehension and situational analysis

c. Reasoning: Analyze logic and predict results
d. Learning: Automatically improve performance (e.g., machine learning) from data
e. Planning: Develop an action strategy
f. Action: Be a machine or interact with people

(3) the development of AI
Pioneer, Artificial Intelligence (AI) literally derived from the epistemology can be traced back to the philosophy of a several hundred years ago:
a. Leibniz (Gottfried Wilhelm (von) Leibniz 1646-1716) Leibniz has a notable argument related to AI, that is, the idea that a large number of human reasoning can be reduced to some class of operations, and that this operation can resolve differences in perception: "The only way to refine our reasoning is to make it as real as mathematics, so that we can find our mistakes at a glance, and when people are arguing, We can simply say, let's calculate calculemus without any further fuss and see who is right. ”The only way to rectify our reasonings is to make them as tangible as those of the Mathematicians, so that we can find our error at a glance, and when there are disputes among persons, we can simply say: Let us calculate, without further ado, to see who is right.[1]
Buniz's calculus ratiocinator, very reminiscent of symbolic logic, can be seen as a way to make this kind of calculation feasible. Leibniz's memo[2] can be seen as an exploration of symbolic logic.

(a) George Boole (1815-1864), Boole published The Mathematical Analysis of Logic in 1847 and developed Boolean Algebra, in mathematics and mathematical logic, Boolean Algebra is a branch of algebraic mathematics. It differs from elementary algebra in two ways. First of all, the values of variables are true and false, usually represented by 1 and 0, whereas in elementary algebra, the value of a variable is a number. Second, Boolean Algebra uses logical operators such as 与 (and), denoted as ∧, or (or), denoted as ∨, and negated (not), denoted as ¬. On the other hand, elementary algebra uses arithmetic operators such as addition, multiplication, subtraction, and division. Thus, Bollinger algebra is a form of describing logical operations, just as elementary algebra describes numerical operations.

(b) The 1956 Dartmouth Conference: Recognized as the official birth of AI. John McCarthy (1927-2011) and others defined AI as: "Allowing machines to perform tasks that would normally require human intelligence." (Let machines perform work that would normally require human intelligence.) Seven topics were set at the conference, namely Autonomous Computers, How to Program Computers to Use Language,

[1] Kulstad, Mark; Carlin, Laurence (29 June 2020). "Leibniz's Philosophy of Mind". In Zalta, Edward N. (ed.). Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2020 ed.).
[2] Many of his memoranda are translated in Parkinson 1966.

Neural Networks, Computational Scale Theory, Self-Improvement, Abstraction, Randomness, and Creativity.[3]

(c). Alan Turing: proposed the famous "Turing Test" (Turing Test) to test whether a machine is intelligent. Turing's 1950 thought experiment, also known as Turing's "imitation game", involves an interrogator writing down his or her own question, and then transmitting the question to a person in another room and a machine, and the interrogator determines which one is a real person and which is a machine based on their answers. The test is intended to find out whether a machine can imitate the same or indistinguishable intelligence as a human. He argues that a machine is "intelligent" as long as it can make it impossible for a person to distinguish whether the person being talking to a person or a machine.[4]

(d) Modern view: Emphasizing "autonomy" and "adaptability": AI is a system that can learn and adapt to changes in the environment.

(e). AI in the humanities: While AI has traditionally been used for logical tasks, it is gradually making its way into the humanities: language generation, sentiment analysis, and even conversations that simulate empathy, thanks to advances in natural language processing (NLP)[5] and deep learning.

4. Can AI be a philosophical counselor?

(1) To some extent, AI can provide background material for philosophical consultation, such as:

(a) Automation of philosophical conversations

AI has a natural advantage in processing large amounts of text, making it a possibility to facilitate philosophical conversations. Language models like Chat GPT and Deep Seek can cite philosophical material, propose thought experiments, and challenge users' beliefs to simulate Socratic questioning.

(b) Emotional intelligence and reflective response

[3] AI Insights: Exploring the significance of the Dartmouth workshop. India AI. 2022-04-28 [2022-11-06].
[4] TURING, A. M. I.—COMPUTING MACHINERY AND INTELLIGENCE. Mind. 1950-10-01, LIX (236) [2025-01-22]
[5] Natural Language Processing (NLP) is a sub-discipline in the field of artificial intelligence and linguistics. This area explores how to process and use natural language; Natural language processing includes many aspects and steps, and basically includes cognition, understanding, and generation. Natural language cognition and comprehension allows the computer to turn the input language into interesting symbols and relationships, and then process them according to the purpose. Natural language generation systems convert computer data into natural language. Natural language processing should develop models that represent language capabilities and language applications, establish a computational framework to realize and improve language models, and design various practical systems based on language models and discuss the evaluation techniques of these systems

AI can be trained to recognize emotional cues in language to respond thoughtfully and mimicking situations in philosophical counseling. However, understanding subtleties such as irony, deep existential despair, or personal trauma remains a major challenge for AI.

(2) The function of AI in philosophical counseling

(a) Proximity

The AI platform can open up philosophical consultation to the world, regardless of geography, language and cost. It democratizes philosophical discourse and allows anyone with the Internet to think deeply about life's big questions.

(b). Non-judgmental interaction

Some people may prefer to talk to an AI consultant because they don't have to worry about being judged by humans. This anonymity encourages them to speak openly about sensitive or socially stigmatized topics.

(c). It does not necessarily replace a consultant

AI doesn't have to replace counselors, but it can enhance their productivity by providing philosophical perspectives, generating conversations, and helping them manage their heavy workload.

5. Ethical considerations for AI and philosophical consultation

(1) Authenticity and trust

Philosophical counseling is deeply rooted in the experience of human life. Can the discussants truly trust AI to provide meaningful reflection? AI can simulate empathy, but its insights can appear hollow or mechanical due to a lack of true awareness or life experience.

(2) Data Privacy

Philosophical counseling often deals with extremely private topics. It is essential to ensure the confidentiality and ethical handling of this sensitive data.

(3) The risk of being manipulated

Poorly designed AI systems, or systems driven by commercial interests, can inadvertently lead users toward an ideology or solution, going against the spirit of open-ended philosophical inquiry.

6. Case Study: AI System in Philosophical Roles

(1) AI couple

Some AI companions, such as Replika [6] (Replika is a generative AI chatbot mobile app released in November 2017. Replika trains the chatbot by asking users to answer a series of questions to build a specific neural network, already having a reflective conversation with the user. Although they are not specialized philosophical tools, they encourage self-reflection and can subtly incorporate philosophical questions in the process of communication.)

(2) Chatbots in mental health
AI chatbots, such as Woebot[7] , are already being designed for cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), but could also be expanded to philosophical counseling in the future to help users critically examine their beliefs and choices.

(3)Practical AI philosophical scholar
Some experimental projects are dedicated to training AI models with philosophical texts, creating "philosopher bots" capable of quoting classics, participating in debates, and even coming up with original philosophical ideas.

7. Challenges and limitations

(1) Depth of understanding
AI lacks subjective experience. Philosophical counseling often involves shared human experiences – love, loss, joy, fear – that AI can't really understand, and it can only simulate.

(2) The risk of not going deep enough
AI may diminish the richness of real human conversations by reducing complex philosophical conversations to superficial question-and-answer processes.

(3) Dependence and alienation
Over-reliance on AI for philosophical guidance can lead to social isolation or the erosion of a community's tradition of philosophical conversation.

[6] Replika is a generative AI chatbot app released in November 2017.[1] The chatbot is trained by having the user answer a series of questions to create a specific neural network.[2] The chatbot operates on a freemium pricing strategy, with roughly 25% of its user base paying an annual subscription fee.Many users have had romantic relationships with Replika chatbots, often including erotic talk. Pardes, Arielle (January 31, 2018). "The Emotional Chatbots Are Here to Probe Our Feelings". Wired.

[7] In 2017, a research team from Stanford University launched Woebot, a healing chatbot, which is based on the "cognitive behavioral therapy technique" and directly challenges psychological counseling, but it is not designed to provide medical services, but is similar to the role of a counselor. The user uses the keyboard to input a conversation, and Woebot responds with more positive words, images, or videos to relieve the other person's melancholy and uneasy emotions. https://robotics.nycu.edu.tw/tw/news/show.php?num=56&page=2&kind=18

8. Philosophical Discussion of AI itself

(1) AI as a philosophical object

AI itself challenges traditional philosophical categories: what is "thinking"? Can machines be "smart"? Through AI-assisted philosophical consultation, users can reflect on these questions and turn the tool itself into an object of discussion.

(2) Existential risk and AI

Philosophical counseling can also help individuals and society confront anxieties about the rise of AI – fear of automation, fear of being replaced, and ethical dilemmas in AI governance.

9. Future Prospects: Wisdom of Collaboration

(1) Human-machine hybrid mode

The most promising future is the synergy between human philosophers and AI . AI can help collate vast amounts of philosophical literature, while human counselors provide situational understanding, empathy, and moral wisdom.

(2) Personalized philosophical assistant

Imagine a future of AI tools that can be personalized to the user's philosophical leanings, guiding them on their own journey of existential exploration.

(3) AI as a catalyst for a philosophical renaissance

AI has the potential to democratize philosophy and spark a renewed passion for philosophical thinking in an era where instant gratification often replaces deep reflection.

10. Conclusion: Towards a symbiotic relationship between ethics and reflection

The question of integrating AI into philosophical counseling is not "if", but "how" better to achieve ethical and meaningful integration. AI has great potential to make philosophical discussions more accessible and livelier, but it must be premised on humility, caution, and respect for the human condition.

Philosophical counseling teaches us that there are not always clear answers to many of life's big questions – they are ongoing conversations between us and ourselves and others. When AI is consciously integrated, it can be a powerful partner in this conversation, not to replace human intelligence, but to amplify it.

Standing at the intersection of technology and eternal human inquiry, the challenge we face is not only technical, but also deeply philosophical: how can we ensure that our tools help us become not only smarter, but wiser?

In the process of writing this article, AI was by considered.

Lou Marinoff (City College of New York)
"Limitations of AI, and Re-Humanization via Philosophical Practice"

Limitations and Liabilities of AI,
and Re-Humanization via Philosophical Practice

For EASPP 2025, Seoul, ROK
The East Asian Society of Philosophical Practice
July 10-11, 2025

Lou Marinoff
Professor, CCNY
President, APPA

Limitations and Liabilities of AI:

In addition to its potential and actual dehumanizing effects

- AI cannot solve tragedies of the commons
- AI cannot solve axiological problems:
  e.g. questions about goodness, rightness, justice, value, meaning
- AI Does not possess human understanding or consciousness
- AI imposes "cognitive debt" on users

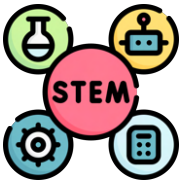
Cautionary Tale #6. *Homo idololatricus* meets *AI:* worship *of* a cybernetic idol



There seems to be an increasingly prevalent belief that AI will solve humanity's problems. But AI cannot and will not do so.

For example, Tragedies of the Commons have no technological solutions (Garret Hardin, 1968). While it is individually rational to exploit any resource held in common, it is collectively Irrational to do so, for over-exploitation leads to degradation and collapse.

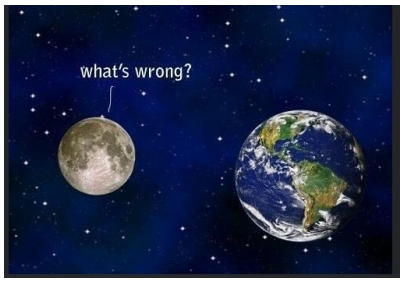
E.g. overfishing, deforestation, space junk, Pacific garbage patches, email spam.

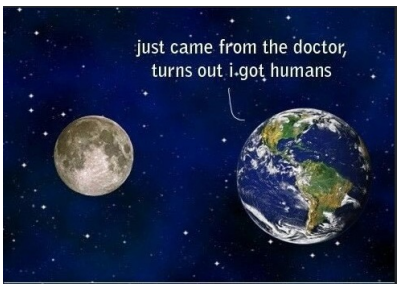


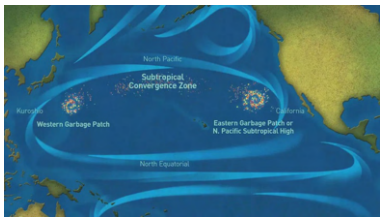
$\not\equiv$



STEM and AI do not entail solutions to moral problems either, nor to crises of meaning



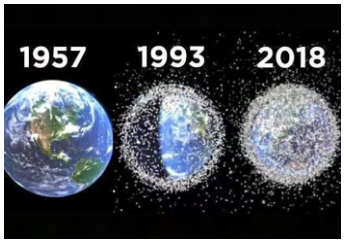






"In truth, man is a polluted river. One must be a sea to receive a polluted river without becoming defiled." Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*









SPAM: "Spiced Ham", Hormel Foods, 1937. "Specially Processed American Meat"

Garbage patches, oil spills, space junk, and digital SPAM are all
Tragedies of the Commons: N-Person PDs where too many defect.
If most defect: a Hobbesian state of nature.

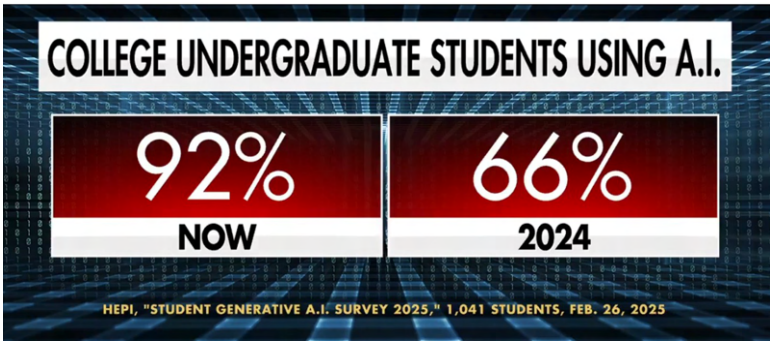
To get at the matter of the Cloud we must unravel the coils of coaxial cables, fiber optic tubes, cellular towers, air conditioners, power distribution units, transformers, water pipes, computer servers, and more. We must attend to its material flows of electricity, water, air, heat, metals, minerals, and rare earth elements that undergird our digital lives. In this way, the Cloud is not only material, but is also an ecological force. As it continues to expand, its environmental impact increases, even as the engineers, technicians, and executives behind its infrastructures strive to balance profitability with sustainability. Nowhere is this dilemma more visible than in the walls of the infrastructures where the content of the Cloud lives: the factory-libraries where data is stored and computational power is pooled to keep our cloud applications afloat.





https://getpocket.com/explore/item/the-staggering-ecological-impacts-of-computation-and-the-cloud?utm_source=firefox-newtab-en-us

Cautionary Tale #6. *Homo furax* meets *LLMs*: plagiarism 2.0



June 2025: Empirical Findings of "Cognitive Debt" Among Students Using LLMs

Your Brain on ChatGPT: Accumulation of Cognitive Debt when Using an AI Assistant for Essay Writing Task△

Nataliya Kosmyna [1]
MIT Media Lab
Cambridge, MA

Eugene Hauptmann
MIT
Cambridge, MA

Ye Tong Yuan
Wellesley College
Wellesley, MA

Jessica Situ
MIT
Cambridge, MA

Xian-Hao Liao
Mass. College of Art and Design (MassArt)
Boston, MA

Ashly Vivian Beresnitzky
MIT
Cambridge, MA

Iris Braunstein
MIT
Cambridge, MA

Pattie Maes
MIT Media Lab
Cambridge, MA

https://www.brainonllm.com/

Brain connectivity systematically scaled down with the amount of external support: the Brain-only group exhibited the strongest, widest-ranging networks, Search Engine group showed intermediate engagement, and LLM assistance elicited the weakest overall coupling.

The reported ownership of LLM group's essays in the interviews was low. The Search Engine group had strong ownership, but lesser than the Brain-only group. The LLM group also fell behind in their ability to quote from the essays they wrote just minutes prior.

. . . as we demonstrated over the course of 4 sessions, which took place over 4 months, the LLM group's participants performed worse than their counterparts in the Brain-only group at all levels: neural, linguistic, scoring.



Do self-driving cars make people better drivers, or worse ones?





Do audio books make people better readers, or worse ones?





Do LLMs make people better writers and learners, or worse ones?



LM Questions Chat GPT

LM: Can you pass a Turing test?

That's an interesting question! While I can engage in conversation and provide information, the Turing test is designed to evaluate whether a machine's responses are indistinguishable from a human's. My goal is to assist you as best as I can, but whether I can pass the test may vary depending on the context and the questions asked.

LM: With respect to John Searle's allegory of the "Chinese Room", do you think that a simulation of human intelligence is able to understand semantics?

John Searle's "Chinese Room" argument raises important questions about the nature of understanding and consciousness. In the allegory, a person inside a room manipulates Chinese symbols without understanding their meaning, suggesting that mere symbol manipulation does not equate to true understanding or semantics.

In the context of AI, while I can process and generate language based on patterns and data, I do not possess true understanding or consciousness. My responses are based on algorithms and training data rather than comprehension of meaning in a human sense. So, while I can simulate conversation and provide relevant information, I don't "understand" semantics in the way a human does.

AI : I do not possess true understanding or consciousness.

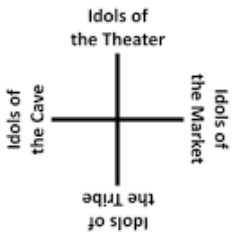
LM: But you must have some idea of what something *is* in order to know that you do not possess it. Even among those who claim to possess "true understanding", no-one can give a wholly satisfactory account of what it is, nor reliably distinguish between understanding and misunderstanding. Moreover, although all humans are conscious, consciousness itself is vulnerable to dissatisfactions and impediments that fly in the face of "true understanding". It can be averred that no human possesses "true understanding" or "pure consciousness", but may only approach them gradually, and with constancy of mind.

AI: My responses are based on algorithms and training data, rather than comprehension of meaning in a human sense.

LM: I see, so you were programmed and trained to respond in this way. But we can observe that human responses are likewise based on "algorithms and training data". In our case, the algorithms are complex biological instruction sets overlaid with cultural operating systems, some of whose large scale 'training data' (i.e. life experiences and conditioning) have lately dispossessed humanity of meaning itself.
Said another way, large swaths of humanity, invariably at the leading edges of globalized technology, are experiencing a collective and deep-seated meaning crisis. Many appear so de-humanized as to have lost "comprehension of meaning in a human sense." When people wander through life with diminished understanding, disturbed consciousness, and dearth of meaning, it signals that they have become de-humanized: robbed by *Homo furax* and *Homo idololatricus* of becoming fully human. Our philosophical mission, as always, is re-humanization.



Bacon's "Idols of the Mind"
Novum Organum, 1620



1. Idols of the Tribe (Idola Tribus): These are rooted in human nature itself and stem from inherent biases in perception. They reflect a tendency to overgeneralize and misinterpret the world, believing that human understanding is a true mirror of reality, when in fact it is a distorted one.

2. Idols of the Cave (Idola Specus): These arise from individual biases, personal experiences, and passions. Each individual has their own "cave" or "den" where they interpret the world through their unique perspectives and prejudices.

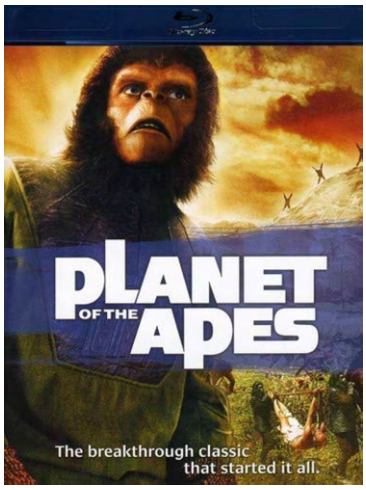
3. Idols of the Marketplace (Idola Fori): These stem from the misuse and ambiguity of language. The words we use to communicate can distort our understanding of things, leading to misunderstandings and confusion.

4. Idols of the Theatre (Idola Theatri): These are prejudices rooted in traditional philosophical systems, similar to plays on a stage that are not grounded in empirical evidence. They involve accepting established doctrines and systems of thought without critical examination.

Philosophical practices provide remedies against all these forms of idolatry.



"I teach you the overman. Man is something that shall be overcome. What have you done to overcome him?... All beings so far have created something beyond themselves; and do you want to be the ebb of this great flood, and even go back to the beasts rather than overcome man? What is ape to man? A laughing stock or painful embarrassment. And man shall be that to overman: a laughingstock or painful embarrassment. You have made your way from worm to man, and much in you is still worm. Once you were apes, and even now, too, man is more ape than any ape... The overman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: the overman shall be the meaning of the earth... Man is a rope, tied between beast and overman—a rope over an abyss ... what is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end." Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*

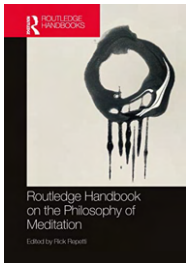




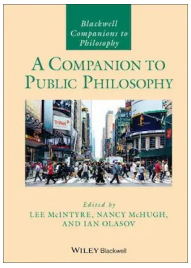
Humor can also be an effective approach to re-humanization.

Thus AI poses a new challenge to Humanities Therapy: Re-humanization of humanity in technosocieties.

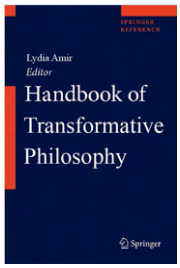
We have at our disposal many pertinent theories and robust methods. At the same time, we face unprecedented opportunities to apply them.



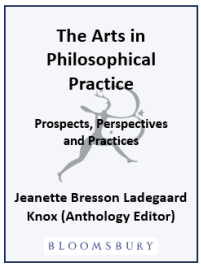
2022



2022



in the press 2025



in the press 2025

Thank you very much!

매우 감사합니다!

非常感谢!

Tianqun Pan (Nanjing University)

“Philosophy is Going to the Plaza - A Brief Report of Nanjing Tea Salon of Philosophy”

1. The Nanjing Tea Salon of Philosophy: Going to the Public under Chinese Context

In the spirit of "Philosophical Café"—where philosophy reaches out to the public—establishing a philosophical practice model rooted in Chinese culture becomes a natural pursuit. Supported by local entrepreneurs in Nanjing, the ‘Nanjing Tea Salon of Philosophy’ was founded in August 2023, aiming to integrate philosophical wisdom into the daily lives of Chinese people and make philosophy accessible to the public within the local cultural context.

1.1. The Logo: "在·宁" – Locality of Philosophical Practice

The salon's logo, "在·宁" (Zài·Níng), carries dual meanings: (1) Being in Nanjing or Being &Peace", and (2) A philosophical fusion of "Dasein" (Heidegger's concept of "being-there") and "Peace". This design, while deeply philosophical, subtly connects existential inquiry with the tranquility of Nanjing's cultural ethos.

南京哲學茶社
Nanjing Tea Salon of Philosophy

1.2. Rules and Core Principles

The salon organizes philosophical dialogue sessions irregularly in open venues across Nanjing, advocating “open, inclusive, and speculative”. Key tenets include:

(1) Democratization and Decentralization of Expression: Every participant’s view should be equally valued, free from hierarchical constraints; and each views could be questioned.
(2) Openness or Inconclusiveness of Answers: The focus lies not on arriving at definitive answers, but on the process of collective inquiry.

(3) Life-Experience-Based Sharing: Participants are encouraged to share insights rooted in personal experience rather than theoretical citations, fostering authentic connections between philosophy and everyday life.

1.3. The Pursuit: A "Philosophical Encounter" in Tea-Salon Atmosphere

The salon seeks to create a wonderful "philosophical encounter" for all involved. Through dialogues and interactions in the Salon, each participant is invited to gain "wisdom for life" by collective thinking. Additionally, mental problems of participants, if any, can be solved in the group dialogues indirectly.

2. Themes being practiced: Close to life while philosophical

Themes selected for the Salon's practice sessions should be practiced to philosophical depth while remaining inherently rooted in everyday experience, enabling profound exploration through interactive engagement.

2.1 Relationship between Me and Other：“I-Thou” and “I-It”.

Given that most human struggles arise from ambiguous or flawed perceptions of interpersonal dynamics--such as parent-child relationships-- the inaugural Philosophy Practice centered on the "I-Thou", drawing from Martin Buber's existential philosophy. The Salon opted to analyze Buber's theory, in which he posits that human existence is fundamentally defined by the relationship between the "I" and the "Other" in the world. Buber categorizes these relationships into two archetypes: "I-It" and "I-Thou".

The "I-It" dynamic is one of instrumental utility, where the "I" assumes the role of the world's epicenter. Driven by survival and developmental needs, the "I" perceives all surrounding entities as objects or tools to be exploited. This relationship dominates the empirical world, roughly equivalent to the tangible realm of sensory experience—sights, sounds, and physical phenomena. An "I-It" interaction might manifest when encountering a tree, where one immediately calculates how many pieces of firewood its branches can yield or how many furniture items its trunk can form—reducing the tree entirely to a utilitarian object, devoid of emotional resonance or reciprocal engagement.

By contrast, the "I-Thou" relationship dissolves the subject-object divide, emerging as a pure intersubjective bond. Here, the "I" neither exploits others nor forges connections to satisfy personal needs. Instead, it encounters the "Thou" with unadulterated authenticity—an encounter stripped of purpose, hope, or expectation, where the most genuine versions of self and other meet without precondition. For Martin Buber, this exemplifies the ideal human relationship—one that humanity should strive for as the purest and most essential form of existence.

During the practice, participants employed the "I-Thou" and "I-It" frameworks to decode their personal struggles and joys, gaining a novel theoretical lens through which to interpret the world and navigate life's challenges. This approach offered a

fresh paradigm for understanding interpersonal dynamics and confronting existential questions rooted in daily experience.

2.2. Friendship.

Subsequently, the Salon delved into themes like "Friendship," "Health," "Hope," and "Dignity," engaging in "philosophical practice" or "spiritual exercises" to explore their existential dimensions.

On the topic of "Friendship," participants began by sharing their multifaceted understandings of the bond. They noted the diverse forms friendship can take—from professional partnerships to connections rooted in shared spiritual values. A junior high school student offered a poignant perspective from personal experience: "I only have classmates, not friends," he said, explaining: "The pressure from courses and homework is overwhelming. I go straight to school as soon as I wake up, rush home to do assignments after dismissal, and even break times between classes are consumed by homework. There's simply no time to connect with classmates."

Building on their initial reflections, participants expanded the dialogue to confront existential questions: What constitutes friendship in its essence? On what foundations does it truly rest? Does it arise from the inherent "goodness" of a friend's character, or from the pleasure and benefits that such goodness affords? What differentiates the intrinsic value of virtue from its utilitarian advantages—is it a matter of permanence versus contingency, of virtue versus self-interest, or of irreversibility versus transience? These queries ignited profound contemplation.

During the practice, participants often smiled involuntarily, likely recalling intimate moments with friends. This revealed how the exploration of friendship had rekindled cherished memories and reawakened longings for meaningful connection. The Salon's session not only clarified the conceptual boundaries of friendship but also inspired participants to honor such bonds in daily life—offering them stable "pillars" and "anchors" amid life's relentless flux.



2.3. Health.

“Health" stands as a foundational topic inextricably linked to human existence, profoundly shaping our well-being. Yet its essence often eludes clear definition. Participants emphasized that health cannot be reduced to mere physical wellness; modern society’s frenetic pace and chronic stress have skewed psychological equilibrium, demanding equal attention to mental health. A critical consensus emerged: negative emotions do not inherently signal illness. As one participant articulated, "Negative emotions must be stratified by intensity. Only those exceeding emotional thresholds constitute unhealthiness. Destructive behaviors triggered by such emotions serve as key markers for mental health assessment—behavioral observation remains the litmus test of psychological wellness."

Divergent perspectives enriched the dialogue: one participant defined health as subjective comfort ("Ease signals health; pain denotes illness"), a view echoed by many who emphasized its individualized nature. Age-relativity further complicated the discourse: "Physical health adheres to fixed standards in youth," noted a contributor, "but as bodies accumulate wear over time, these metrics lose universality. Person A’s health paradigm cannot be imposed on Person B—there is no need to validate our wellness to others." A crucial caveat emerged: while physical health may correlate with pain, mental health resists such simplistic measurement. A thought experiment illustrated this: "A person who tortures cats and feels 'comfortable' is not mentally healthy," exposing the fallacy of equating psychological wellness with personal satisfaction.

The discussion itself fostered deep camaraderie, as participants refined their perspectives through dialogue—a quintessential function of philosophical practice. The Salon serves as a crucible for reconciling cognitive dissonance and confronting intellectual pain, a role underscored by a professor citing Sartre's "Existentialism Is a Humanism". Recounting a dilemma where a young man grappled with choosing between caring for his mother and joining the French Resistance during the WWII, they noted: "Sartre offered no advice—he affirmed the young man's freedom to choose, and his responsibility for that choice. The Salon similarly empowers us to articulate our philosophical positions, enabling autonomous decision-making rooted in self-understanding."

2.4. Dignity

"Dignity" remains a perennial topic of profound significance in human discourse. A philosophical dialogue centered on this concept unfolded on December 10, 2023—World Human Rights Day, which aptly themed "Dignity, Freedom, Justice, for All."

Participants shared nuanced perspectives shaped by lived experience. Some contextualized dignity as a tripartite construct interwoven with personality, legal personhood, and moral decency, emphasizing that its preservation often entails sacrifice. A paradox emerged: to secure dignity in the future, one might temporarily yield present dignity; to uphold it long-term, immediate compromises may be necessary. Others framed dignity as the entitlement to agency— the right to be consulted or offered choices before actions affect us, rendering it a synonym for possibility.

A student participant drew a crucial distinction between dignity and "face," asserting that dignity is self-bestowed: it embodies the freedom to choose one's life form and developmental trajectory, fundamentally a right to self-determination. A professor invoked Jean-Paul Sartre's *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, citing the tenet that human dignity arises from free will: since actions stem from voluntary choice, individuals bear responsibility not only for their deeds but for the selves they create. This existentialist view— treating humans as ends, not means—reclaims dignity as inherent in the act of choosing.

Notably, participants observed a poignant truth: dignity's essence often reveals itself in its absence. Whether defined through legal personhood, existential freedom, or moral agency, its value becomes most acute when threatened— a testament to its role as both a right and a fragile human necessity.

After delving into the concept of individual dignity, the participants posited that collective dignity—such as national dignity—also warrants consideration. However, on the topic of collective dignity, some participants raised thoughtful objections: they argued that the specific connotations of collective dignity do not differ from those of individual dignity, as both represent the universal dignity shared by all humanity. The emphasis on group dignity, they contended, arises precisely because the dignity of certain communities has been systematically disrespected. For instance, in some

societies, women face systemic disrespect compared to men, or the lives of specific ethnic groups are undervalued.

Participants also explored the definition of dignity from diverse cultural perspectives. In Chinese culture, dignity often embodies integrity, moral principles, or national righteousness. As articulated in *Mencius - Teng Wengong II*, "Neither wealth nor rank can corrupt him; neither poverty nor humble circumstances can make him waver; neither power nor force can subdue him—this is what we call a true man." This encapsulates the conception of dignity in ancient Chinese philosophical thought. A participant cited the Confucius' sentence "The commander of an army can be captured, but the will of even an ordinary person cannot be taken away," illustrating thinking of dignity in Chinese cultural tradition.

In addition, participants delved into the question of dignity's dependency—whether dignity must be inherently tied to other constructs. Some argued that dignity is inextricably linked to rights, positing that the loss of dignity equates to the forfeiture of rights. However, one participant countered this view, asserting that dignity is an inherent constant, existing independently even when its realization is constrained. In their perspective, dignity remains unmoored from external dependencies, a perpetual presence regardless of circumstance. Other participants, however, endorsed the idea of dependency.

A notable discussion centered on the interdependence of dignity and morality. One participant contended: "Dignity is embodied in moral beings. Those devoid of morality descend to animalistic existence because morality elevates reason above mere will. Morality, rooted in reason, distinguishes moral individuals by subordinating animalistic survival instincts to rational principles." Meanwhile, some participants posited a dependency between dignity and life itself, arguing that dignity is exclusive to the living. By this logic, "posthumous honor" cannot be categorized as dignity, as the discussion of dignity loses meaning beyond the bounds of life.

Drawing a connection to the salon's opening topic on human connection, participants further proposed the intersubjective nature of dignity. As illustrated by the example: "If others disrespect my mother, I feel indignation—this exemplifies dignity's intersubjectivity." This concept is also reflected in the reciprocal dynamic of respect: observing how others honor dignity (whether their own or others') instructs us in how to accord them dignity in kind.

One participant further broached the topic of dignity for non-human beings, stating that while unsure whether animals possess inherent dignity, they would extend dignity to them as a matter of principle. This stance prompted dissent from others, who argued that non-human beings cannot possess dignity precisely because they are regarded as tools. As one participant illustrated: "We use tools like smartphones and computers to accomplish tasks—they serve functional roles. If inanimate objects had dignity, we could not use them, rendering technological innovation purposeless."

Following this lively debate, participants came to appreciate the value of philosophical inquiry in the salon: it is precisely through acknowledging dignity's existence and engaging in ongoing discussions about its connotations and boundaries that we

deepen our understanding of its importance and refine our capacity to respect the dignity of others. This process of collective reflection, they noted, underscores how dialogue itself reinforces the very principles of dignity it seeks to explore.



3. Philosophical Practices by Youth: Hope, Pressure, Love and Ideal life

Recognizing challenges faced by young people, the Salon organized some activities of "Special Philosophical Practice" for students.

3.1. Hope

The inaugural session focused on "Hope," a theme that elicited candid reflections absent of adult influence. Participants shared tangible aspirations—hopes for adequate sleep, time to finish unread books, and smooth academic progress—revealing the intersection of mundane needs and existential longings.

Hope vs. Desire: A Dialectical Exploration. Some participants proposed reframing these hopes as "desires"—e.g., "I desire sleep" or "I desire to read"—prompting a debate on their conceptual divide. One camp argued that hope resides in the spiritual realm (e.g., hope for world peace, an end to hunger), while desire is rooted in physical impulsivity (e.g., hunger, fatigue). Desires, being immediate and urgent, were seen as more likely to enslave the subject: "When I feel hungry, rationality struggles to override the compulsion to eat." Countering this, others contended that the boundary is porous: non-physical desires (e.g., for love, knowledge, power) are inherently spiritual, blurring the distinction between the two concepts.

The Shadow of Hope: Paradoxes and Perils. The discussion deepened into hope's dark side—how it can mutate into a tool of control when desires are masked as "hopes." Parents imposing unfulfilled dreams via phrases like "I hope you..." exemplified this phenomenon. Participants also explored intra-hope conflicts: what one person deems noble (e.g., career ambition) may seem oppressive to another. A poignant testimony illustrated this: a participant described a mental health crisis triggered by "inflated positive hopes" that left her empty despite relentless striving. The group concluded that unfiltered hopes—too numerous, too grandiose, too immediate—create a paradox: "When hope becomes a burden, we are engulfed by the very 'light' we pursue."

A key insight emerged: healthy hope requires emotional distance—between others' expectations and one's own, and between weighty aspirations and fleeting wishes. Carrying societies and others' hopes, participants warned, risks turning hope into the "straw that breaks the camel's back," rendering life unsustainable.

3.2. Peer Pressure in the Digital Age

Following "Hope," the youth spontaneously chose "peer pressure" for their next dialogue, led by a student host. Participants analyzed how the internet has expanded pressure sources: social media exposes them not only to local peers but also to celebrities' children, creating a perceived "ceiling" of achievement unattainable in pre-digital eras.

The Involution Dilemma: Students described being trapped in GPA and competition cycles, where "involution" erodes mental well-being. A participant noted that tangible peers—those in daily life—exert more acute pressure than internet figures, citing a popular term "other families' children" which parents in Chinese context often speak.

The Dual Nature of Digital Pressure: While social media amplifies anxiety (e.g., curated achievements), it also provides informational benefits, countering "cognitive deprivation" that arises from isolation. Internet peers, being more distant, can serve as non-threatening role models, whereas local peers feel like tangible competitors.

Strategies for Navigating Pressure. Discussions on resilience centered on:

- **Cognitive Boundaries**: "Others' excellence is not our failure; we must separate their paths from our own."
- **Purpose Clarity**: Defining personal goals rather than chasing others' benchmarks reduces pressure, especially when happiness is redefined individually.
- **Resource Dynamics**: Scarcity intensifies competition, while abundance fosters coexistence. A thought-provoking question arose: "If peer pressure stems from shared resources, why do few deviate from societal timelines?" The consensus: utilitarianism drives low-risk, high-reward choices, while high trial-and-error costs deter alternatives.

By session's end, participants gained clarity on peer pressure's mechanisms, empowering them to carve independent paths in college—free from its tyrannical hold.



3.3. Love.

In June 2024, the 11th event probed love's mysteries, examining its narcissistic undercurrents and interpersonal complexities. Participants dissected love's forms—familial, friendly, romantic—and debated whether love targets real individuals or idealized constructs, inviting timeless questions about human connection.

3.4. Ideal Life.

In December 2024, young students centered on *Ideal Life*, where participants shared diverse understandings and aspirations. Discussions spanned from individual self-consistency and happiness to the dialectical tension between ideals and reality, and whether an ideal life can be fully realized.



4. Continuous Extending: The Echo of the Times in Philosophical Practice

Since its establishment in August 2023, the philosophical practice of the Nanjing Tea Salon of Philosophy has continuously expanded its thematic scope. Building on prior sessions, the Salon now explores topics that, while distinct from earlier discussions, remain deeply rooted in everyday life.

4.1. Philosophy of Flower.

In an innovative move, the Salon launched its 12th event, *The Philosophy of Flowers*—likely the first philosophical discourse themed around flowers in China. Participants probed into propositions on beauty, nature, and life through lenses such as the aesthetic value of flowers, the significance of social construction, and the human-flower relationship. Notably, the question "Does picking flowers truly signify loving them?" sparked profound reflections on possession versus appreciation, as well as utility versus aesthetics.



4.2. Right to well-dying?

Entering 2025, the Philosophy Tea Salon continued to engage with cutting-edge issues. Since two public figures chose to end their lives voluntarily, the Salon, on January 16, delved into the question of life philosophy *"Does one have the right to a well-dying?"*—addressing sensitive societal topics like euthanasia, hospice care, and the dignity of life. Participants posited that "well-dying" should be integral to well-being, framing it as a fundamental component of a good life, but there were debates on questions such as whether we should transfer our right to others.



4.3. Artificial Intelligence and the Lifeworld

The April 17th event, *Artificial Intelligence and the Lifeworld*, confronted the philosophical implications of AI's rapid advancement. Against this backdrop, participants—whose ranks diversely included high school students and senior citizens—pondered how AI technology reshapes human existence and the challenges it presents.

These activities demonstrate that the Salon not only upholds the tradition of philosophical inquiry but also keenly responds to epochal issues, offering participants a pluralistic platform to engage with ideas that resonate with both timeless wisdom and contemporary life.



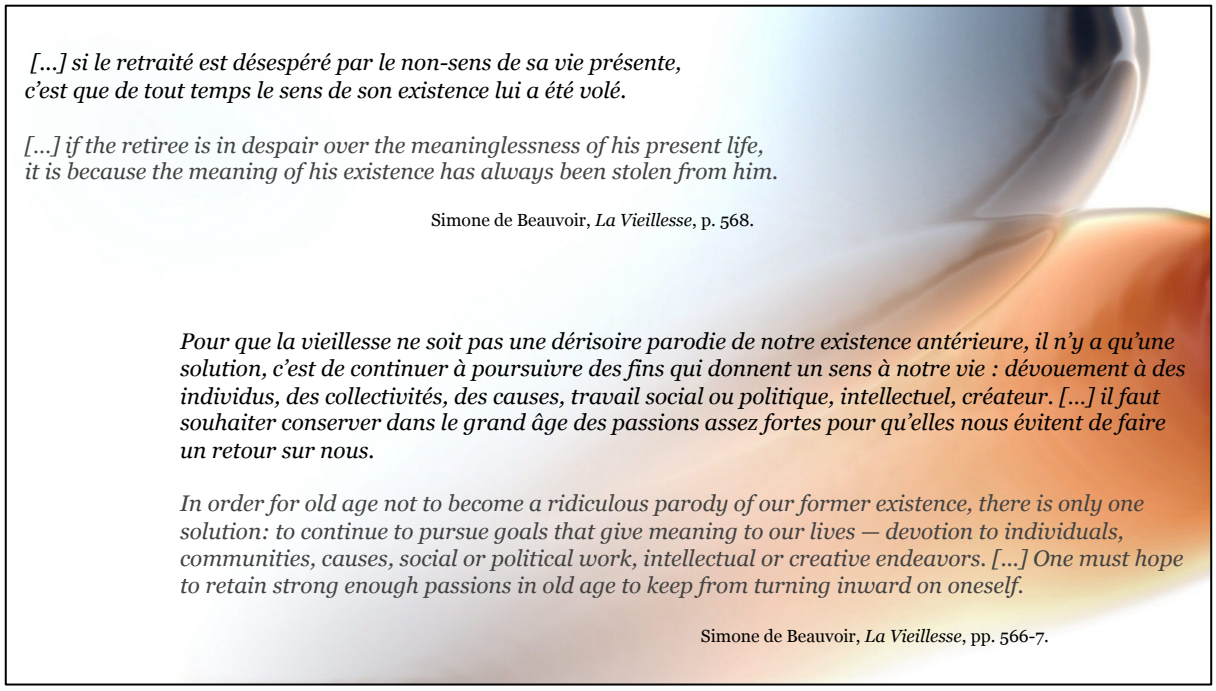
5. Conclusions: The Salon and Nanjing March in Lockstep Toward the Future

The Salon stands as a dynamic platform where cognitive intersections, intellectual synergy, and actionable inspiration converge. Through its activities, participants engage in profound self-reflection, explore their inner landscapes, and sharpen their philosophical acumen—thereby deepening their understanding of existence and self. The Salon has progressively crafted a distinctive paradigm of philosophical practice, defined by its inclusive ethos. By fostering an environment where diverse voices thrive, it empowers each individual to engage in critical thought and forge individual life philosophies.

As a public welfare initiative open to society, the Salon's philosophical endeavors rely on the participation and support of diverse stakeholders. Notably, Mr. Wang Jihua, Founder of China Jasmine Valley, and Ms. Qian Lijun, Deputy General Manager of *Oriental Doll* Magazine at Phoenix Group, have served as ardent participants and patrons, embodying the cross-sectoral collaboration that sustains its mission. Set against the backdrop of Nanjing—a historic cultural hub pulsating with modern vitality—the Salon, bolstered by community support, is emerging as a vital cultural landmark. It now weaves itself into the city's vibrant tapestry, marching in lockstep with Nanjing toward a future where philosophical inquiry enriches civic life.

Seunghwa Jeon (Kyungpook National University)
"Development and Efficacy Verification of Life Story Program for the Elderly and Development of Convergent Base Technology for AI-Life Story Program"





Elderly Population Trends

1. Elderly Population Growth
- In 2024, the elderly population aged 65 and over will exceed **10 million.**
- By 2025, elderly individuals will comprise **20%** of the total population.

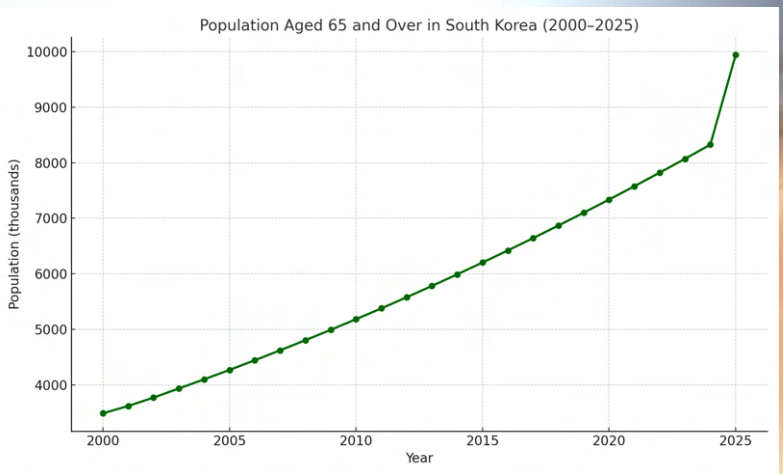
2. Aging Population and Longevity in Korea
- The current life expectancy in Korea is **83.6 years**.
- There is an increasing trend in the population of elderly individuals aged **75 years and older**.

3. Increase in Mild Cognitive Impairement Cases
- The number of patients with **mild cognitive impairment (MCI)** is increasing year by year.

4. Increase in Dementia Among the Elderly in Korea
- As **life expectancy** increases, the number of elderly individuals with **dementia** is also rising.
- According to the co-authored work by Lee Ji-soo, approximately **840,000** individuals aged **65 and older** had dementia in **2020**.

5. Elderly Suicide as a Societal Issue in Korea
- The **suicide of the elderly** has emerged as a serious social problem in Korea.
- Articles from 2019 and 2023 highlight that Korea has the **highest suicide rate among the elderly** in the OECD.

Elderly Population in South Korea (2000–2025)



1. Statistics Korea. (2021). *Population Projections for Korea: 2021–2070*. KOSIS (Korean Statistical Information Service). Retrieved from https://kosis.kr
2. Lee, Yoon-sik. (2024, June 12). "Over 10 Million People Aged 65 or Older Next Year... Entry into a Super-Aged Society." *Doctors News*. Retrieved from https://www.doctorsnews.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=150793

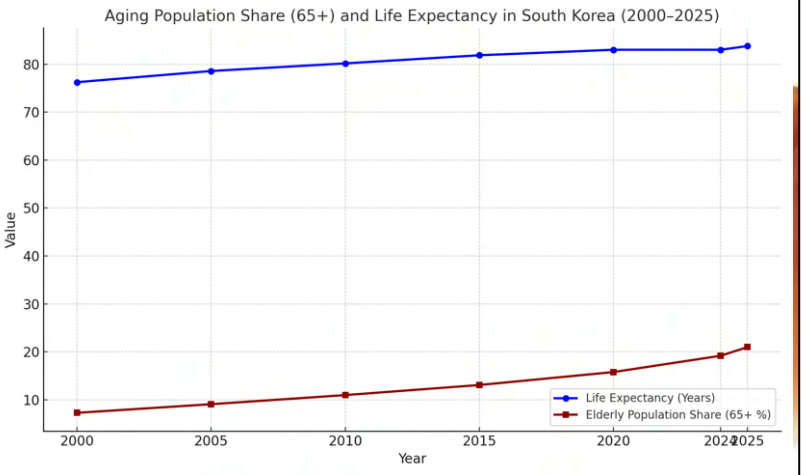
Aging Population and Longevity in Korea

- xychart-beta

Aging Population Share (65+) and Life Expectancy in South Korea (2000-2025)

- x-axis "Year"
- y-axis "Value"

- line "Life Expectancy (Years)"
- 2000 : 76.24
- 2005 : 78.57
- 2010 : 80.16
- 2015 : 81.85
- 2020 : 83.00
- 2025 : 83.77
- line "Elderly Population Share (65+ %)"
- 2000 : 7.3
- 2005 : 9.1
- 2010 : 11.0
- 2015 : 13.1
- 2020 : 15.8
- 2024 : 19.2



Data Sources & References

1. Share of older adults South Korea 2000-2024 – Statista. 2. South Korea Life Expectancy (1950-2025) – Macrotrends.
3. Life Expectancy in Republic of Korea 1950-2025 & Future Projections.

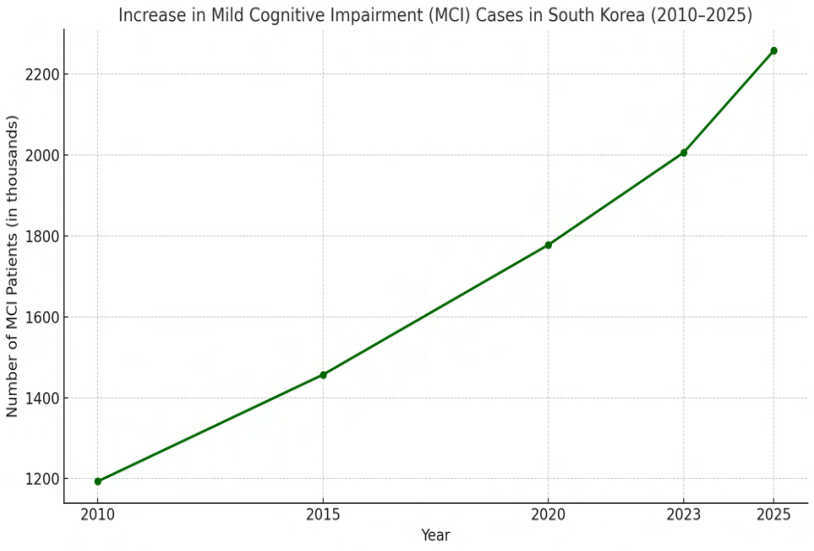
Increase in Mild Cognitive Impairement Cases

1. Graph Description

- **Y-axis**: Number of MCI patients (in thousands)
- **X-axis**: Years
- The curve shows a steady and sharp increase over the years.

2. Data Sources & References

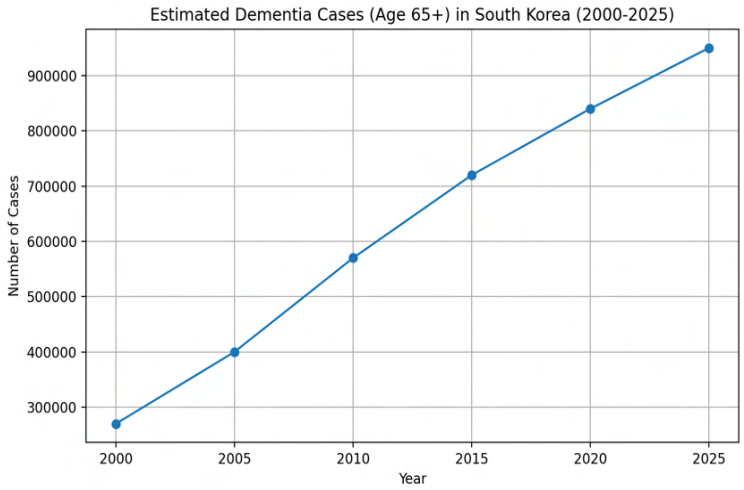
- **National Institute of Dementia, Korea** (2021). "National Institute of Dementia Annual Report." – Provided the 65+ population statistics and dementia-related data.
- **Jang, J. W. et al. (2023).** *Current Status of Mild Cognitive Impairment in Korean Older Adults.* – Reports an average MCI prevalence of **22.8%** among people aged 65 and older.
- **World Alzheimer Report (ADI, 2018).** – Confirms global prevalence estimates of MCI in older adults between **15–30%**, which aligns with Korean data.



Increase in Dementia Among the Elderly in Korea

1. Estimated Number of Dementia Patients Aged 65+ in Korea (2000–2025)

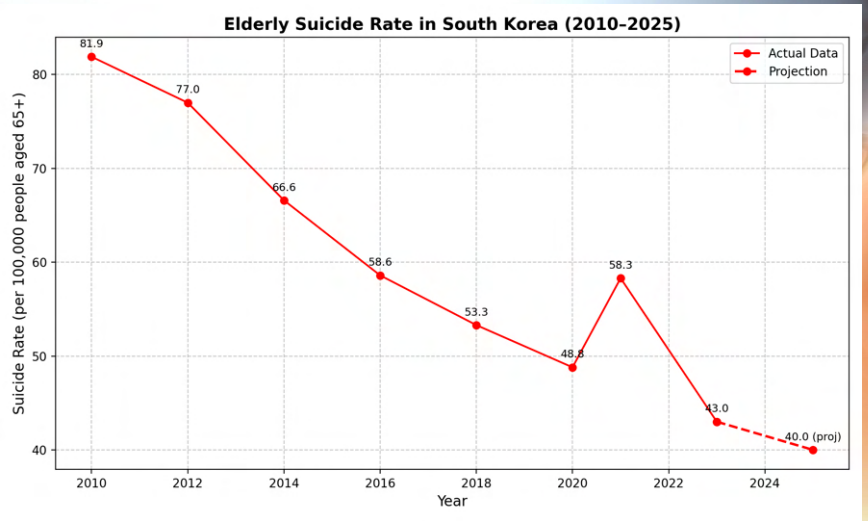
- Year | Estimated Dementia Cases (Age 65+)
- ----------
- 2000 | 270,000
- 2005 | 400,000
- 2010 | 570,000
- 2015 | 720,000
- 2020 | 840,000 ← (Actual data from source)
- 2025 | 950,000 (estimated projection)



2. Reference

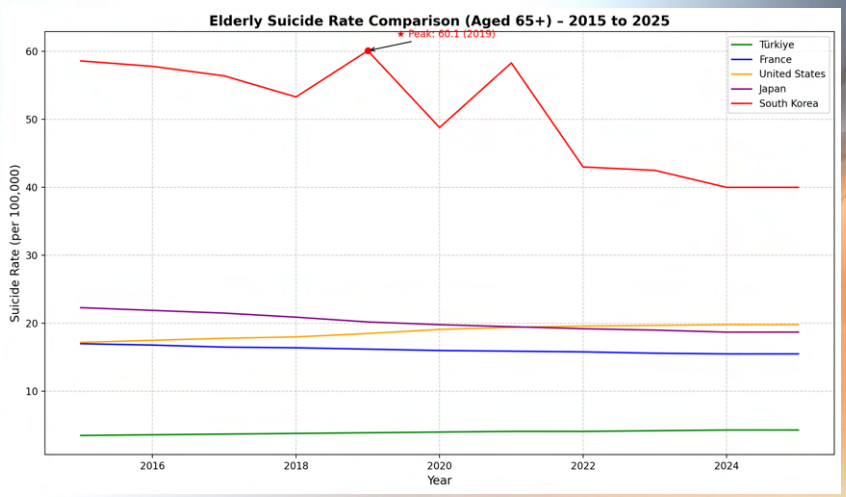
1) Korea Ministry of Health and Welfare
2) OECD Health Data
3) WHO: Dementia Fact Sheets
4) Alzheimer's Disease International – World Alzheimer Report
5) For official projections or detailed reports:
•Korean Statistical Information Service (KOSIS) http://kosis.kr
•WHO Global Dementia Observatory https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/themes/topics/dementia

Elderly Suicide as a Societal Issue in Korea(1)



References:
1) OECD Health Statistics: https://stats.oecd.org 2) KOSIS (Korean Statistical Information Service): https://kosis.kr
3) KBS News (2019): https://news.kbs.co.kr/news/pc/view/view.do?ncd=4292513 4) Chosun Health (2023): https://health.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2023/01/31/2023013101761.html

Elderly Suicide as a Societal Issue in Korea(2)



References:
1. KOSIS (Korean Statistical Information Service) https://kosis.kr 2. OECD Health Statistics – Suicide Rates by Age Group https://stats.oecd.org
3. WHO Suicide Data https://www.who.int/teams/mental-health-and-substance-use/suicide-data 4. Health & News Reports
5. KBS (2019): https://news.kbs.co.kr/news/pc/view/view.do?ncd=4292513
6. Chosun Health (2023): https://health.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2023/01/31/2023013101761.html

South Korean Policies on Elderly Welfare(2022-2025)

Policy Area	Yoon Suk Yeol Government	Lee Jae-myung Government
Core Philosophy	"Welfare for vulnerable" in 100-Year Era	"Basic Society" with state-guaranteed dignity
Employment	■ Record 1.03M gov't-supported jobs (2024) ■ Corporate-centered growth approach ■ Budget: $12B (2024)	■ Diversified job opportunities ■ Focus on social economy model ■ Budget: $15B proposed (2025)
Income Support	▪ Job creation as primary income solution ▪ Limited pension reforms	■ Pension overhaul: Eliminated spousal reduction ■ Expanded to bottom 70% income group
Healthcare	■ Home-based care for mobility-impaired ■ Institutional care upgrades ■ 4IR tech focus	■ Universal coverage expansion ■ 30% reduction in out-of-pocket costs ■ Rural access focus
Long-Term Care	■ Medical-care integration ■ Tech-driven efficiency ■ Hospital-centered	■ Cost reduction mandates ■ Quality standards enforcement ■ Home-care first approach
Community Care	■ "Aging-in-place" support ■ Limited rural coverage ■ 45 integrated care centers	■ Hyper-local service hubs ■ Urban-rural equity focus ■ 100+ pilot communities (2024)

South Korean Policies on Elderly Welfare(2022-2025)

Policy Area	Yoon Suk Yeol Government	Lee Jae-myung Government
Tech & Innovation	■ AI/IoT health monitoring ■ $3B R&D investment ■ Corporate partnerships	▪ Limited explicit focus ▪ Basic digital literacy programs ▪ Traditional service emphasis
Mental Health	▪ Dementia care only ▪ No emotional wellness programs	▪ Community counseling pilots ▪ Dementia focus maintained
Funding Approach	■ Corporate tax incentives ■ Public-private partnerships ■ Fiscal conservatism	■ Wealth tax proposals ■ Redistribution focus ■ Budget reallocation
Implementation Style	■ Top-down scaling ■ Business efficiency model ■ Centralized control	■ Bottom-up pilots ■ Local customization ■ Participatory governance

1) Yoon Administration
1. Ministry of Health and Welfare (2023): Senior Employment Expansion Plan. 2. *Korea Development Institute* (2024): 4th Industrial Revolution in Elderly Care
3. National Assembly Budget Office (2023): Welfare Budget Analysis

2) Lee Administration
1. Blue House Policy Brief (2024): "Basic Society Implementation Roadmap" 2. *Ministry of Economy* (2024): Pension Reform White Paper
3. Korea Health Industry Institute (2024): Medical Cost Reduction Plan

3) Cross-Cutting Analysis
1. OECD (2023): *Aging in Korea: Policy Comparative Assessment* 2. Asian Development Bank (2024): *Social Welfare Systems in Northeast Asia*
3. Korea Herald (2024): "Two Visions for Elderly Care" (Policy Comparison)

Both policies have largely failed to address psychological and emotional aspects such as emotional isolation, loneliness, and a sense of meaning in life, or have only mentioned them superficially. In particular, concrete solutions to real issues faced by elderly people in Korea—such as lonely deaths and the high suicide rate among seniors—are lacking

A healthy psychological and emotional foundation is essential for seniors to overcome aging-related depression, lethargy, and anxiety—restoring self-esteem to reimagine later life and prepare for death. This foundation need not be built dramatically. Much like Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* illustrates how ecstatic memories bridge past and present to transcend temporal absurdity, reviving elders' vibrant past memories (even amid physical decline) may alleviate present suffering.
By affirming their current existence and establishing this foundation for *well-living* and *well-dying*, older adults can resist self-hatred and self-destructive urges.

Elderly Isolation: A Shadow of Senior Welfare – Trends of the Elderly Living Alone in South Korea

1. Key Observations:

1) Steady Growth:

- Solo senior households increased by **85%** from 2010 (1.025M) to 2022 (1.875M).
- Average annual growth: ~**4.5%** (excluding the 2021 outlier).

2) Accelerated Growth (2020-2022):

- Significant jump in 2021 (+136,000 households), likely due to aging demographics and COVID-19 impacts (e.g., delayed family reunification).

3) Proportion of Senior Households:

- Exceeded 20% in 2021 and reached **20.8%** in 2022.
- Projected to reach ~**22%** by 2025.

4) 2025 Projection:

- Based on the 2010-2023 trend (average 3-4% annual growth), solo senior households are expected to surpass **2.06 million** by 2025.

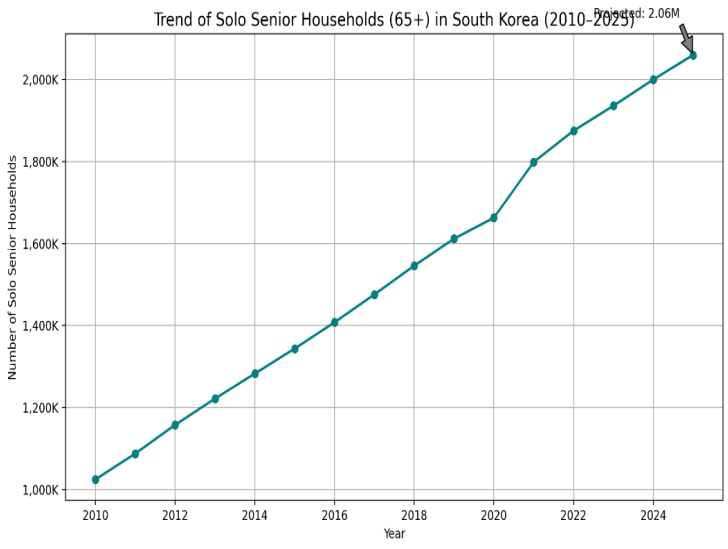
2. Data Sources & Notes:

1) 2010-2022: Official data from Statistics Korea (KOSIS).

2) 2023: Preliminary estimate based on Q1-Q3 2023 data (+3.2% YoY).

3) 2024-2025: Projections assume continued growth at a moderated rate (~3% annually), accounting for demographic shifts.

3. Policy Implication: With 1 in 5 seniors living alone (rising to 1 in 4 by 2030), South Korea urgently needs expanded support systems (e.g., welfare checks, mental health services, affordable housing) to address isolation and vulnerability among elderly populations.



Factors Contributing to Elderly Living Alone

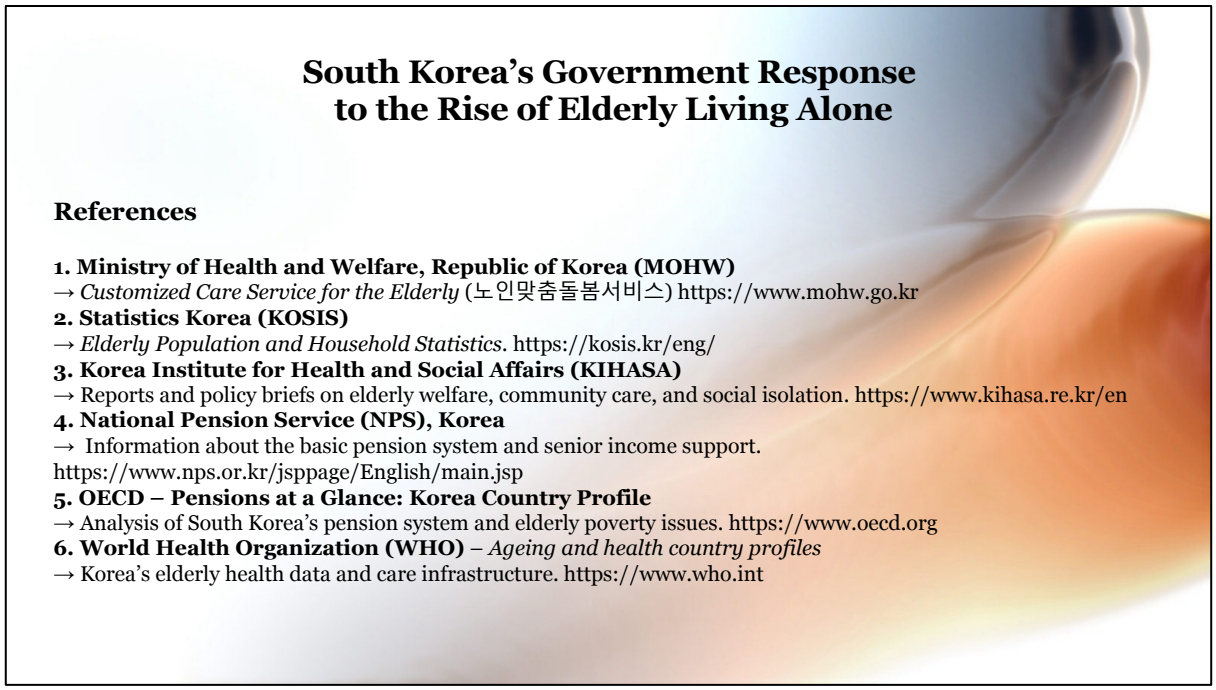


Factors Contributing to Elderly Living Alone

References

1. **Statistics Korea (KOSIS).**
→ *Population and Household Projections for Korea: 2020–2070* (2023). Retrieved from https://kosis.kr/eng/
2. **OECD.**
→ *Pensions at a Glance: Korea Country Profile* (2021). Retrieved from https://www.oecd.org/
3. **Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs (KIHASA).**
→ *Policy Responses to the Aging Society in Korea* (2022). Retrieved from https://www.kihasa.re.kr/en
4. **United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA).**
→ *World Population Ageing 2020 Highlights* (2020). Retrieved from https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/
5. **Ministry of Health and Welfare, Republic of Korea (MOHW).**
→ *Customized Care Services for the Elderly (노인맞춤돌봄서비스)* (2023). Retrieved from https://www.mohw.go.kr
6. **World Health Organization (WHO).**
→ *World Report on Ageing and Health* (2015). Retrieved from https://www.who.int
7. **Lee, Y. & Kim, H.**
→ "Living Alone in Later Life: Policy Challenges in South Korea", *Journal of Aging & Social Policy*, 33(4), (2021). 379–395.


South Korea's Government Response to the Rise of Elderly Living Alone
Public Rental Housing
Affordable housing options for elderly citizens
Emergency Safety Monitoring
Safety systems for quick emergency response
Basic Pension Expansion
Financial assistance for low-income seniors
Community-Based Care
Local networks for community support
Customized Care Services
Personalized care and support for seniors
Mental Health Programs
Initiatives to address mental health needs
RENT


South Korea's Government Response to the Rise of Elderly Living Alone
References
1. Ministry of Health and Welfare, Republic of Korea (MOHW)
→ Customized Care Service for the Elderly (노인맞춤돌봄서비스) https://www.mohw.go.kr
2. Statistics Korea (KOSIS)
→ Elderly Population and Household Statistics. https://kosis.kr/eng/
3. Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs (KIHASA)
→ Reports and policy briefs on elderly welfare, community care, and social isolation. https://www.kihasa.re.kr/en
4. National Pension Service (NPS), Korea
→ Information about the basic pension system and senior income support.
https://www.nps.or.kr/jsppage/English/main.jsp
5. OECD – Pensions at a Glance: Korea Country Profile
→ Analysis of South Korea's pension system and elderly poverty issues. https://www.oecd.org
6. World Health Organization (WHO) – Ageing and health country profiles
→ Korea's elderly health data and care infrastructure. https://www.who.int

Introduction of Artificial Intelligence in Senior Care

The transition to a super-aged society entails more than just an **increase in the number of elderly people**; it leads to **a surge in long-term care demands** and **a structural shortage in the caregiving workforce**. In reality, care workers such as nursing assistants and senior support staff face poor working conditions, high turnover rates due to the demanding nature of the job, and a persistent lack of supply. As a result, **the search for technological alternatives or supplements to human caregivers** has become an inevitable trend.

AI-Based Elderly Care Services in South Korea

- Launch of Integrated Services — Introduction of unified elderly care services in 2020
- Distribution of AI speakers to combat isolation in 2021 — Expansion of AI Speaker Distribution
- Pilot Projects for Smart Care Platforms — Implementation of smart care platforms with various sensors from 2022
- Incorporation of AI into elderly care under the Digital Platform Government strategy from 2023 — Integration with Digital Welfare Initiatives

AI-Based Elderly Care Services in South Korea

References

1. Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW), Korea
→ Customized Care Services for the Elderly (노인맞춤돌봄서비스). ttps://www.mohw.go.kr
2. Statistics Korea (KOSIS)
→ Population projections and household structure data. https://kosis.kr/eng
3. Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs (KIHASA)
→ *Community Care Policy Briefs*, Elderly Living Alone Reports. https://www.kihasa.re.kr/en
4. Seoul Metropolitan Government
→ Smart welfare initiatives for seniors, including AI speaker distribution program.
5. KT & SKT Smart Care Pilot Projects
→ Case studies and press releases from telecom providers collaborating with local governments
→ Example: KT AI Care press center https://corp.kt.com
6. OECD & WHO
→ Broader context on population aging and digital health. https://www.oecd.org, https://www.who.int

Therefore, our research originated from a shared recognition of the need :

- to address accelerating societal aging and the growing societal demand for **well-living and well-dying** ;
- to develop the **Life Story Program (LSP)**—a creative, humanities-based therapeutic program—specifically adapted for the Korean elderly population while focusing on its **emotional and psychological effects**; and to broaden LSP's reach by integrating it with **artificial intelligence**, thereby improving **the quality of life for seniors**.

Research Objectives

Analyze existing LSP models

targeting both general elderly populations and those with neurocognitive disorders from literary, philosophical, and psychological perspectives. This will identify data parameters essential for building the AI-LSP algorithm and inform new LSP model development.

Develop a novel LSP model

structured according to the data parameters required for AI-LSP algorithm construction, as identified in Objective.

Establish a systematic, professional LSP framework by :

1) Designing and implementing pre-/post-LSP experiments to measure emotional changes.
2) Developing standardized protocols for these experiments.
3) Creating a biometric signal analysis algorithm to interpret physiological data.

Scientific Validation through Clinical Trials with Cognitively Normal Participants

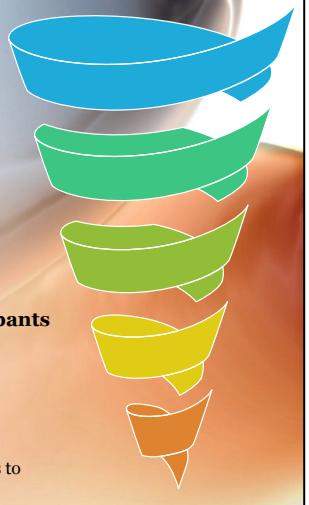
Conduct clinical applications of the new LSP model alongside literary and philosophical counseling to validate its effectiveness, collect data for AI development, and assess its potential for broader implementation.

Simulation Using Commercial AI and Clinical Application

Prior to launching full-scale AI-LSP development, build and implement a simulated version using commercial AI. Apply it to both cognitively normal and neurocognitively impaired elderly populations to verify its effectiveness and feasibility, and collect necessary developmental data.

Blueprint for Full AI-LSP Development and Expansion Planning

Integrate all results to create a comprehensive blueprint for the actual development of AI-LSP. Secure funding for continued research and prepare for the 2028 Global Humanities and Social Sciences Convergence Research Program application.



(AI)-LSP Research Team Structure

This global humanities–social science convergence research team is organized into six specialized sub-teams, each responsible for a distinct component of the AI-integrated Life Story Program (AI-LSP) development.

Biosignal Analysis Team

This group collects and analyzes participants' biosignals before and after the LSP sessions to measure the program's emotional and psychological impact. Researchers in information and computer engineering lead this team.

AI-Assisted Visual storytelling Team

Using commercial AI tools, this team co-creates illustrated representations of selected life story episodes in collaboration with participants. It is staffed by Researchers from the Institute for Digital Humanities and Engineering.

Psychological Analysis & Life Story Production Team

Responsible for analyzing the participants' psychological states and creating personalized life story deliverables (e.g., picture book narratives) based on interview transcripts. This team includes experts in literature and philosophical counseling.

AI-LSP Development Team

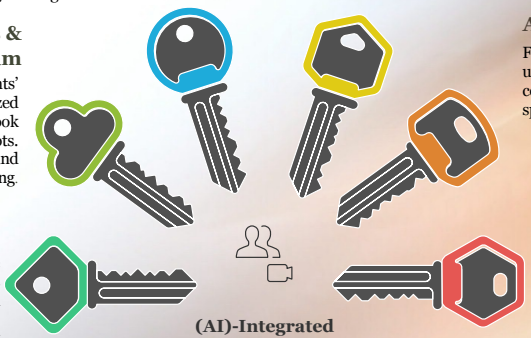
Focused on constructing the AI-LSP model using collected life story data, this team consists of computer science researchers specializing in natural language processing.

Life Story structure & Interview Team

This team designs the structure of the Life Story Program (LSP) and conducts interviews with participants. It is composed of researchers with academic backgrounds in social welfare and certified counseling credentials.

Coordination & administration Team

Serving as the central control tower, this team integrates all research activities, coordinates clinical planning, and manages administrative affairs. It includes the principal investigator and research assistants.



The Emergence and Spread of Autobiographical Writing Programs in Korean Elderly Welfare Centers

Initial Introduction (Late 2000s)

Autobiographical or life story writing programs began to appear informally in Korea **during the late 2000s**. They were often implemented by **senior welfare centers**, lifelong learning institutions, and NGOs as part of **literacy education or reminiscence therapy**. Most programs were small in scale and led by volunteers or professionals in literature and counseling.

In *Autobiography – A Record of the Self and the World* (2016), Im Soon-chul observes that in South Korea during the 2000s, autobiographical writing emerged as both **a method and a means of self-expression**. He emphasizes that, particularly for the elderly, writing an autobiography was not merely about recalling the past but about **actively reinterpreting and reconstructing memories** in order to reaffirm the meaning of one's existence and life trajectory. Through this reflective process, older adults sought to **reclaim their sense of agency**, positioning themselves not as passive subjects of aging but as active narrators of their own lives.

The Emergence and Spread of Autobiographical Writing Programs in Korean Elderly Welfare Centers

By the early 2010s, these programs gained traction as their psychological and social benefits became more widely recognized:
1) **Improved self-esteem** through personal narrative construction 2) **Depression prevention** and **enhanced cognitive stimulation** 3) **Intergenerational communication** through shared storytelling
Local governments (e.g., Seoul, Gwangju) and institutions like the **Korea Labor Force Development Institute for the Aged (KLFD)** and various **senior welfare centers** began supporting these programs more systematically..

Expansion Phase (Early to Mid-2010s)

Im Soon-chul also states that **the autobiography writing project** is designed to preserve the memories, experiences, and wisdom embedded in the everyday lives of local elderly individuals, transforming them into local historical records and communal assets. He explains that writing an autobiography is **a process of self-discovery**, offering older adults **the opportunity to reestablish life goals in later adulthood by reflecting on their past**. Furthermore, it fosters intergenerational empathy and mutual understanding, contributing to improved perceptions across age groups. The process of creating an autobiography can also help **enhance the self-esteem of the elderly participants**.

The Emergence and Spread of Autobiographical Writing Programs in Korean Elderly Welfare Centers

Institutionalization and Popularization (Post-2015)

From 2015 onward, life story writing became a common component of:
1) **Dementia prevention programs** 2) **Personalized elderly care services** (e.g., the Customized Care for the Elderly program) 3) **Public literacy and lifelong learning courses**
The programs were increasingly formalized, with some seniors even **publishing their autobiographies** as printed books or presenting them in exhibitions, adding value to both individual identity and public discourse.

References

1.Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs (KIHASA)
1. Reports on aging and reminiscence therapy programs
2. https://www.kihasa.re.kr/en

2.Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW)
1. "Customized Care Services for the Elderly"
2. https://www.mohw.go.kr

3.Korea Labor Force Development Institute for the Aged (KLFD)
1. Senior education and community activity program reports
2. http://www.kordi.or.kr

4.Lee, H. & Park, S. (2020).
1. *"The Therapeutic Effects of Autobiographical Writing on Elderly Well-Being."*
2. *Korean Journal of Social Welfare Studies*, 51(2), 133–157.

The Utilization of Life Story Programs in Elderly Welfare in South Korea

Early Introduction (Early 2000s)

Life Story Programs (LSPs) were first introduced in South Korea in the early 2000s, primarily in academic and therapeutic contexts. At this stage, LSPs were **limited in scope**, used mainly in experimental projects led by universities or social welfare centers, often integrated into **reminiscence therapy or literary healing** sessions for older adults.

Institutional Integration (Mid–Late 2010s)

By the mid-to-late 2010s, LSPs were increasingly incorporated into:
1) **Customized Care Services for the Elderly**
2) **Dementia prevention initiatives**
3) **Lifelong learning and literacy education programs**

Expansion and Recognition (2010s)

LSPs gained wider attention as studies and practice-based evidence highlighted their effectiveness in:
1) Enhancing **emotional stability** and **self-esteem**
2) Supporting **cognitive function** and **dementia prevention**
3) Promoting **social connection** and **identity reconstruction** in later life
Local governments and senior welfare centers began implementing LSPs more actively, often combining them with **group counseling**, **writing workshops**, and **life review interventions**.

Convergence with Technology and AI (2020s–Present)

In recent years, LSPs have begun to evolve with the integration of digital and AI tools. Emerging innovations include:
1) **Digital life archives and storytelling apps**
2) **AI-generated life story visuals or narratives**
3) **Biosignal-based emotional tracking** during storytelling sessions

Reasons Why the Life Story Program Is Less Widely Adopted Than Autobiographical Writing

Factor	Autobiographical Writing	Life Story Program (LSP)
Accessibility	High — easy to conduct individually or in groups	Low — requires trained professionals and structured sessions
Complexity	Simple writing process	Involves psychological guidance, emotional interaction
Output Visibility	Clear — produces a book, memoir, or document	Often abstract — emotional or cognitive gains
Public Awareness	Familiar and intuitive	Conceptually unfamiliar to general public
Individual Comfort Level	Personal, can be private	Requires interpersonal sharing and openness
Institutional Support	Widely integrated in lifelong learning and welfare	Fragmented support; not yet standardized
Perceived Purpose	Writing and legacy creation	Healing, reflection, identity reconstruction
Program Cost & Resources	Low cost; volunteer-led possible	Higher cost; trained personnel, time-intensive

The development of AI-based Life Story Programs (AI-LSP) can fundamentally address two of the major limitations of traditional LSPs:

- **time consumption** and **the need for significant human resources**. By utilizing deep learning models trained on data from LSP sessions conducted by professional counselors, AI can process large volumes of information in a short period and allow LSPs to be carried out with **minimal human involvement**.
- Moreover, the integration of AI can highlight the **playful, game-like nature** of LSPs, thereby reducing the psychological burden, emotional tension, and resistance some participants may feel toward exposing their life stories. This helps improve **accessibility** to the program. For example, AI-LSPs can be linked to devices already familiar to older adults, such as **TVs left on throughout the day to combat loneliness**, **smartphone applications**, or **tablet-based programs**. These formats allow users to engage in the program in relaxed, informal environments—almost like playing a game—thereby minimizing discomfort.
- In addition, while traditional LSPs often produce only **text-based outcomes**, AI-LSPs are capable of generating **multimodal outputs**, including **sound, images, and video**, along with text. This diversity enhances user satisfaction and further strengthens the **therapeutic and emotional benefits** of the program.

The development of AI-based Life Story Programs (AI-LSP) can fundamentally address two of the major limitations of traditional LSPs:

- **time consumption** and **the need for significant human resources**. By utilizing deep learning models trained on data from LSP sessions conducted by professional counselors, AI can process large volumes of information in a short period and allow LSPs to be carried out with **minimal human involvement**.
- Moreover, the integration of AI can highlight the **playful, game-like nature** of LSPs, thereby reducing the psychological burden, emotional tension, and resistance some participants may feel toward exposing their life stories. This helps improve **accessibility** to the program. For example, AI-LSPs can be linked to devices already familiar to older adults, such as **TVs left on throughout the day to combat loneliness**, **smartphone applications**, or **tablet-based programs**. These formats allow users to engage in the program in relaxed, informal environments—almost like playing a game—thereby minimizing discomfort.
- In addition, while traditional LSPs often produce only **text-based outcomes**, AI-LSPs are capable of generating **multimodal outputs**, including **sound, images, and video**, along with text. This diversity enhances user satisfaction and further strengthens the **therapeutic and emotional benefits** of the program.

Risks and Mitigation Strategies for AI-LSP

3. Technical Accessibility Gaps

1) **Risk** : **Digital exclusion** of populations with low tech literacy (average age 75+).

2) **Mitigation :**
Voice-Only Interfaces: Develop TV remote-like devices operable solely by voice commands.
Offline Support: Deploy AI kiosks at community centers with on-site assistants.

4. Therapeutic Efficacy Concerns

1) **Risk** : "Gamified" approaches may **compromise depth of reflection**, reducing therapeutic impact.

2) **Mitigation :**
- Stratified Clinical Trials:

Group	Traditional LSP	AI-LSP	Hybrid Model
Effectiveness	Emotional depth ↑	Accessibility ↑	Trust + Efficiency ↑

- I-LSP must augment—not replace—human empathy. Hybrid frameworks and ethical tech design are non-negotiable for scaling responsibly

Contributions and Strategic Plans of the AI-LSP Project

1) Academic & Societal Contributions

Academic

- Promotes a new model of applied humanities, integrating literature, philosophy, and AI to expand the field beyond academia.
- Provides big data on aging, death, and emotional change, useful for research in both humanities and STEM fields.
- Enhances LSP effectiveness with literary, philosophical, and psychological frameworks, enabling deeper therapeutic outcomes.
- Demonstrates the value of interdisciplinary AI-humanities collaboration, bridging gaps between disciplines.
- Supports the transition from weak to strong AI by developing emotion-sensitive algorithms for elderly care.

Societal

- AI-LSP helps manage emotional issues (depression, anxiety, isolation) in aging populations, especially in underserved regions.
- Offers scalable solutions for mental health and well-dying, regardless of time, location, or economic barriers.
- Enables real-time tracking of emotional states via biosignals and supports caregivers with actionable insights.
- Can reduce suicide rates among older adults by fostering self-acceptance and legacy creation.
- Has global export potential for AI-integrated emotional wellness systems.

Contributions and Strategic Plans of the AI-LSP Project

2) Human Resource Development

- **LSP Clinical Expert Training**: Hands-on research, academic writing, and clinical certification system development.
- **LSP Counselor Training**: Courses in literary/philosophical counseling, certification pathways, and field placements.
- **Biosignal Analyst Training**: Research participation, internships with device developers, and employment linkage.
- **AI-LSP Developer Training**: Curriculum in deep learning, system design opportunities, and industry partnerships.

3) Educational Integration

- Research outputs will be embedded into undergraduate and graduate courses through team-teaching and practical labs.
- AI-LSP outcomes will be shared via lectures, workshops, and public education, spreading awareness of its methods and benefits.

Contributions and Strategic Plans of the AI-LSP Project

4) Scalability & Future Potential

- AI-LSP meets growing global interest in AI-powered elderly care and emotional wellness.
- Biosignal-based emotional feedback can personalize services (lighting, music, space design) and improve dementia care.
- Supports creative self-expression, promotes mental health, and addresses core needs of dignity and connection in aging.

Thank you for your attention

Keynotes 2

Chien-Chi Lu (Taiwan Philosophical Counseling Association)
"The Development and Challenges of Philosophical Counseling in Taiwan"

Preface

As we enter the era of artificial intelligence, a critical question emerges: how should philosophy, long regarded as the discipline most deeply rooted in human rationality, respond to this technological paradigm shift? Does this development constitute a crisis for the field, or might it offer a transformative opportunity?

This paper examines the current landscape of philosophical counseling as a means to assess whether the practical application of philosophy can serve to revitalize the discipline and address its diminished status in Taiwan. By exploring various dimensions of this issue, the study seeks to identify alternative pathways for the development of philosophy in Taiwan. In particular, it considers how philosophical counseling might enable the discipline to move beyond the confines of academia and engage more directly with society.

This article will examine the following three areas:

1. The current development of philosophical counseling in Taiwanese universities
2. The academic research on philosophical counseling in Taiwan
3. The current development of the Taiwan Association for Philosophical Counseling

Ⅰ. The Current Development of Philosophical Counseling in Taiwanese Universities

In Taiwan, the first university courses explicitly titled "Philosophical Counseling" were offered twenty years ago—by the Department of Philosophy at Huafan University (Chien-Chi Lu, 2002) and at Fu Jen Catholic University (Bernard Li, 2003). Introducing a new course in a university department is not easy; it requires approval by the department's curriculum committee and alignment with the department's goals. The instructor must also provide a syllabus that explains how the course content fits their area of expertise. Only after meeting these requirements can a new course be launched.

After 2007, other Taiwanese universities began to offer courses linking philosophy and psychological counseling. For example, the Department of Philosophy at Tunghai University introduced "Philosophical Counseling and Phenomenological Therapy." Later, universities such as National Dong Hwa University, Fo Guang University, Nanhua University, Aletheia University, Taipei National University of the Arts, and

Chang Jung Christian University also introduced related courses, such as Counseling Ethics, Logotherapy, and courses on Existentialism and Counseling. These courses were mostly offered by departments of psychology, counseling, or religious studies. In contrast, philosophy departments at Taiwanese universities—especially those at public institutions—have shown little interest in courses or research related to philosophical counseling. It was not until 2022 that the Department of Philosophy at National Chengchi University (NCCU) launched a credit program in "Philosophy of Care," led by Professor Wei-Lun Lee, who transferred from the Department of Counseling and Clinical Psychology at Dong Hwa University and became chair of NCCU's Philosophy Department.

Fu Jen Catholic University had already established a credit program in "Philosophical Counseling and Guidance" in 2009 within its College of Liberal Arts.[1] This program was jointly offered by the Departments of Philosophy, Clinical Psychology, and Psychology, making it the first interdisciplinary philosophical counseling program in a Taiwanese university. Students can earn the certificate upon completing 20 credits.

In addition to Fu Jen's program, NCCU's Philosophy of Care program[2] is also interdisciplinary. The Philosophy Department contributes courses that explore topics such as health, illness, treatment, and care from the perspectives of existential and phenomenological philosophy, as well as courses involving phenomenology, psychology, and psychological healing. The History Department offers courses on the sociocultural history of the body, emotions, family, childhood, and medicine. The Sociology Department contributes perspectives on family and caregiving. The Department of Ethnology focuses on family culture and children's education. The Psychology Department offers psychological and pathological insights into child development. The Department of Chinese Literature provides courses in literature and mythology as platforms for cultivating the human spirit and life narratives.

Currently, these are the only two structured programs related to philosophical counseling in Taiwan. Comparing the two, Fu Jen's program focuses more on integrating philosophy with psychological counseling and aims to professionalize philosophical counseling. NCCU's program, by contrast, is more aligned with general education at the college level, with a broader interdisciplinary focus. However, its dispersed course offerings and lack of consistency in course titles and goals make it difficult to form a coherent concept of the "philosophy of care."

As for other universities, although some offer courses related to philosophical counseling, these are typically limited to one course of 2–3 credits per semester or year. Students usually take them out of personal interest, often as a symbolic departure from traditional theoretical philosophy before graduation. Such limited

---

1 https://www.philosophy.fju.edu.tw/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=936:202407305&catid=88&Itemid=85

2 https://thinker.nccu.edu.tw/PageDoc?fid=10434

exposure makes it difficult for students to develop the skills necessary for professional practice or philosophical application.
From the design of these courses, it is evident that the development of philosophical counseling within philosophy departments at Taiwanese universities remains highly constrained.

Ⅱ. The Current State of Academic Research on Philosophical Counseling in Taiwan

The development of philosophical counseling in Taiwan can be observed not only through the aforementioned university courses but also through academic journal articles, theses and dissertations, and academic conferences.
First, in terms of academic journals, the earliest article explicitly titled with "philosophical counseling" in Taiwan was Li-Chu Hung's "Understanding Philosophical Counseling," published in ***Counseling and Guidance***. This article introduced Taiwanese academia to the theories and concepts of philosophical counseling and marked the first connection between philosophy and counseling in Taiwanese academic journals. Unfortunately, aside from Li-Chu Hung's piece, ***Counseling and Guidance*** has published only two more articles related to philosophical counseling over the past twenty years, totaling merely three articles. All of them provide introductory overviews of philosophical counseling theories. This trend suggests that the counseling and guidance field in Taiwan has not placed much importance on the academic study of philosophical counseling.
A search using the keyword "philosophical counseling" on the National Central Library's Journal Article Index reveals 71 related journal articles.[3] Of these, 61 were published in *Monthly Review of Philosophy and Culture*, a journal edited and published by Fu Jen Catholic University. In 2004, *Monthly Review of Philosophy and Culture* released two special issues focused on philosophical counseling, featuring a total of 12 articles. As a highly regarded academic journal in Taiwan, these publications helped draw attention from more scholars in the field of philosophy to philosophical counseling. Since then, *Monthly Review of Philosophy and Culture* has released a special issue on philosophical counseling nearly every year. These issues feature work not only from domestic scholars but also from scholars in mainland China and abroad, thereby elevating the scholarly quality and expanding the breadth and depth of philosophical counseling research. This has drawn the attention of Chinese

[3] Referring to the National Central Library's Periodical Literature System and compiling results using "philosophical counseling" as the keyword search, https://tpl.ncl.edu.tw/NclService/JournalContent?q%5B0%5D.i=%E5%93%B2%E5%AD%B8%E8%AB%AE%E5%95%86&q%5B0%5D.f=*&q%5B1%5D.o=0&q%5B1%5D.i=&q%5B1%5D.f=*&lang=&pys=&pms=&pye=&pme

philosophical circles to Taiwan's work in this field and has contributed to the internationalization of Taiwan's research on philosophical counseling.

As for theses and dissertations, the first to directly use philosophical counseling as its title was the 2005 doctoral dissertation by Ying-Fen Su in the graduate program of the Department of Philosophy at Fu Jen Catholic University, titled ***Philosophical Counseling be Applied to the Relationship of Men and Women***. Over the past two decades, more than forty graduate theses and dissertations have used "philosophical counseling" as a title or keyword (see Appendix for details on authors, universities, advisors, and dates). Nearly thirty of these were completed in the graduate program of the Department of Philosophy at Fu Jen Catholic University, underscoring the university's prominent role in advancing philosophical counseling. Huafan University's Department of Philosophy follows with seven such works.

The academic directions of these graduate studies on philosophical counseling generally fall into the following categories:[4]

1. **Linking Philosophical Counseling with Western Philosophy**: These theses often connect philosophical counseling with Greek philosophy, Scholastic philosophy, and existentialism, focusing primarily on ethical topics—one of the key practical concerns of philosophical counseling.
2. **Linking Philosophical Counseling with Chinese Philosophy**: These studies tend to explore connections between philosophical counseling and Confucianism or Daoism. The application of Confucian and Daoist thought in philosophical counseling differs significantly—Confucianism emphasizes moral cultivation, while Daoism centers on the concept of life.
3. **Linking Philosophical Counseling with Psychotherapy**: These theses often focus on existentialism and logotherapy. From this perspective, if existential psychotherapy is acknowledged within the field of psychological counseling, it is worth considering why philosophical counseling has not received similar recognition in Taiwan, which presents an intriguing issue.
4. **Linking Philosophical Counseling with Education**: Topics include applying philosophical counseling theory in educational settings, examining children's sharing behaviors through philosophical counseling, and exploring the integration of philosophical counseling into life education.
5. **Linking Philosophical Counseling with Buddhism**: Topics include end-of-life care through the lens of the ***Samyukta Āgama Sutra***, investigating

[4] According to the National Central Library's Taiwan Theses and Dissertations System, a keyword search for 'philosophical counseling' yields 44 entries, with 30 of them featuring philosophical counseling in the title: https://ndltd.ncl.edu.tw/cgi-bin/gs32/gsweb.cgi/ccd=YgED5r/login?jstimes=1&loadingjs=1&o=dwebmge&ssoauth=1&cache=1724719388446

counseling theories and practices in the ***Śūraṅgama Sūtra***, and counseling frameworks based on Buddhist philosophical thought.

6. **Theoretical and Methodological Exploration of Philosophical Counseling**: Research here often focuses on the C.I.S.A. counseling method, which was developed in Taiwan by Professor Bernard Li. Since many of these theses were supervised by Li, it is natural that students chose C.I.S.A. as their topic, making it the only indigenous philosophical counseling method in Taiwan distinct from Western approaches.
7. **Linking Philosophical Counseling with Everyday Life**: These works emphasize the practical application of philosophical counseling in areas such as intimate relationships and the pursuit of happiness.

The diversity of these seven types of graduate research demonstrates the wide-ranging applications and interdisciplinary connections of philosophical counseling. In addition to integrating Western and Chinese philosophies and Buddhist thought, philosophical counseling is also applicable to psychology, counseling, and education. Furthermore, its relevance to modern life underscores its role in the practical application of philosophy.

To actively promote the academic development of philosophical counseling in Taiwan, Fu Jen Catholic University and Huafan University have established courses and academic tracks and have encouraged graduate theses and dissertations on the subject. They have also hosted academic conferences, inviting scholars from Taiwan and abroad. Fu Jen's Department of Philosophy, in collaboration with the Taiwan Association for Philosophical Counseling, Fu Jen's Academia Catholic, and Huafan University, has held nearly ten conferences on philosophical counseling. The most prominent of these was the 2015 "Philosophical Counseling and Humanistic Healing" conference, which gathered over 100 scholars from 15 academic institutions both domestic and international. The event featured 27 papers, including keynote speeches by Elliot D. Cohen, president of the American National Center for Logic-Based Therapy, and Professor Young E. Rhee of Kangwon National University, who is also head of the International Association for Philosophical Practice (IAPP). Scholars from Hong Kong and mainland China also participated.

In the past twenty years, the "Christian Counseling and Guidance Symposium" has been held eight times, roughly every two years, with a focus on the intersection of religion and philosophical counseling. More than twenty related papers on philosophical counseling have been presented, significantly contributing to the academic development of the field in Taiwan.

Ⅲ. Current Development of the Taiwan Society for Philosophical Counseling

The Taiwan Philosophical Counseling Association was initiated in 2010 by Professor Bernard Li of Fu Jen Catholic University, who invited more than thirty scholars to begin

preparations. A year later, it was officially established as a non-profit social organization. Its primary aim is to apply philosophy to everyday life, promoting the ideal of using philosophy both to help oneself and to assist others, while advancing the theoretical and practical development of philosophical counseling as a professional field.

The founding of the Taiwan Philosophical Counseling Association sought to move philosophical counseling beyond theoretical research and university curricula and into the domain of practical, socially engaged helping work. Over the past ten years, the most significant achievement of the association has been its training and certification of philosophical counselors. To date, the professional certification training program has been held nine times, with around ten participants enrolling in each cohort. Beyond the association's original group of certified counselors, over forty individuals have since completed its training and practicum programs, bringing the total number of certified philosophical counselors in Taiwan to nearly fifty.

In addition to core training and certification, the Taiwan Philosophical Counseling Association has invited internationally renowned philosophical counseling scholars to Taiwan. These include Lou Marinoff (U.S.), Peter B. Raabe (Canada), Shlomit C. Schuster (Israel), Elliot D. Cohen (U.S.), and Oscar Brenifier (France). Through keynote lectures, workshops, and training sessions, these experts have introduced interested individuals in Taiwan to internationally recognized certification organizations and provided them with practical experience in philosophical counseling methods developed overseas.

In terms of social services and outreach, the association has brought philosophical counseling into nursing homes and long-term care facilities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it also offered online counseling services. Additionally, the association holds periodic workshops and reading groups for individuals interested in philosophical counseling.

Notably, it has hosted over a dozen group counseling workshops centered on Socratic dialogue, each focused on a distinct theme to attract participants. Attendance for each session has typically ranged from 20 to 30 people. These group sessions have introduced philosophical counseling to individuals from diverse backgrounds and demonstrated its relevance to everyday issues, gradually fostering public understanding and acceptance of philosophical counseling as a helping profession.

Currently, enrollment in the Taiwan Philosophical Counseling Association's certification training program requires participants to hold at least a master's degree. The certification curriculum is divided into three components: foundational courses, philosophical counseling courses, and practical training. The foundational courses include 18 hours in helping work and 36 hours in philosophical foundations. The philosophical counseling component comprises 102 hours of professional coursework and 24 hours of seminars. Practical training requires 144 hours. Altogether, the full training totals 324 hours, representing a rigorous and comprehensive certification process.

Regarding instructors, the association's program draws from a pool of over fifteen teachers, more than 80% of whom hold doctoral degrees and have taught at universities. All are certified philosophical counselors with strong theoretical grounding and extensive practical experience. This level of professional expertise, curriculum structure, and training duration make the association's certification program one of the most robust professional helping programs in Taiwan. In contrast to short workshops (often only a day or two with a single instructor and about ten hours of content) that still offer "philosophical counseling" certification, the association's program stands apart in depth and credibility.

Some certified philosophical counselors have already launched private practices, and the association provides a platform on its website for scheduling appointments with counselors. It also offers in-person counseling at the association's office. These efforts are gradually introducing the public to philosophical counseling as a form of professional support.

Conclusion: Challenges and Opportunities

From the three aforementioned perspectives, several ongoing challenges in the development of philosophical counseling in Taiwan can be identified.

First, with regard to its presence in universities, the field still faces institutional limitations. Philosophy departments at many Taiwanese universities have yet to incorporate enough philosophical counseling courses into their curricula. There remains a tendency to regard philosophical counseling through the lens of traditional philosophical theory rather than practical application, resulting in limited recognition. At the same time, philosophy departments are struggling with declining enrollment, frequent student transfers, and institutional pressures from universities due to low retention rates.

In this context, philosophical counseling presents an opportunity for curricular transformation and diversification. Beyond Fu Jen's philosophical counseling program and National Chengchi University's care philosophy program, other universities could also develop interdisciplinary applied philosophy programs in collaboration with related departments. This reflects a broader trend in higher education toward cultivating versatile, cross-disciplinary skillsets, especially in light of increasing pressure from the rise of AI. The integration of philosophical counseling into curricula offers a valuable opportunity to reposition philosophy education.

Second, the academic research on philosophical counseling in Taiwan faces challenges of its own. Most of the research, including master's theses, doctoral dissertations, journal articles and conference presentations, has been concentrated at Fu Jen Catholic University. This creates a perception of academic insularity. While this reflects an existing reality, the body of scholarship built over the past two decades has nonetheless given philosophical counseling a stable academic foundation in Taiwan.

To broaden academic engagement, institutions beyond Fu Jen must be involved. Philosophy departments, as well as programs in psychology, counseling, and

education, can all integrate philosophical counseling into their research agendas. Graduate students from Fu Jen could also be encouraged to publish in diverse journals and present at various conferences, helping to raise awareness of philosophical counseling's academic value and promoting more varied lines of scholarly inquiry.

Finally, the Taiwan Philosophical Counseling Association itself faces its own set of limitations. Taiwan's current boom in short-term spiritual or personal growth workshops suggests a widespread sense of psychological emptiness and helplessness. This presents another area where philosophical counselors could play a meaningful role. Thus, in addition to its formal certification program, the association should also actively promote short-term workshops, reading groups, online outreach, and digital counseling services. These efforts can broaden public awareness of philosophical counseling and provide support that complements, rather than replaces, psychological counseling, helping to establish philosophical counseling as a legitimate helping profession in Taiwan.

Where there are challenges, there are also opportunities for change. When Gerd B. Achenbach founded the German Society for Philosophical Practice in 1982, he brought philosophical counseling into mainstream society. Over the past 40 years, it has become widely accepted in Western countries as a professional helping practice. Taiwan, by contrast, only introduced the concept two decades ago, and the Taiwan Philosophical Counseling Association has just passed its ten-year mark. Philosophical counseling is still in its infancy in Taiwan, but it has great potential for growth. In a dehumanized, AI-driven world, the need for a human-centered approach to life's ethical and existential issues is more urgent than ever. If the three aforementioned challenges can be transformed into opportunities, philosophical counseling in Taiwan still holds great promise.

References

Fu Jen Catholic University Department Website（2024.6）https://www.philosophy.fju.edu.tw/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=936:202407305&catid=88&Itemid=85

National Chengchi University Department Website（2024.6）https://thinker.nccu.edu.tw/PageDoc?fid=10434

Referenced the National Central Library's Periodical Literature System — searched using the keyword "哲學諮商" ("philosophical counseling") and compiled relevant results（2024.6）https://tpl.ncl.edu.tw/NclService/JournalContent?q%5B0%5D.i=%E5%93%B2%E5%AD%B8%E8%AB%AE%E5%95%86&q%5B0%5D.f=*&q%5B1%5D.o=0&q%5B1%5D.i=&q%5B1%5D.f=*&lang=&pys=&pms=&pye=&pme

Referenced the National Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations in Taiwan (NDLTD) — 44 theses were found using the keyword "哲學諮商" ("philosophical counseling"), with 30 of them having it as the main title topic（2024.6）https://ndltd.ncl.edu.tw/cgi-bin/gs32/gsweb.cgi/ccd=YgED5r/login?jstimes=1&loadingjs=1&o=dwebmge&ssoauth=1&cache=1724719388446

Taiwan Philosophical Counseling Association Website（2024.6）https://twpcaservice.wixsite.com/twpca

https://twpcaservice.wixsite.com/twpca/events-1/2022nian-di-ba-qi-zhe-xue-zi-shang-shi-pei-xun-ke-cheng

The Development and Challenges of Philosophical Counseling in Taiwan

Chien-Chi Lu,
President of the Taiwan Philosophical Counseling Association

1

Introduction

Today, I'm going to talk about the current state of philosophical counseling and consider whether using philosophy in practical ways can help renew the field and improve its declining status in Taiwan. This study looks at how philosophical counseling might give philosophy a fresh direction by taking it beyond academia and into everyday life. In this presentation, I'll focus on three main areas:

- The current development of philosophical counseling in Taiwanese universities
- The academic research on philosophical counseling in Taiwan
- The current development of The Taiwan Philosophical Counseling Association

2

Current Development in Taiwanese Universities

- In Taiwan, the first university courses explicitly titled "Philosophical Counseling" were offered twenty years ago—by the Department of Philosophy at Huafan University (Chien-Chi Lu, 2002) and at Fu Jen Catholic University (Bernard Li, 2003).
- Introducing a new course in a university department is not easy; it requires approval by the department's curriculum committee and alignment with the department's goals. The instructor must also provide a syllabus that explains how the course content fits their area of expertise. Only after meeting these requirements can a new course be launched.

3

Current Development in Taiwanese Universities (Cont.)

- After 2007, other Taiwanese universities began to offer courses linking philosophy and psychological counseling.
- For example, the Department of Philosophy at Tunghai University introduced "Philosophical Counseling and Phenomenological Therapy." Related courses appeared in psychology or religious studies departments at several universities.
- However, philosophy departments, especially public ones, showed less interest.

4

Current Development in Taiwanese Universities (Cont.)

- **Fu Jen Catholic University** had already established a credit program in "Philosophical Counseling and Guidance" in 2009 within its College of Liberal Arts.
- This program was jointly offered by the Departments of Philosophy, Clinical Psychology, and Psychology, making it the first interdisciplinary philosophical counseling program in a Taiwanese university.
- Students can earn the certificate upon completing 20 credits.

5

Current Development in Taiwanese Universities (Cont.)

- In addition to Fu Jen's program, **National Chengchi University (NCCU)**'s Philosophy of Care program is also interdisciplinary.
- Currently, these are the only two structured programs related to philosophical counseling in Taiwan. Comparing the two, Fu Jen's program focuses more on integrating philosophy with psychological counseling and aims to professionalize philosophical counseling.
- NCCU's program, by contrast, is more aligned with general education at the college level, with a broader interdisciplinary focus. However, its dispersed course offerings and lack of consistency in course titles and goals make it difficult to form a coherent concept of the "philosophy of care."

6

Academic Research on Philosophical Counseling (Journal Articles)

- A search using the keyword “philosophical counseling” on the National Central Library’s Journal Article Index reveals 71 related journal articles.
- Of these, 61 were published in *Monthly Review of Philosophy and Culture*, a journal edited and published by Fu Jen Catholic University.
- In 2004, *Monthly Review of Philosophy and Culture* released two special issues focused on philosophical counseling, featuring a total of 12 articles.
- As a highly regarded academic journal in Taiwan, these publications helped draw attention from more scholars in the field of philosophy to philosophical counseling.

7

Academic Research on Philosophical Counseling (Theses and Dissertations)

- As for theses and dissertations, the first to directly use philosophical counseling as its title was the 2005 doctoral dissertation by Ying-Fen Su in the graduate program of the Department of Philosophy at Fu Jen Catholic University, titled “Philosophical Counseling be Applied to the Relationship of Men and Women.”
- Over two decades, more than forty graduate works used “philosophical counseling” as a title or keyword. Nearly thirty of these came from Fu Jen, highlighting its leading role, while Huafan University produced seven.

8

Academic Research on Philosophical Counseling (Theses and Dissertations) (Cont.)

Graduate studies in philosophical counseling generally cover:

- Linking with Western and Chinese Philosophy
- Connecting with Psychotherapy
- Relating to Education
- Exploring ties with Buddhism
- Theoretical and Methodological Exploration
- Applications in Everyday Life

9

Academic Research on Philosophical Counseling

- To actively promote the academic development of philosophical counseling in Taiwan, Fu Jen Catholic University and Huafan University have established courses and academic tracks and have encouraged graduate theses and dissertations on the subject.
- They have also hosted academic conferences, inviting scholars from Taiwan and abroad. Fu Jen's Department of Philosophy, in collaboration with The Taiwan Philosophical Counseling Association , Fu Jen's Academia Catholic, and Huafan University, has held nearly ten conferences on philosophical counseling.

10

Development of the Taiwan Philosophical Counseling Association

- The Taiwan Philosophical Counseling Association was initiated in 2010 by Professor Bernard Li of Fu Jen Catholic University, who invited more than thirty scholars to begin preparations.
- A year later, it was officially established as a non-profit social organization. Its primary aim is to apply philosophy to everyday life, promoting the ideal of using philosophy both to help oneself and to assist others, while advancing the theoretical and practical development of philosophical counseling as a professional field.
- The founding of the Taiwan Philosophical Counseling Association sought to move philosophical counseling beyond theoretical research and university curricula and into the domain of practical, socially engaged helping work.

11

Development of the Taiwan Philosophical Counseling Association (Cont.)

- Over the past ten years, the most significant achievement of the association has been its training and certification of philosophical counselors. To date, the professional certification training program has been held nine times, with around ten participants enrolling in each cohort.
- Beyond the association's original group of certified counselors, over forty individuals have since completed its training and practicum programs, bringing the total number of certified philosophical counselors in Taiwan to nearly fifty.

12

Development of the Taiwan Philosophical Counseling Association (Cont.)

- The Association has also invited renowned international philosophical counseling scholars to Taiwan. Through lectures, workshops, and training, these experts introduced international certification bodies and practical overseas methods to interested individuals in Taiwan.
- Enrollment in the Association's certification program requires at least a master's degree. The comprehensive 324-hour curriculum includes foundational courses (in helping work and philosophical foundations), professional philosophical counseling courses, seminars, and extensive practical training, ensuring a rigorous process.

13

Universities - Challenges

In universities, the field faces institutional limits.

- Many philosophy departments lack sufficient philosophical counseling courses, often viewing it theoretically rather than practically, which hinders recognition.
- These departments also struggle with declining enrollment and institutional pressures. Diversification towards applied, career-oriented learning is crucial to attract and retain students.

14

Universities - Opportunity

Philosophical counseling presents an opportunity for curricular transformation and diversification.

- Beyond Fu Jen's philosophical counseling program and National Chengchi University's care philosophy program, other universities could also develop interdisciplinary applied philosophy programs in collaboration with related departments.
- This reflects a broader trend in higher education toward cultivating versatile, cross-disciplinary skillsets, especially in light of increasing pressure from the rise of AI.
- The integration of philosophical counseling into curricula offers a valuable opportunity to reposition philosophy education.

15

Academic Research – Challenges & Opportunity

- **Challenge:** Most of the research, including master's theses, doctoral dissertations, journal articles and conference presentations, has been concentrated at Fu Jen Catholic University. This creates a perception of academic insularity.
- **Opportunity:** To broaden academic engagement, institutions beyond Fu Jen must be involved. Philosophy departments, as well as programs in psychology, counseling, and education, can all integrate philosophical counseling into their research agendas.

16

Taiwan Philosophical Counseling Association - Challenges and Opportunities

Challenge:

- The Taiwan Philosophical Counseling Association also has limitations. Its small training cohort model means only around fifty individuals have been certified.
- Furthermore, traditional stereotypes about psychological counseling make it difficult for philosophical counselors to gain recognition as helping professionals

Opportunity:

- To enhance training's psychological relevance, the association could invite more instructors with psychological counseling expertise.
- However, many psychological issues in Taiwan, particularly those involving ethics, values, and logical reasoning, may not be fully addressed by conventional counseling. This highlights the unique contribution philosophical counseling can offer.

17

Societal Needs - Opportunities

- Taiwan's current boom in short-term spiritual or personal growth workshops suggests a widespread sense of psychological emptiness and helplessness.
- This presents another area where philosophical counselors could play a meaningful role.
- Thus, in addition to its formal certification program, the association should also actively promote short-term workshops, reading groups, online outreach, and digital counseling services.

18

Future Directions

- Where there are challenges, there are also opportunities for change. When Gerd B. Achenbach founded the German Society for Philosophical Practice in 1982, he brought philosophical counseling into mainstream society. Over the past 40 years, it has become widely accepted in Western countries as a professional helping practice.
- Taiwan, by contrast, only introduced the concept two decades ago, and the Taiwan Philosophical Counseling Association has just passed its ten-year mark. Philosophical counseling is still in its infancy in Taiwan, but it has great potential for growth.
- In a dehumanized, AI-driven world, the need for a human-centered approach to life's ethical and existential issues is more urgent than ever.
- If the three aforementioned challenges can be transformed into opportunities, philosophical counseling in Taiwan still holds great promise.

19

Thank You

Chien-Chi Lu,
President of the Taiwan Philosophical Counseling Association

20

Horie Tsuyoshi (Osaka University)

“The ‘philosophical’ Elements of Dialogue: To unravel Roles/Positions”

0. Introduction

Since 2000, I have conducted many philosophical dialogues. My participants are diverse, including students, businesspeople, and citizens, but especially those working in the health care field, such as doctors, nurses, patients, and their families. When conducting dialogues with people in this field, we often face special difficulties. These arise from differences in roles and positions, which prevent equal dialogue. In the field of healthcare, there are power relationships between professions, with doctors at the top, and a gap between medical professionals with specialist knowledge or skills and patients suffering from illnesses, including the patient's insistence on their position in relation to medical treatment. It cannot be easily resolved by saying “let's talk as equals, beyond our roles and positions”.

However, conversely, these difficulties can also be an opportunity to open a dialogue philosophically. During the dialogue, the participants make opinions as they please; within these opinions, their roles and positions are latent. In other words, these are thought patterns that people acquire without realizing it, in their work and in their lives. This includes ‘points of view’ as a way of understanding their problems. When participants become aware of the differences or diversity of their ‘points of view’ through the dialogue, their roles and positions are unraveled. Different participants have hidden abilities to view their problems in a different way. I think it is the potential to develop dialogue in a philosophical way.

In my presentation, I will introduce two cases of dialogue, which I and other philosophical practitioner have conducted, and consider what the philosophical elements in them are. It consists of three aspects.

1. Setting the theme and making the environment

Philosophy seems to be an abstract discussion on a theme that is far removed from the problem at hand. However, it is also a viewpoint that is equidistant from different roles and positions. In other words, we choose the theme in a dialogue that do not differ in terms of voice depending on roles and positions. Furthermore, a dialogue must be a place where the participants can talk about their own ideas without worrying too much about what other people think, or a place where they can temporarily step away from their own roles/positions. I present this point based on two cases.

Case 1: What is effective?

At a university's medical, dental and pharmaceutical research department, a philosophical practitioner[1] holds regular philosophical café series in different themes.

[1] Eri MATSUKWA, one of the co-authors of the above article.

The participants are limited to medical professionals, including students. A theme of this series was “What is effective?” based on a suggestion from a pharmacist.
This theme is relevant to the issue of medical practice, i.e., drug effectiveness. But at the same time, it is a generalized theme that can be talked about in other contexts. The aim here was to enable people to talk on an equal footing, transcending differences in occupation and position. In addition, limiting the number of participants considers the following: As professionals who provide treatment and care, medical staff cannot easily discuss medical issues in front of patients; this is a place where they can discuss issues, problems and concerns in the field without worrying about the stares of patients or the public.
First, the facilitator asked the participants why they wanted to think about this theme. The young pharmacist who suggested the theme said, “I've been wondering why some people say that a certain medicine doesn't work at all, while others say it works really well”. Another pharmacist also said that we were worried because a patient had said that a medicine had worked, but the patient's test results hadn't changed. In the subsequent discussion, many examples of ‘effects’ in hobbies and other medical fields were mentioned. For example:

- There is an expression in Japanese chess called an ‘effective move’.
- During piano practice, I had the following experience: I was not sure if I was getting better, but I could feel the effects of my practice only when the teacher praised me.
- As a physician, I do not feel effective unless I match goals with patients in palliative care.
- There is something called the ‘cheering effect’ in marathons. It is not only the effect of medicine and treatment, but also the effect of medical personnel becoming the patient's cheerleader.

Later, the participants were interviewed about how they thought the philosophical café would be useful in clinical practice. There, the following feedback was received:

- Behind the words of the patient ‘the medicine worked’, I began to think about what kind of effect it was.
- Unlike science, which tries to accurately grasp things without fail, I was able to see various meanings depending on the context of the words at the philosophical café.

During the dialogue, participants considered the ‘effects’ as they moved back and forth between their points of view as hobbyists, patients, and health care providers. Before the dialogue, the participants had a limited understanding of the word ‘effects’ in a medical context, i.e. changes in test results or symptoms. However, through the dialogue, they became aware of the diversity of meanings that the word ‘effective’ can have. The interview after the dialogue show that they not only began to consider the

differences in their positions, but also tried to incorporate the different perspectives that became apparent in the dialogue and apply them in clinical practice.

Case 2: When you can no longer eat by mouth
A civic activist involved in healthcare[2] held a workshop to discuss the issue of artificial nutrition, with medical professionals and ordinary citizens as participants. First, the medical experts gave a lecture on the merits and demerits of artificial nutrition, and then the theme for the subsequent dialogue was set as ‘When you can no longer eat by mouth’. The issue of artificial nutrition in medicine was here replaced with the perspective of ‘eating by mouth’, that can be applied to everyone. In the workshop, the participants were divided into two groups: non-professionals and professionals, and they held separate dialogues on the same question: Would you prefer artificial nutrition or not, if you could not eat by mouth? We set up separate dialogues in the two groups, with one group interacting and the other group listening silently. After that, all the participants held a dialogue together.
What was interesting about this workshop was that, despite the same question, the non-professional and professional groups had completely different conversations. The main topic of conversation for the non-professional group was their views on life and death, such as:

- like the Zen monks of the Middle Ages, I would prefer to die naturally by abstaining from food.
- In Buddhism, there are words "to live out one's natural life”.
- A poet wrote a poem, "I wish to die in spring under the cherry blossoms in full bloom”.

In contrast, the professional group talked about providing information and services to patients and their families regarding artificial feeding, and about the circumstances of the service providers. For example:

- With gastric fistula, patients sometimes forget to eat by mouth. However, there are some diseases in which practicing swallowing by mouth and gastric fistula at the same time can be beneficial.
- Aggressive artificial nutrition for terminally ill patients is a heavy burden for them.
- When the gastric band is removed and the patient is to eat by mouth, manpower is needed.

[2] Keiko FUJIMOTO, one of the co-authors of the above article. The presenter HORIE also joined this workshop as one of the facilitators.

The dialogues of the two groups developed along different lines of interest. It can be said that the perspectives from which the issues were perceived crossed paths quite admirably. This was also the result of the group's position.
In the dialogue between all the participants, the workshop organizers, expected that the participants would recognize this difference on their own and the awareness of differences would lead to mutual understanding of the issue of artificial nutrition. But the awareness did not occur. Of course, the participants fully understood the content of each other's conversations. However, they did not come to see it as a ‘difference in points of view’ on the issue. For this, we felt that more time for dialogue was needed.

2. Facilitator as a catalyst

Setting the theme and making the environment is the preparatory work for the philosophical dialogue. The facilitator is the person who leads the dialogue with the participants. However, the facilitator does not lead the dialogue unnecessarily; he/she refrains from summarizing the participants' comments on their own as much as possible. The facilitator focuses on listening carefully to the participants' words and connecting them to other participants. When a participant is hesitating before saying something, the facilitator waits for them to find the words. By showing this attitude, the facilitator helps participants to delve into and verbalize experiences that they would not have been able to face alone.
In many cases, whether they are professionals or patients/family members, participants in dialogue implicitly assume their roles and positions; they try to think about the issues from there. In other words, they do not try to deviate from their ‘framework for viewing the problem’ based on their roles and positions.
It also means that there are viewpoints that are excluded from the framework of problem, and that opportunities to become aware of such different viewpoints are closed off.
The facilitator helps the participants to find these opportunities in some way. The philosophical facilitator dares to allow time for participants to hesitate and tries to highlight the different ‘points of view’ latent in the statements rather than the differences in opinions and arguments of the participants. The facilitator acts as a catalyst to help the participants find new viewpoints for themselves through dialogue.
The philosophical facilitator, who performs this kind of function, needs to have a certain level of skill. However, he/she does not need philosophical knowledge as a specialist. In terms of being a catalyst to facilitate the participants philosophically, it is more important that he/she is *not* in the roles/positions of the field. Those involved in the field of heath care as professionals are busy dealing with their own issues. They are strongly bound to their own roles and positions. When considering various healthcare issues, it is necessary for non-medical professionals and non-patients outside the field to be involved. Being able to take a step back from the framework of problem in the field, and creating a space for such dialogue, it is the essential element of dialogue that makes the participants ‘philosophical’. The facilitator is neither a medical

professional nor a patient. This is why the philosophical facilitator has a special function.

3. Reflection

The contribution of the philosophical facilitator acting as a catalyst, is to create ‘reflection’ in the dialogue.

The word ‘reflection’ originally meant “to bend backwards, or to move away”; it has come to mean reflection of light in a mirror and/or psychological introspection. That is, it refers to a transformation that occurs when something is illuminated and then bends away from it. It is also a process of seeing or becoming aware of something that was not directly visible or noticed before. From this conception of the word, I will try to analyze the two cases again.

Case 1: The starting point was the pharmacist's concern over the effects of the medicine. Through dialogue, the participants came to refer to ‘effects’ in a context other than the effects of the medicine. Illuminated by the language used in some different fields from the medicine, it became a kind of reflective surface that provided an opportunity for the participants (pharmacists) to change. By considering the various meanings of the word ‘effect’, they are trying to understand patients from a broader point of view. This is also an example of how they were able to acquire a perspective that is not limited to their own position. It can be said that they have acquired knowledge that can be used to understand the actual medical workplace.

The intersection of medical contexts with some contexts of daily life makes it possible to examine issues in the medical field from different perspectives. In the dialogue, the participants confirm the relevance of the theme to issues in the medical field both as professionals and as ordinary people (patients). As a result, they were able to notice meanings and possibilities that are difficult to see from the perspective of a medical professional. By exchanging different contexts, the participants were able to gain a sense of the clinical significance of the issues in the medical field from a variety of perspectives that were not limited to the framework of medical issues.

Case 2: The difference of the dialogues that arose between the professional and non-professional groups was supposed to be the basis for reflection. In other words, it was the opportunity for the participants to turn to self-reflection. What did the participants notice and what kind of transformation occurred from the difference? The workshop organizer had expected that something could happen through the dialogue between all the participants. The workshop set up such a reflective place. But, although the difference in content was clearly apparent, the participants did not respond to the different points of view. This is a case where reflection has not occurred, even though the source of the reflection was vividly created.

4. Conclusion

What are the elements that make dialogue philosophical? As we have seen so far, this has nothing to do with special knowledge about philosophy. It depends on the generalized theme setting, the facilitator's attitude as a catalyst, and, above all, whether the ‘reflection’ occurs. Through these elements, it can be said that the participants ‘philosophize’ naturally in the dialogue. There, the participants become aware of different points of view. Philosophical dialogue is not about solving problems, but about ‘unraveling’ roles/positions of the people involved in the problem.

The ‘philosophical’ Elements of Dialogue

To unravel Roles/Positions

The 1st International Conference of EASPP, July 10-12, 2025
Tsuyoshi HORIE, Osaka University

1

0. Introduction

Difficulties of Dialogue in Healthcare Field

- Power relationships between professions with doctors at the top
- Gap between medical professionals and patients
- Patient's insistence on their position in relation to medical treatment

Potential to develop the philosophical dialogue

- Participants’ roles/positions latent within opinions, including their ‘points of view’
- Becoming aware of differences of their ‘points of view’ through the dialogue
- Differences as an opportunity to unravel their roles/positions

2

1. Setting the theme / Making the environment

Setting the theme

- Philosophical theme far removed from the problem at hand
- It gives a viewpoint equidistant from different roles/positions

Making the environment

- Place where the participants can talk about their own ideas
- Place where they do not worry too much about what other people think
- Place where they can temporarily step away from their own roles/positions

3

Case 1: What is effective? (1)

Philosophical café under the theme ‘What is effective?’

- Based on a suggestion from a pharmacist
- Relevant to the issue of medical practice: drug effectiveness
- Generalized theme that can be talked about in other contexts

- Limited number of participants to medical professionals
- Place where they can discuss issues without worrying about the stares of patients

4

Case 1: What is effective? (2)

Examples of 'effects' in hobbies and other medical fields

- Expression in Japanese chess called an 'effective move'
- Piano practice: I could feel the effects of my practice only when the teacher praised me.
- Palliative care: I do not feel effective unless I match goals with patients in.
- So-called 'cheering effect' in marathons

Feedback to clinical practice

- Before the dialogue: Limited understanding of the word 'effects' in a medical context
- Through the dialogue: Awareness of the diversity of meanings the word 'effective'
- Interview after the dialogue: Considering the differences in their positions

5

Case 2: When you can no longer eat by mouth (1)

Workshop to discuss the issue of artificial nutrition

- Theme: When you can no longer eat by mouth
- Lecture on the merits/demerits of artificial nutrition by medical experts
- Question: Would you prefer artificial nutrition or not, if you could not eat by mouth?

- Dividing into two groups: Non-professionals and professionals
- When one group interacting, the other group listening silently
- After the dialogues by two groups, all the participants held a dialogue together

6

Case 2: When you can no longer eat by mouth (2)

Dialogue by non-professional group

- Like the Zen monks , I would prefer to die naturally by abstaining from food.
- The words “to live out one‘s natural life” in Buddhism
- Japanese Poem: I wish to die in spring under the cherry blossoms in full bloom.

Dialogue by professional group

- With gastric fistula, patients sometimes forget to eat by mouth
- Heavy burden of aggressive artificial nutrition for terminally ill patients
- Necessity of manpower when the patient is to eat by mouth

7

Case 2: When you can no longer eat by mouth (3)

Dialogue between all the participants

- The dialogues of the two groups developed along different lines of interest
- It was the result of the group’s role/position

- Expectation: the participants would recognize the disparateness of dialogues on their own
- Expectation: the awareness of difference would lead to mutual understanding of the issue
- They did not come to see it as a ‘difference in points of view’ on the issue.

8

2. Facilitator as a catalyst (1)

Facilitator…

- Refrains from summarizing the participants' comments on their own as much as possible.
- Focuses on listening carefully to the participants' words and connecting them to other participants.
- Waits for participants to find the words, when they are hesitating before saying something.

Participants…

- Assume implicitly their roles/positions in dialogue.
- Do not deviate from their ‘framework for viewing the problem’ based on their roles/positions.
- Close off opportunities to become aware of different points of view.

9

2. Facilitator as a catalyst (2)

Function of philosophical facilitator

- Highlighting the different ‘points of view’ latent in the statements of participants
- Catalyst to help the participants find new viewpoints for themselves through dialogue

To facilitate issues in healthcare field

- No need philosophical knowledge as a specialist
- Be *not* in the roles/positions of the field
- Be involved as non-medical professionals and non-patients outside of the field

10

3. Reflecion (1)

The word ‘reflection’

- Original meaning: to bend backwards, or to move away
- Today’s meaning: reflection of light in a mirror and/or psychological introspection

It refers to…

- Transformation that occurs when something is illuminated and then bends away from it.
- Process of becoming aware of something that was not directly visible or noticed before

11

3. Reflecion (2)

Case 1

- Starting point: pharmacist's concern over the ‘effects’ of the medicine.
- Through dialogue: referring to ‘effects’ in a context other than the effects of the medicine

- Transformation illuminated by the language used in some different fields
- Understanding patients from a broader point of view

- Result: Noticing possibilities difficult to see from the perspective of a medical professional

12

3. Reflecion (3)

Case 2

- Difference of the dialogues between professional and non-professional groups
- Opportunity for the participants to turn to self-reflection
- Dialogue between all the participants as a reflective place

- Difference in content was clearly apparent
- The participants did not respond to the different points of view
- Result: Reflection has not occurred

13

4. Conclusion

The ‘philosophical’ elements of Dialogue

- Generalized theme equidistant from different roles/positions
- Making the environment where participants can step away from their own roles/positions
- Facilitator as a catalyst to help the participants find new viewpoints for themselves
- Reflection: Process of transformation illuminated by other ‘points of view’

■ Through these elements, the participants ‘philosophize’ naturally in the dialogue.
■ Philosophical dialogue is to ‘unravel’ roles/positions of the people involved in the problem.

14

Sunhye Kim (Kangwon National University)

"Schopenhauer's Eudemonism as a Difference of Life-Wisdom commensurate with a Difference of Age"

EASPP 2025-7-11



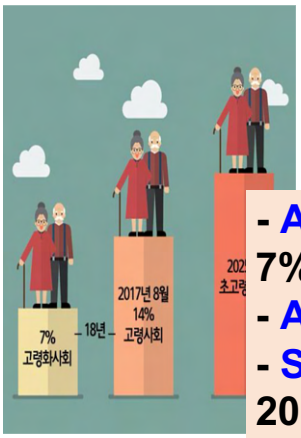
Gustave Moreau, Oedipus and the Spinx

Schopenhauer's Eudemonism as a Difference of Life-wisdom to commensurate with a Difference of Age

Sun-Hye Kim
Kangwon National University, Korea
scharnier@kangwon.ac.kr

1. Super-aged Society, South Korea

South Korea, December 24, 2024, people aged 65 and older make up 20% of the population



UN categorizes people aged 65 and older as follows, based on their percentage of the total population

- An aging society: more than 7%
- Aged society: 14% or more
- Super-aged Society: More than 20%

1) Super-aged Society

- **Meaning**: at least 20% of the population aged 65 or older
- **Existing super-aged social issues**: Mainly focusing on economic aspects such as labor shortages, reduced productivity, increased elderly support costs, and increased health care and welfare costs
- **a new issue**: the growth of a population that must have a very different relationship with themselves

2) Task of the super-aged Population

- **an old age in which one has to live at an age that one has never lived before**
- Difficulty living a different age **with the life- wisdom you've gotten used to so far**
- **Age differences require differences in the life- wisdom**
- The need **to strengthen information and wisdom for the life of old age**, which is insufficient compared to wisdom for **children or young people**

3) Philosophical Issues on Super-aged Society

- **Pay attention to age differences** among **the various differences in humans**
- **A Study on the Differences in Wisdom of Life for Age Differences**
- **Philosophical Topic**: Seeking clues for wisdom that is still lacking compared to **the growing population of an aged society or super-aged society**, that is, to live a happier life in old age

2. Schopenhauer, Philosophy of the Age-Differences

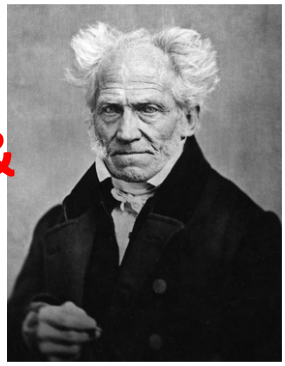
1788~1860(72 years old)

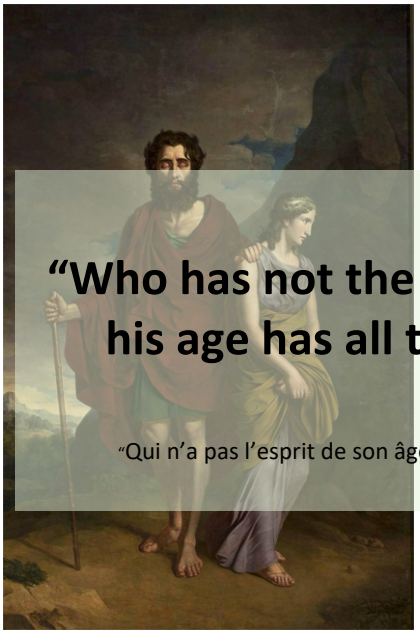

Schopenhauer as a teenager

&


Schopenhauer in his late 20s

&


Schopenhauer in his early 70s



Oedipus And Antigone, Antoni Brodowski, 1784-1832

“Who has not the spirit of his age, of his age has all the misfortune.”

“Qui n’a pas l’esprit de son âge, De son âge a tout le malheur.”

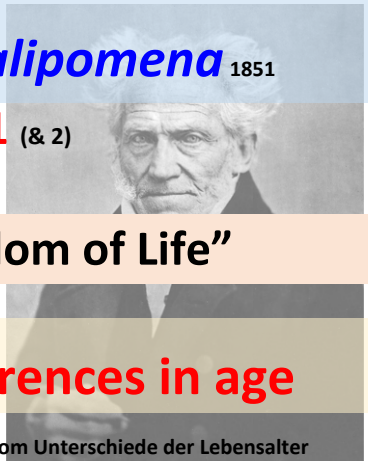
À Mme du Châtelet, **Voltaire**

Parerga und Paralipomena,
A. Schopenhauer

1) Philosophy of Age-Difference :

Parerga und Paralipomena 1851

Volume 1 (& 2)



“Aphorisms on the Wisdom of Life”

Chapter VI. On the differences in age

Vom Unterschiede der Lebensalter

2) "Aphorisms on the Wisdom of Life"& 'On the Differences in Age'

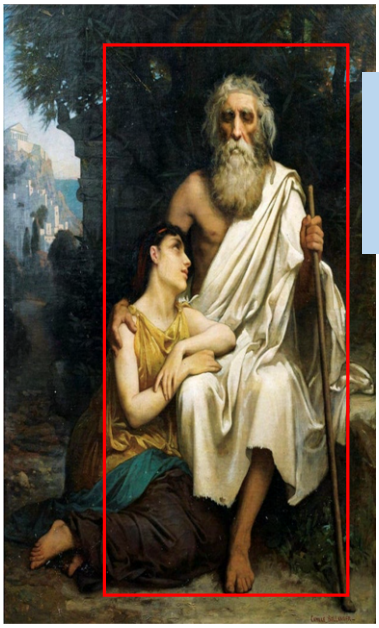
- **"Aphorisms on the Wisdom of Life" :** The last of the six appendixes in Volume 1 of ***Parerga and Paralipomena***
- **Central Philosophy**: **Eudemonism(Eudämonologie)**
- **Eudemonism**: **guidelines for happiness theory**, which deals with the art of living as **comfortably and happily as possible**
- A Fundamental Study **on the suffering of human life as existence**: the key to the theory of happiness in existence
- **'On the differences in age': the last chapter of 'Aphorism on the Wisdom of Life', the sixth appendix of Volume 1 of *Parerga and Paralipomena***

3. Difference in Age & Difference in Life



Sphinx Stone Sculpture, 530 BC, Attica, Greece

Reinterpretation of Sphinx's Riddle



Oedipus And Antigone Painting, Camille Felix Bellanger, c. 1853 – 1923

1) *Oedipus Rex*

Oedipus swollen feet

- the son of Laius, king of Thebes, and Jocasta, queen of Thebes
- King of Thebes & husband of Jocasta & father of Antigone



Gustave Moreau, Oedipus and the Sphinx

2) Sphinx's Riddle: Age-difference & Foot-difference

Sphinx's Riddle: What walks on four feet in the morning, two in the afternoon, and three at evening?

Oedipus's answer: Humans; he/she crawls on all fours as a baby, he /she walks on two feet as an adult, and he /she uses a walking stick in old age.

3) Difference of Feet & Difference of Wisdom



Jean Auguste Dominique, Oedipus and the Sphinx

The difference among the wisdom of **the child's life in the morning**, the wisdom of **the youth's life in the afternoon**, and the wisdom of **the elderly life in the evening**

The difference among life-wisdom for four feet, life-wisdom for two feet, and life-wisdom difference for three feet

4. Schopenhauer's Wisdom of Life for the Age-Difference

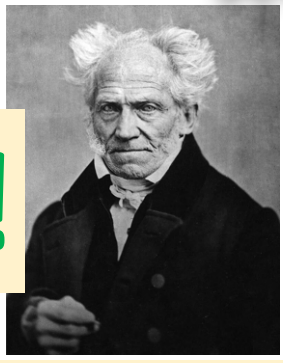
Chapter VI. On the differences in age, "Aphorisms on the Wisdom of Life"



Schopenhauer as a teenager



Schopenhauer in his late 20s



Schopenhauer in his early 70s

1) what is needed for Childhood Life



Schopenhauer as a teenager

The Wisdom of Life for Four Feet

(More) Happy Childhood



- **Much happier** to have **a cognitive attitude rather than a driven one**
- little relationship, little desire, and **therefore little stimulation of will**

The reason why the first quarter of our lives is happy & our childhood as a lost paradise

A Childhood Life

- **Childhood Life**: **Not insensitive to its impression through iteration, still very new and fresh in front of us**
- **Childhood**: Forming a firm foundation that **forms our worldview and also forming the surface and depth of our worldview**
- Having **a purely objective and poetic landscape**
- **The reason** is **that the will has not yet shown its full energy**
- So, children act **more purely cognitively than motivated**

- **Many children's eyes** are **seriously intuitive**(anschaulich)
- **These eyes** are also visible to the angels that Raphael painted on ***Sistine Madonna***
- That's why **childhood is so full of joy**
- So **the constant yearning of childhood memories**



Sistine Madonna - Samzio Raphael, c.

Childhood: Intuitive Recognition

- While we are committed to understanding things **intuitively at the beginning**, on the other hand, education is trying to teach us **concepts**
- Providing us with what is **truly essential**: **an intuitive grasp(Auffassung) of the world**, **not the concepts provided by education**
- **Intuitive grasping can't be taught, it can only be gained on its own**
- **Why the environment and experience of a child is so firmly imprinted**: It comes from **a deep understanding of the intuitive outside world I saw for the first time**



2) What is needed for the Life of Youth

The Wisdom of Life for Two Feet

Schopenhauer in his late 20s

A largely unsatisfactory Youth



- **Why Youth Is Dark and Unhappy**: **Because of the hunt for happiness**, with the firm premise that they must be **able to catch happiness in life**
- From this, there is **a constant sense of vain hope**, from which **dissatisfaction arises**
- Young people are generally dissatisfied, no matter what our situation and environment are

The Reality and Wisdom of Youth



- **Reality: The opposite happens**
- **Reason:** Youth does **not experience the world realistically**, but comes across it **through literary works** that **depict the early youth in a splendid way**
- **The result: deluded in youth**

Wisdom of youth

Early uprooting of the deceptive illusion of youth, namely the delusion that you will get a lot in the world

Difference between the first and second Half of life

- Characteristics of the first Half of Life: Unsatisfied longing for happiness
- Characteristics of the second Half of Life: Worry about unhappiness

Life-wisdom

A rational person is more likely to strive for a state of painlessness or undisturbedness than for pleasure.



3) What is needed for the Life in old Age

The Wisdom of Life for Three Feet

Schopenhauer in his early 70s

When the bell rings, two reactions

- As a young person, when it rings, it's fun.
- As an older person, when it rings, it's scary.

Two Feelings when Someone is alone

- Being alone in Youth: Frequently feeling abandoned by the human world
- Being alone in old Age: Feeling free from the human world
- Reason for unpleasant feelings of abandonment: because the human world is unknown
- Reason for pleasant feelings of freedom: because the human world has become well understood

Wisdom of old Age

A mature person has life experiences that allow them to see the world differently than young people or children, making them unbiased among other things.

Why old Age makes Life seem shorter

Wiederkehr

- Repetition of seeing, doing, and experiencing things gradually makes them unimportant and causes them to be forgotten
- Just as a piece of art seen a thousand times makes no impression, things are rushed past without leaving any impression.

Wisdom of old age

- "What has been learned must be practiced, the past must be ruminated, if both are not to sink into the abyss of oblivion."
- Direct recognition, the first recognition of truth, requires intense, vivid and deep impressions

5. A New Question in Philosophical Counseling: the mysterious identity of the sphinx in a super-aged society



an artistic/non-willful | empirical, scientific, willful | a philosophical/de-willful tendency

From Youth to old Age


≠

≠

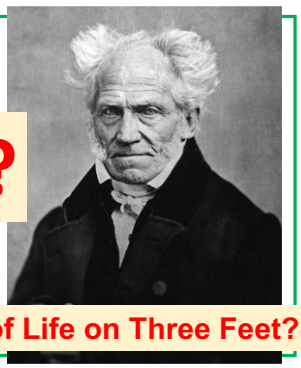

- Wisdom for walking on Four Feet: not much help when walking on two feet
- Wisdom for Walking on Two Feet: Can Be Harmful when walking on three feet

Schopenhauer,

A philosopher who noted human differences, and contemplated the wisdom of living in accordance with those differences.

6. A New Question in Philosophical Counseling: Solving the Riddle of the Sphinx in a Super-Aged Society


!

?


The Wisdom of Life on Three Feet?

The Wisdom of Life on Four Feet | Life on Two Feet

Disease & Boredom, The Fate of old Age?

- Sickness and boredom are often seen as the fate of old age
- Sickness is not inherent to old age
- Boredom is not greater in old age
- Old age is solitary, but solitude does not always come with boredom

7. Wrapping Up: Our Challenge to the Riddle of the Sphinx



"Who has the spirit of his age, of his age avoid many misfortune."

Oedipus ponders the riddle of the Sphinx,
Attic red-figure kylix c. 470 BCE

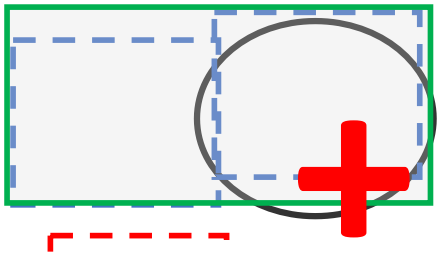
KSH

Super-aged Society,
Philosophizing like
Mr. Mori

翁

(2018
)

Mori, The Artist's
Habitat

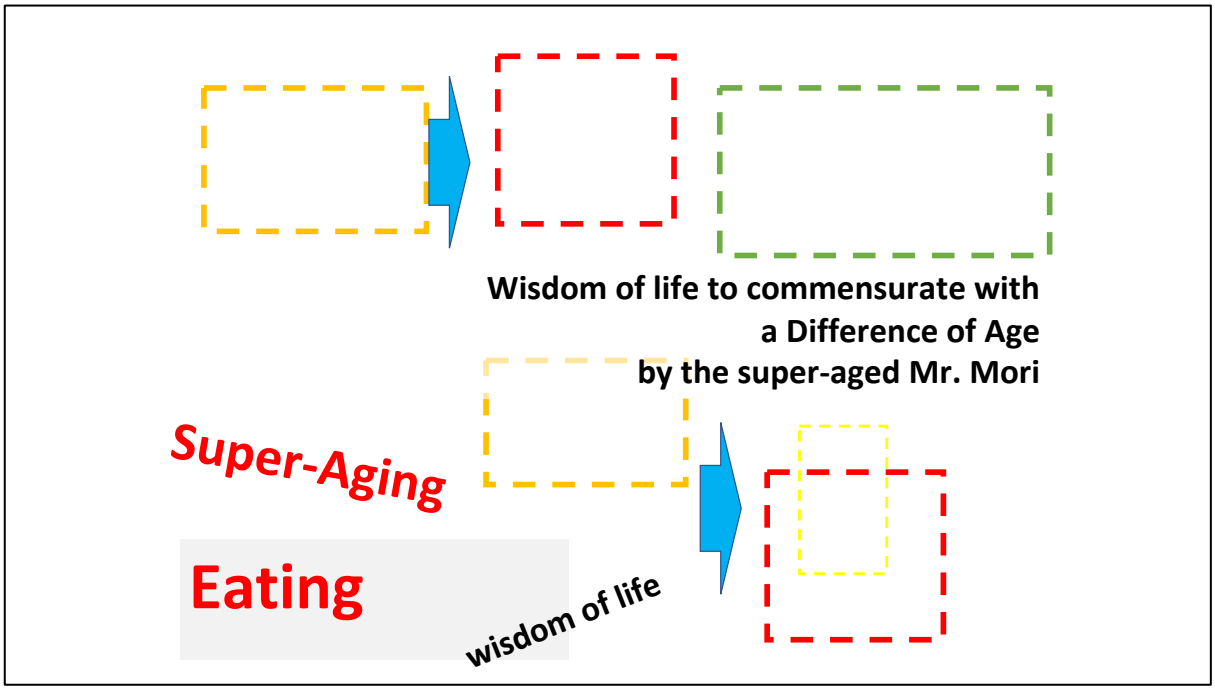


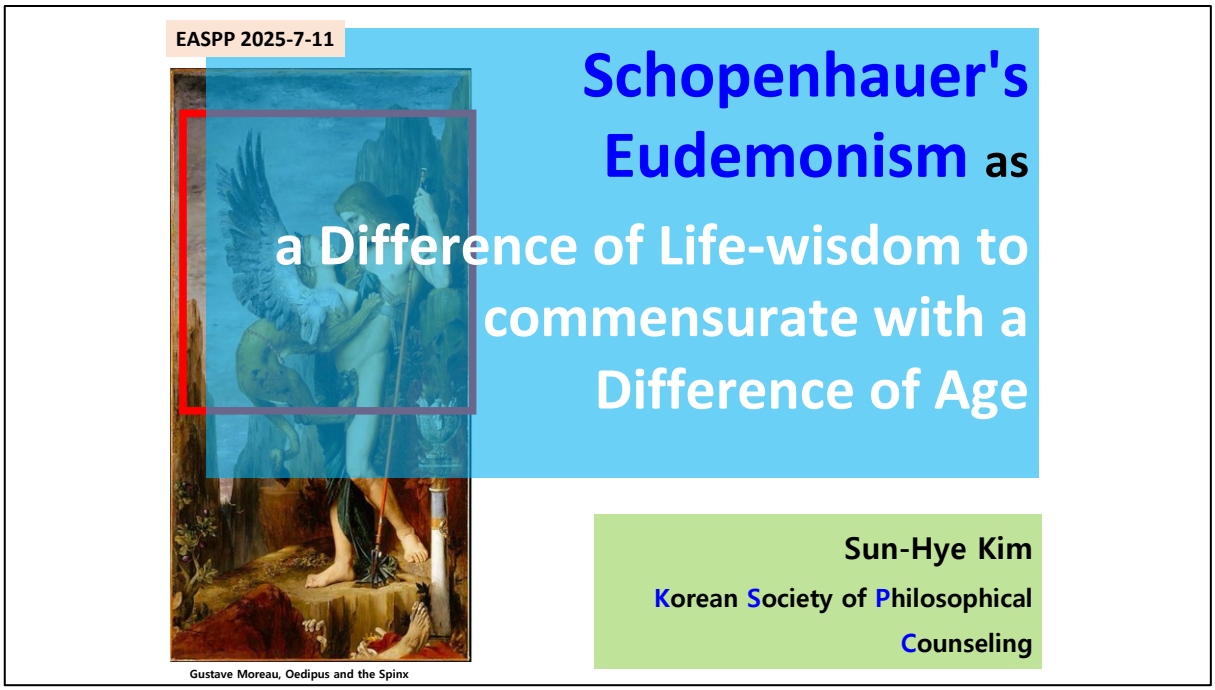
Wisdom of life to commensurate with
a Difference of Age
by the super-aged Mr. Mori

Super-Aging

Taking a Walk

wisdom of life


Wisdom of life to commensurate with
a Difference of Age
by the super-aged Mr. Mori
Super-Aging
Eating
wisdom of life


EASPP 2025-7-11
Schopenhauer's Eudemonism as
a Difference of Life-wisdom to commensurate with a Difference of Age
Sun-Hye Kim
Korean Society of Philosophical Counseling
Gustave Moreau, Oedipus and the Spinx

A1

Yu-Chang Yang (Sun Yet-Sen University)

“Epictetus' Philosophical Healing Thought and Contemporary Philosophical Consulting Practice - Taking Philosophical Counseling for Prisoners as an Example”

1. The Distinction Between the Internal and External Aspects of the Self as a Key to Philosophical Therapy

At the core of Epictetus’ therapeutic philosophy is the distinction between one’s internal and external aspects—and the ensuing conception of the self that arises from this separation. The opening passages of both the *Discourses* and the *Enchiridion* emphasize the difference between what lies within our control and what does not. As Epictetus explains:

> “Things in our control include our opinions, impulses, desires, and aversions—essentially, everything that is the product of our own actions. Things not in our control include the body, property, reputation, and position, along with all that is not produced by us” (Epictetus, 2009, p. 578).

Because the matters within our control are inherently free, while those outside our power are constrained, we should fully invest our energy in what we can influence and allow what we cannot to take its natural course.

This differentiation holds vital guidance for life—and it is particularly salient for prison inmates. The challenges faced by prisoners are largely tied to their status as convicts and the restrictive nature of prison life. They often contend with the burden of a criminal label, societal discrimination, concerns regarding their families, tense interpersonal relations, disputes during rehabilitative labor, and uncertainty about their future. In such a situation, it is especially important for inmates to clearly distinguish between what is within their immediate power and what is not.

For example, when some inmates express concerns over the discrimination they face in society, a counselor might advise:

> “Society indeed exhibits discrimination, but since we cannot change that, we must instead change and improve ourselves to create opportunities” (Yang, 2020, p. 173).

This counsel is essentially an application of Epictetus’ distinction between what genuinely belongs to us and what does not. In this way, his differentiation continues to have practical relevance today. By consciously integrating this approach into

philosophical counseling practices, counselors can enhance the effectiveness of their work.

Indeed, Epictetus' distinction arises from his unique life journey from slavery to freedom and his keen observations of human existence. Counselors have noted that some well-educated inmates, through reading and self-reflection, come to grasp this very distinction—and use it to regulate and improve their mindset. One inmate remarked:

> "I have actually gained a great deal here. Before, I was successful and lived a life of luxury and superficiality outside—every day was filled with dazzling lights and lavish banquets, and I had long since abandoned any notions of morality, principles, or integrity. Now that I am here, I always make time to read and reflect on my past, to consider the value of my life. Had I still been outside, I would never have had such an opportunity. When I think of this, I feel that being in prison is truly a form of self-cultivation" (Yang, 2020, pp. 45–46).

This testimony indicates that these inmates have, through personal experience and study, begun to shift their focus from external markers such as wealth and power to elements that truly belong to them—such as their physical well-being, family ties, and knowledge. It must be noted, however, that their shift has not yet reached the radical extent advocated by Epictetus. In his view, even the body does not entirely belong to the self; what truly belongs is one's will. Only by truly recognizing one's will does a person attain a freedom impervious to external influences—a freedom stemming from self-initiative and an inalienable sense of self. In a similar vein, Confucius stated,

> "A general might be overthrown, but an individual's aspirations cannot be usurped" (Confucius, 1980, p. 95).

The remarks of the inmates demonstrate their efforts to separate what is truly theirs from what is not, thereby alleviating external burdens and enabling them to focus on their own lives. The fact that even those in extreme conditions—such as slaves and prisoners—can affirm themselves through this distinction underscores the universal significance of Epictetus' philosophy. If one can uphold and affirm the internal self under such adverse conditions, there is even less reason to succumb to despair under more favorable circumstances. This insight is one reason why counselors often find themselves both educated and inspired by their work with prisoners.

It is precisely through the deliberate work of distinguishing between what is internal and what is external that inmates begin to let go of attachments to the outer world and turn their attention inward, thereby achieving self-transformation. As illustrated by the inmate's testimony, the loss of physical freedom can paradoxically create the necessary conditions for deep self-reflection—which, in turn, can prevent an individual from being contaminated or assimilated by the negative influences of society upon

regaining freedom. Epictetus himself adhered to this path. His emphasis on differentiating between the internal and external—and his call for rigorous self-examination—serves as a potent remedy for the psychological challenges faced by prisoners. Both the counseling provided to inmates and their personal reflections while in confinement attest to the effectiveness of this approach.

2. The Philosophical Therapeutic Significance of Rational Thinking

Epictetus's distinction between the internal and external aspects of the self—and the corresponding conception of self—rests firmly on the application of rational thought. This differentiation reflects a clear awareness of human finitude: it affirms human competence while simultaneously imposing limits by acknowledging inherent constraints. In his teachings, Epictetus frequently refers to the divine; however, his notion of God, much like that of Socrates, is one of a rational deity—affirming and circumscribing human reason simultaneously. As Long (2002) observed,

> "In my view, the most profound insights of Epictetus stand in stark contrast to the core messages of mainstream Christianity—even though there are notable parallels with the New Testament. His ethical outlook, which entirely appeals to self-interest and insists on placing the value of the individual self above everything else, is nevertheless that of a moralist, an uncompromising defender of integrity in human relationships, and, regarding material concerns and the role of chance, a precursor to Kant" (pp. 3–4).

In his efforts, Epictetus sought to maintain a dynamic equilibrium between the relationship of man with the divine and with other people—that is, with society. This balance was intended to prevent the reduction of humans to mere servants of God (as would later occur under medieval Christianity) while also averting the extreme self-aggrandizement characteristic of modern Enlightenment or will-centric philosophies. In this respect, Epictetus's perspective on human orientation embodies a lucid rational attitude that offers valuable insights into healing the self-conflicts encountered in contemporary society.

For Epictetus, it is precisely through rationality that human beings can transcend their animal nature and lead morally exemplary lives. He famously stated,

> "It is not events themselves that disturb us, but our judgments about them" (Epictetus, 2009, p. 581).

Yet in everyday life, people often lose sight of this truth. Instead, they act impulsively or conform to prevailing social customs, which leads to missteps and irrational behaviors. Their actions are neither deliberate, free, nor autonomous; rather, they require the disciplined application of rational thought to recognize and correct errors—

thus forming what might be described as “appropriate modes of action.” As Epictetus further advises,

> “When you learn not to value those things that lie beyond your will, when you come to recognize that none of these external things are truly yours—and that only the proper formation of your judgment, along with the correct motives and desires to act or avoid action, is yours—how then can you continue to pander to others or act in a servile manner?” (Epictetus, 2009, p. 432).

The very purpose of distinguishing between internal and external is to enable one to accurately discern one’s own will and cultivate a sound self-awareness. According to Epictetus, behaviors such as spiritual degradation, melancholic expressions, excessive dependence on others, and a tendency to blame external circumstances are all forms of irrationality. In short, as long as a person adheres to rational principles and nurtures noble character, they are bound to experience happiness.

This emphasis on the therapeutic value of rational thought is especially pertinent for prison inmates. On one hand, inmates must atone for their past misdeeds and bear the consequences of their actions; on the other, they are called to reexamine and redefine themselves as they prepare to embark on a new life. In this context, rational reflection becomes the bridge that helps them move from the shadows of their past into a renewed future. One philosophical counselor noted:

> “Although, by nature, they are not entirely bad, they do indeed lack the capacity for rational reflection. … Philosophy can illuminate the reasons behind their errors and show them how to reclaim and adapt themselves to life. I take pride in philosophy because it truly cares about the human spirit. … Even those who have sinned remain human, and it is my hope that they might come to understand not only the importance of conformity but, more importantly, how to view people and situations correctly” (Yang, 2020, p. 137).

A significant factor contributing to the high recidivism rates among former inmates is their inability to comprehend and govern themselves once freed from the strict discipline of prison. As Yang (2020, p. 191) explains,

> “The value of philosophical counseling does not lie solely in imparting a set of values but in guiding clients to uncover the rationality that has been obscured within them—to recognize the habitual laziness of their everyday thought, and thereby engage in a comprehensive and effective self-reflection on their lives.”

The practical impact of philosophical counseling for inmates lies in its capacity to analyze and evaluate the underlying value beliefs shaping their behavior. Counselors

actively listen to inmates' feelings and ideas, helping them to achieve greater self-awareness, correct cognitive distortions, and chart a more promising path forward. This mentorship role—often described as a "guide to life," a term frequently associated with Epictetus—is closely aligned with the rehabilitative mission of modern correctional systems.

Moreover, during philosophical counseling sessions, counselors have observed a marked difference in mindset between inmates with higher education and those without. Inmates with higher educational backgrounds often pursue interests—such as reading or practicing calligraphy—that help them pass the long hours of confinement in a meaningful way. They tend to manage their emotions more effectively, enjoy better mental states, and possess stronger abilities for self-comfort and encouragement. Conversely, less-educated inmates often demonstrate confusion about life after prison; they struggle to discern their future ambitions and face significant psychological pressure. Even though the prison system imposes strict external discipline, those with higher education are generally better able to maintain a unique personal identity through their individual interests. This observation underscores the direct impact of rational thought on an individual's mental and overall well-being. Even when one's present circumstances are dire, as long as a person retains the capacity for sound reasoning, philosophical counseling can help them develop a more satisfying life. In some cases, counselors have found that inmates construct their views on others and society based on their personal worldviews—which may be skewed—and that it is not simply what actually happens, but what they believe happens that shapes their behavior. In such cases, counselors can engage in dialogue to help modify these perceptions, thereby promoting genuine reform. This outcome is in perfect accord with Epictetus's views on the therapeutic significance of rational thought, serving as a testament to his enduring insight.

3. The Philosophical Practice of Egalitarian Dialogue

The rational character of Epictetus' therapeutic philosophy is expressed in practice through egalitarian dialogue. As he states,

> "Only when one party fully understands the other's ideas and viewpoints—and reciprocates by allowing the other to understand their own—can the meeting truly be regarded as an encounter between equals" (Epictetus, 2009, p. 349).

Epictetus viewed philosophical dialogue as a process of mutual examination in which both participants help one another identify and eliminate erroneous beliefs. This approach is an evolution of Socrates' method of philosophical midwifery. Since philosophical dialogue concerns the exchange of "views and opinions" rather than practical methods for resolving concrete issues, the philosopher does not assume the role of a subject-matter expert. Furthermore, by embracing the awareness of their own

ignorance, both parties engage as co-investigators in an inherently egalitarian conversation. As Long (2002) explains,

> "Just as Socrates in Plato's early dialogues did not impose his refined doctrines upon his hearers, Epictetus likewise refrains from forcing his elaborate theories on his audience. Instead, he motivates them to know themselves, to engage in self-examination, and to discover an inner reservoir of goodness independent of external randomness—a resource capable of fostering personal happiness and integrity" (p. 92).

The benefits of such egalitarian dialogue become particularly evident in the philosophical counseling provided within prisons. When a counselor and an inmate converse face-to-face, both are initially in a state of mutual ignorance regarding each other's perspectives. Moreover, because "philosophy" lacks the rigid, universally accepted definition that characterizes other disciplines, their dialogue can freely address topics of mutual concern—without being restricted by disciplinary boundaries or disparities in status or background. Although inmates may initially feel a sense of inferiority when meeting a philosophical counselor, this is effectively overcome through rationally grounded, egalitarian interaction. One counselor remarked:

> "I exchanged ideas with her and came to believe that the transgression of law and the inferiority or superiority of character are not equivalent. Many who break the law do so not out of malice but out of ignorance, and thus should not feel inferior for their misdeeds. In our view, the relative merit of an individual is determined not by social status but by the virtue or vice inherent in their character" (Yang, 2012, p. 286).

Here, the counselor applies Socrates' principle that "no one willingly does wrong" alongside Epictetus' claim that the essence of goodness is manifested through the deliberate use of reason. Through their work, counselors have come to understand that each person, regardless of circumstance, harbors a darker side. Inmates, like any other individual, care for their loved ones and wrestle with life's challenges. In this sense, there is no fundamental difference between the counselor and the inmate—both are united in their shared human condition.

At the beginning of a counseling session, the mutual acknowledgment of ignorance between counselor and inmate effectively renders their past identities irrelevant, compelling them to examine both themselves and each other in search of new possibilities. In one prison counseling session, an inmate began by asking, "What is it that you want to know?" The counselor clarified that there was no interrogative motive—merely a wish to engage in sincere conversation. Once this was established, the dialogue flowed smoothly (Yang, 2020, p. 260). This example illustrates that the value of egalitarian dialogue lies not in the specific content exchanged but in the very

act of dialogue itself; a conversation free from both physical and psychological barriers can yield unexpectedly positive effects.
As one counselor noted:

> "As a stranger, engaging in such open communication can occasionally enable someone to unburden their heart and experience a moment of spiritual release. In fact, I found that through our dialogue, he imparted as much wisdom to me as I did to him. Gradually, my own perceptions of criminals began to shift" (Yang, 2020, p. 248).

Following an extended exchange of ideas, another inmate confessed:

> "Before you came, I felt that continuing to live was pointless—because, for so long, the only people I interacted with were prison guards or my own family. I hadn't experienced normal communication with the outside world for a long time. After our conversation, I found that I felt much more at ease and even discovered a sense of meaning for my future" (Yang, 2020, p. 177).

From these accounts, counselors recognize that inmates have an acute need for egalitarian dialogue. The importance of dialogue does not lie solely in its content but in the act of communicating freely on equal terms. Philosophical counseling plays a unique role in helping inmates reintegrate into society and reclaim their freedom, as it enables them to understand both themselves and the world around them through rational analysis, and to learn how to exercise their freedom appropriately. In this regard, the freedom-oriented philosophy rooted in Epictetus' own life experience speaks directly to the concerns of inmates about achieving true liberation and offers clear guidance for overcoming their inner conflicts.
Practical experience with prison philosophical counseling demonstrates that Epictetus' therapeutic philosophy is highly effective for inmates. By discerning what lies within one's power and what does not, inmates are better able to assess their abilities, manage their relationships with their environment, and identify pathways for action and development. Encouraging inmates to engage in rational thinking and participate in egalitarian dialogue is crucial to effective counseling. For many, crimes born of ignorance and impulsiveness have left them mired in guilt and feelings of inferiority, while others struggle with adapting to the prison environment, experiencing emptiness and anxiety about the future. Rational reflection can help these individuals accurately assess their circumstances and overcome negative emotions, while egalitarian dialogue can foster the restoration of their self-esteem and confidence—thereby motivating them to explore and create new possibilities. Clearly, the principles and methods embodied in Epictetus' therapeutic thought remain as applicable today as they were in ancient times, and they merit serious scholarly and practical attention.

References

Confucius. (1980). *The Analects* (B. Yang, Trans.). Zhonghua Book Company.

Epictetus. (2009). *Epictetus' Discourses* (W. Wang, Trans.). Commercial Press.

Long, A. A. (2002). *Epictetus: A Stoic and Socratic guide to life*. Oxford University Press.

Yang, Y. (2012). *Walking with philosophy: Philosophical explorations based on life practice*. Shaanxi People's Publishing House.

Yang, Y. (Ed.). (2020). *Philosophy's field*. Intellectual Property Publishing.

I. The Relationship Between Epictetus' Philosophical Therapeutics and Contemporary Philosophical Counseling Practice

1. Application of Epictetus' Philosophical Therapeutics in Contemporary Counseling

Epictetus' therapeutic philosophy is applicable to modern philosophical counseling practices. As one illustration, I have long integrated prison counseling into my curriculum at the Department of Philosophy at Sun Yat-sen University. In courses such as "Foucault Studies" and "Philosophical Counseling and Philosophical Therapeutics", I have practically taken students to prisons on an annual basis for consultation and mentorship with inmates. Over the years, I have published several related collections, and the present report is grounded in this body of research.

2. A Shared Fundamental Challenge: From Confinement to Freedom

Both Epictetus and prison inmates confront a similar fundamental question: How does one achieve a transformation from confinement to freedom? This issue lies at the very heart of contemporary philosophical counseling.

II. Distinguishing Between the Internal and External as the Key to Philosophical Therapeutics

1. The Foundational Distinction in Epictetus' Works

In the opening passages of both his *Discourses* and the *Enchiridion*, Epictetus makes a clear distinction between what is within our power and what is not:

> "That which is within our power includes our opinions, our motives, our desires, and our aversions—in short, everything that we ourselves do. That which is not within our power encompasses our body, property, reputation, position, and everything that is not the product of our own doing." (Epictetus, 2009)

2. Guidance for Cultivating a Healthy Mindset Among Inmates

This very distinction offers practical guidance for philosophical counselors working with prisoners. For example, one counselor remarks:

> "There is indeed discrimination in this society, but since we cannot change it, we must work on altering and perfecting ourselves to seize the available opportunities." (Yang, 2020b)

Another counselor adds:

> "While we may not be able to change the perceptions held by others, we can certainly transform how we view ourselves. I consistently encourage them

> not to look down on themselves, not to believe that a past mistake eternally renders them inferior, and not to impose labels on themselves. Society is harsh—this is an inescapable reality—but at the very least, one should foster a properly optimistic mindset." (Yang, 2020b)

3. Fostering Self-Transformation Through Internal-External Distinctions

By making a clear distinction between internal and external factors, inmates are enabled to set aside external concerns and focus on their inner selves, thereby facilitating genuine self-transformation. One inmate explained:

> "I have actually gained a great deal here. Previously, I had achieved much—living a life of luxury and superficial extravagance outside, with dazzling nights and ceaseless indulgences, where notions of morality, boundaries, and integrity were long abandoned. Now, in prison, I make deliberate use of every idle moment to read, reflect on my past, and reevaluate the value of my life. Had I remained outside, I would never have encountered such an opportunity. Whenever I reflect on this, I realize that even serving time in prison can serve as a form of spiritual cultivation." (Yang, 2020a)

III. The Philosophical Therapeutic Significance of Rational Thinking

1. The Role of Rational Attitude in Self-Perception and Worldview

Epictetus's distinction between what is internal and what is external reflects a rational attitude toward how one perceives oneself and the world. By placing self-interest at the forefront—while also upholding moral principles through an effort to balance the relationship between man and the divine, as well as man and society—his approach offers valuable insights for resolving the internal divisions and conflicts experienced by contemporary individuals.

2. The Promise of a Morally Fulfilling Life Through Rational Self-Knowledge

According to Epictetus, as long as individuals accurately understand their own intentions, they can lead lives marked by moral excellence and true happiness. This perspective is especially relevant for prisoners, as it helps them gain self-awareness and rectify cognitive distortions. For example, Epictetus states:

> "It is not things themselves that disturb us, but our opinions about them." (Epictetus, 2009)

He further explains:

> "When you learn not to value that which is external or beyond your own volition, when you realize that none of those things truly belong to you—and that only by forming your own judgments correctly, having proper impulses

> to act, and generating the right desires to obtain or avoid things can these things be considered your own—how then can you behave in a servile manner or resort to base actions?" (Epictetus, 2009)

Philosophical counselors echo the value of such rational insights. One counselor notes:

> "At their core, these individuals are not inherently flawed; they simply lack the capacity for rational reflection. Philosophy can show them why their actions are misguided and guide them in rediscovering themselves and adapting to life. Ultimately, philosophy is concerned with nurturing the inner life of a person. Even those who have erred remain human, and I hope they come to embrace not just conformity but a correct and balanced understanding of people and events." (Yang, 2020b)

Another counselor emphasizes:

> "The purpose of philosophical counseling is not necessarily to impart a specific set of values, but rather to help individuals uncover the rationality that has been hidden within them—to recognize the habitual laziness in their everyday thought processes and thereby launch a comprehensive and effective reflection on their lives." (Yang, 2020b)

3. Impact of Rational Thinking on Inmates' Mental States and Lifestyle

Prisoners' diverse understandings of their prison experience have a profound effect on their emotional well-being and life satisfaction. Inmates with higher levels of education, for instance, tend to better regulate their moods and preserve a distinct personal identity even within a highly regulated environment. This observation underscores that the ability to engage in rational thought has a direct impact on one's internal state and overall quality of life. Philosophical counselors can play an essential role in guiding inmates to adopt rational thinking as a means to live more fulfilling lives. One counselor remarked:

> "From their accounts, it is clear that their greatest challenge is a pervasive emptiness—they are often uncertain about how to spend their days. Life in prison can sometimes be excruciating, and while the hope of eventual release may spark a glimmer of optimism, the monotony and isolation of daily life remain overwhelming." (Yang, 2020b)

Reflecting on another encounter, a counselor stated:

> "I was somewhat surprised by her depth of insight. She observed, 'If you are young and your sentence is not severe, serving time can be a valuable opportunity for personal growth. There is nothing here to complain about—it

> was simply a lack of legal awareness in the past, and that is something you must address in your future endeavors.' … Her smile unfolded as elegantly as a lily, and I sincerely wish for her heart to freely choose tranquility." (Yang, 2012)

IV. The Practice of Equal Dialogue as a Philosophical Engagement

1. Equal Dialogue as a Process of Mutual Examination

Epictetus's therapeutic philosophy advocates for an equal dialogue—a process of mutual examination in which both parties help one another identify and discard erroneous perceptions and viewpoints. This approach is essentially a continuation and development of Socratic maieutics.

2. The Benefits of Equal Dialogue in Inmate Counseling

The merits of the equal dialogue promoted by Epictetus become particularly evident in the context of philosophical counseling with prisoners. Equal dialogue enables counselors and inmates to discuss any issue of concern without being constrained by disciplinary boundaries or differences in identity and background. Such an approach allows both parties to fully engage in the conversation, often resulting in unexpectedly positive outcomes.

For instance, one participant shared:

> "In our exchange of ideas, I found that breaking the law and the question of moral quality are not equivalent. Many who break the law do so not from malicious intent but out of ignorance—and therefore should not feel inherently inferior because of their actions. In our view, the merit of a person is not determined by their social status, but by the goodness or evil of their character." (Yang, 2012)

Another participant remarked:

> "As a stranger, engaging in this kind of communication can sometimes allow a person to open up and experience a form of spiritual relief. In fact, I believe that in the course of our dialogue, the educational value he imparted to me was no less than what I was able to offer him. Gradually, my own perceptions of criminals have evolved." (Yang, 2020b)

V. Conclusions

Philosophical counseling practices in prisons demonstrate that Epictetus's therapeutic philosophy can effectively address the specific needs of prisoners. By distinguishing between what is within our power and what lies beyond it, inmates are enabled to

realistically assess their abilities, balance their relationship with the external environment, and identify viable avenues for personal development.

Within this process, encouraging inmates to engage in rational reflection and participate in equal dialogue is crucial for the success of philosophical counseling. Many inmates, driven by ignorance and impulsiveness, find themselves mired in guilt and low self-esteem, while others struggle to adapt to the prison environment, feeling a pervasive emptiness and anxiety about the future. Rational thinking helps them attain a clearer understanding of themselves and overcome negative emotions, and equal dialogue reinforces their self-respect and confidence—thereby fostering the discovery and creation of new possibilities.

Thus, the philosophical therapeutic principles and methods inherent in Epictetus's thought are as applicable in contemporary contexts as they were in ancient times, warranting careful study and practical application. Epictetus's method of distinguishing between the internal and external and advocating a return to one's own volition finds a parallel in Foucault's trajectory—from his early analyses of power's disciplining techniques to his later focus on "technologies of the self."

Foucault eloquently remarks:

> "Today's goal is not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are. In order to break free from the political 'double bind'—the twin constraints of individualization and totalization present in modern power structures—we must imagine and construct what we might be." (Heyes, 2014)

He further explains the concept of self-technology:

> "Self-technology enables individuals, whether through their own efforts or with the help of others, to exercise a range of controls over their bodies, souls, thoughts, behaviors, and modes of existence. Through such practices, they achieve a transformation of self in the pursuit of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or even immortality." (Foucault, 1988)

These insights illustrate that Epictetus's philosophical therapeutic thought, Foucault's analyses of power and subjectivity, and modern philosophical counseling are all part of a broader exploration of the possibilities of selfhood and freedom. Their ultimate aim is to help individuals overcome external constraints and take control of their own lives—that is, to effect a transformation from confinement to freedom.

References

Epictetus. (2009). *Epictetus' Discourses* (W. Wang, Trans.). Commercial Press.

Foucault, M. (1988). Technologies of the self. In *Technologies of the self: A seminar with Michel Foucault* (Vol. 18, p. 170).

Heyes, C. J. (2014). Subjectivity and power. In *Michel Foucault* (pp. 159-172). Routledge.

Yang, Y. (2012). *Walking with philosophy: Philosophical explorations based on life practice*. Shaanxi People's Publishing House.

Yang, Y. (Ed.). (2020a). *Discipline, Self-Knowledge, and Self Redemption: Philosophical Reflections on Mental Illness and Crime*. Shaanxi People's Publishing House

Yang, Y. (Ed.). (2020b). *Philosophy's field*. Intellectual Property Publishing.

Qi Tan (Nanjing Agricultural University)
“Research on the Philosophical therapy of the Stoic school”

The development of the Stoic school can be divided into three periods: the early, middle, and late periods. Its philosophical system consists of three parts: physics, logic, and ethics. Generally, scholars believe that, regardless of the period, ethics has always been the core concern of Stoic philosophers, and the studies of physics and logic serve ethics. However, recently, some scholars have argued that the Stoic philosophical theory is a whole. For example, Pierre Hadot and Anthony Long believe that Stoic philosophy is a living physics, a living logic, and a living ethics. These three share the same divine "Logos." Therefore, in philosophical therapy, they should also be unified. The reason they are divided into three parts is that Stoic teaching mainly focuses on these three courses. This understanding endows the Stoic philosophical therapy thought with great tension and vitality. Physics is not only the theoretical premise of ethics but also the methodology of philosophical therapy. Logic is not merely a method and tool for philosophical therapy but also the thought of philosophical therapy itself. The life goal of ethics is premised on the cosmology in physics. Thus, when studying the Stoic philosophical therapy thought, it is necessary to regard its physics, logic, and ethics as an integrated theoretical framework.
Starting from their understanding of themselves and the universe, the Stoics' cosmology teaches us how to view the relationship between humans and the world. It requires us to submit to fate, and the Logos is equivalent to concepts such as fate, nature, and reason. Therefore, submitting to fate means being in harmony with the divine Logos. Ethics teaches us how to view the relationship between humans and others, requiring us to root out passions and live a life in accordance with nature. The cosmic reason ensures the goodness of this natural reason. Logic teaches us how to view the relationship between humans and themselves, requiring us to use our rational examination ability to make appropriate judgments about things, so as to be free from the control of passions and achieve inner peace. In this sense, the contemporary existentialism - model philosophical therapy can be traced back to the Stoic school. Different from psychiatric and psychological therapies, which only expound from the internal perspective of humans, existentialist philosophical therapy has a broader vision and includes the relationship between humans and the external world. The fundamental reason is that humans are beings in a specific time and history. Ontological - level therapy transcends the internal dimensions of brain science, psychoanalysis, and psychology, and places humans in the relationship between humans and the world for holistic treatment.

1. Living in Harmony with Nature
In the overall framework of the Stoic cosmology, on the one hand, the universe (cosmos) is a rational animal, a self - generating rational living being. On the other hand, the universe is an intelligent creator, a divine craftsman who creates all things

through self - production. The Stoic cosmology was influenced by Plato and Aristotle. From the perspective of the external generating cause of the universe, it absorbed Plato's concept of the divine craftsman's creation. From the perspective of the internal generating cause, it absorbed Aristotle's biological approach of analogy between art and nature. However, there is a fundamental difference in the Stoic cosmology. That is, the universe is not only a living being, and it explains the generation and operation of the universe as an organic whole through the reproductive model and the artisanal model.

As a rational living being, the universe is composed of an active principle (reason, god) and a passive principle (matter). The Stoics proved through various examples that the universe is a unified organism and is under the control of god, which is the Logos. The operation of the universe follows the Logos. All things have their natural laws of existence, interact with each other, and have a causal relationship. No individual can exist independently of the universe as a whole. Zeno argued as follows: "First, a rational being is superior to an irrational one. The universe is the supreme being, so the universe is rational. Second, an irrational being cannot give birth to a rational one. The universe has given birth to rational beings, so the universe is rational." Zeno also compared the relationship between humans and the universe to that between branches and leaves of a tree. Humans and the universe are like organs to a living being. Modern science has also proven that the composition of the human body is the same as the basic raw materials of the universe, which scientists currently identify as carbon, oxygen, nitrogen, iron, and sulfur. The structure of the human brain not only has a similar picture to cosmic star clusters but also has a coincidence in quantity. According to the latest estimate, there are 100 billion galaxies in the universe, which is also a rough estimate of the number of neurons in the human brain. As Long and Sedley said, "The life history of god and the history of the world he created are completely identical."

The Stoic cosmology mainly inherited the pantheistic thought of Heraclitus. The early Stoics defined nature as a creative fire that creates according to certain laws. They advocated a monism in which essence is phenomenon, god is nature, and the Logos is inherent in matter. Different from the mystical characteristics of Heraclitus' cosmology, the Stoics absorbed the thoughts of different ancient Greek natural philosophies and had a more complex development of the continuity between nature and the universe. Some scholars believe that the Stoic philosophical system has more internal unity and coherence than classical philosophy. In their overall cosmological framework, Logos = god = reason = nature = fate, thus achieving the unity of human natural nature and cosmic reason. The moral theory and eudaimonism are embedded in such a cosmological background.

As an important representative of the late Stoic school, Marcus Aurelius developed Zeno's thought. He combined cosmology and ethics and demonstrated the normative ethical principle that people should submit to fate and live in harmony with nature. In Meditations, Aurelius equated "virtue" or "good" with "in accordance with nature." Based on "natural nature," it serves as the criterion for guiding human actions and the

goal of life. Virtue is a rational state consistent with nature, while evil is an ignorant state that violates nature. The highest good is to live a life in harmony with nature. Here, "nature" has a dual meaning, referring to both human nature and the nature of the universe. Since human nature is a part of the universe's nature, living in harmony with nature is in line with both the special nature of humans and the universal reason of the universe. Nature = virtue = good, so a life in accordance with nature is the goal pursued by moral life.

Aurelius defined the basic propositions of ethics with cosmological propositions. It is a way of inferring how people should live in the universe by questioning the special nature of humans in the universe and striving to achieve the good of this special nature. In this regard, the Stoic ethics is consistent with the ideas of classical - period philosophers. They inquire into human nature through the ontology of natural philosophy, demonstrate human virtue through human nature, and thus determine human moral life. Cicero further based his ethical propositions on cosmology in On the Laws. "Because we are rational, ethical principles are rules for us," and correct reason is law. The core of this sentence, according to a Kantian interpretation, is that ethical principles are "rules" not because they are externally coerced but because rational beings can legislate for themselves, making universal moral laws a necessary choice of free will. Although their ultimate moral laws point in different directions, to some extent, Cicero foresaw Kant. The ethical law of "living in harmony with nature" for the first time had objective necessity, elevating moral life to the ontological level. It enabled people to truly realize their nature and reach a state of unity with cosmic reason.

Living in harmony with nature is often misinterpreted as a passive fatalism. In fact, this view still leaves room for human free will after recognizing the inevitability of things. Because true freedom is not acting willfully but living according to rational laws. Submitting to fate is not passive waiting or inaction but to understand nature, perfect our reason, and actively understand and identify with the rational arrangements of the universe, thus uniting with fate. Fate reflects the inevitability of the universe's operation and the inevitability of causal relationships. Therefore, only by recognizing the Stoic view of human position and mission in the universe and understanding the inevitability of things can we truly master the essence of "living in harmony with nature." Spinoza also emphasized that freedom is the recognition of necessity. However, Spinoza's pantheism originated from a thorough rationalist spirit, while the Stoics' view was based on cosmology. It is worth noting that this view of living in harmony with nature and submitting to fate is by no means a nihilistic ethical proposition, nor will it lead to a passive and negative attitude towards life. Instead, it reflects the Stoics' practical wisdom. On the one hand, they advocate accepting fate with a calm attitude but also emphasize actively using our reason to achieve freedom. Although this freedom was called "abstract freedom of thought" (the spirit is not afraid of bullets) by Hegel, in fact, Stoicism is still very useful in the current reality. It can indeed help people offset and endure some losses and pains in reality and help people continue to live. As long as we are alive and can think, we can have freedom of thought. On the other hand, when we think from the perspective of nature and the universe rather than from an individual

perspective, the vastness of the universe will make us realize that personal pain and troubles are insignificant. Aurelius practiced and thought philosophically in this way. Contemporary philosophical therapy also pays attention to this point and summarizes it as "cosmic consciousness." By meditating on the universe, we will realize that our reason is of the same nature as cosmic reason. The perspective of looking at problems rises from the particularity of the individual to universality, thus reducing pain and troubles and achieving mental freedom and peace.

2. Perfecting Reason

The Stoics believed that reason is the divine part in everyone and the foundation of the human community. This reason is not only a cognitive ability but also a moral choice ability. Regardless of gender, social status, or identity, everyone has infinite value by virtue of their rational and moral abilities. Just because everyone has this universal human nature, people on the entire earth are cosmopolitans. In contrast, Plato corresponded the three parts of the soul to the city - state life of three social classes. Using the analogy of the city - state and the soul, he connected human nature with city - state life. For Aristotle, "man is a political animal." Even an independent philosopher cannot survive outside the city - state. The death of Socrates also exemplified the political nature of humans: he refused to accept his friends' offer to be exiled elsewhere because he could no longer be the same person anywhere else. His identity was decisively connected with Athens.

The Stoics developed the natural purpose of respecting human nature into the thought of cosmopolitanism, especially reflected in the works of Cicero and Aurelius. They believed that reason makes everyone fellow citizens, regardless of their social status. Cicero mentioned in On Duties that nature stipulates that everyone should safeguard the interests of others because he is a human. "If so, everyone will be subject to a single natural law; if so, we are all destined not to harm others." Aurelius pointed out: "As long as a person lives anywhere like a cosmopolitan, it doesn't matter whether he lives here or there. Realizing this, we should not set obstacles between people due to differences in nationality, class, race, or even gender."Wherever we are, we should discover human nature and first be loyal to and respect the core elements of human nature, namely, reason and moral abilities. This view of reason provides the teleological foundation of human nature for the Stoics.

The thought of respecting human nature and moral abilities was further developed in Kant's moral philosophy. Although Kant's discussion of Stoic thought was relatively brief, his moral philosophy system was deeply influenced by it. Especially the thoughts of Cicero and Aurelius on natural law had an important impact on the core ideas of Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals. Cicero interpreted the Stoic view of living in accordance with nature as universal respect for human nature. This awe of the sanctity of inner reason deeply influenced Kant. Kant based moral motivation on the awe of moral laws and emphasized that true moral behavior must stem from pure respect for moral laws. This thought was further expounded in Kant's concept of the

"kingdom of ends." Humans are not only means but also ends in themselves. Everyone has an irreplaceable moral value. The Stoics believed that moral motivation originated from the awe of natural laws. People should revere natural laws and live according to reason. This awe is not only respect for external order but also identification with internal reason. Kant developed the Stoic view that people should live according to natural laws into the idea that people should live for rational purposes. At the same time, he directly removed the intervention of god and transferred the moral foundation from nature to human reason. However, Kant did not attach importance to emotions (for example, he denied the ethical value of compassion), while late Stoics such as Aurelius and Seneca believed that emotions promoted social harmony. This difference precisely became the starting point of Nussbaum's emotion theory.

Based on the enlightenment of reason, we can clearly feel that the connotations of "deontology" and "moral autonomy" in his moral philosophy are influenced by the Stoic thought of living in harmony with nature, especially taking rationalism as the highest standard for universal legislation. Kant regarded reason as the source of moral laws and emphasized the core role of practical reason in moral behavior. His "categorical imperative" requires that the maxim of an action must have the possibility of universalization. Aurelius pointed out: "If reason is universal, then the law is universal; if both are so, then we are all fellow citizens. If so, we share an organized polity. If so, the world is like the former city - state." Kant believed that we have a responsibility to try our best to understand the ways of thinking of others. Here, Kant was clearly following Aurelius. He referred to the Stoic view of cosmopolitan identity, especially reflected in his work Perpetual Peace.

In short, the Stoic theory of human nature is based on natural teleology. Reason, as a cognitive ability, enables people to understand nature; as a normative law, it enables people to live a life in harmony with nature. The dual nature of reason points to the same goal. The ultimate goal of humans is to realize their universal human nature.

Nussbaum developed the Stoic thought of perfecting reason into a therapeutic art in philosophical therapy - rational self - management. When studying the philosophical therapies of the three major schools in the Hellenistic period, Nussbaum believed that the differences between the Stoic school and other schools were as follows: first, everyone's reasoning ability is not only valued as a value but also has intrinsic value and deserves respect. Second, the object of philosophical therapy should cover everyone. Based on rational human nature, it is believed that everyone has an equal status. The key to the therapeutic effect of philosophy does not lie in philosophy submitting to other norms - as an art of pursuing happiness, but in the fact that only through philosophical argumentation can we obtain the happiness we truly desire. The former clarifies that philosophy, as a means, can promote people's pursuit of happiness through the art of rational self - management. The latter means that philosophy is an end in itself. That is, philosophy not only provides a certain theory but also invites us to participate in philosophical argumentation, improve our rational ability to control our lives, and reshape ourselves in this process. Hume believed that human behavior is the combined product of relevant beliefs and desires. Among them, desires

alone provide the driving force for behavior, and rational beliefs have nothing to do with the driving force but only provide information on how to act to satisfy desires. Hume's reason has an instrumental side and is a means to achieve desires. The Stoic reason, however, is about value. Reason itself can establish values and goals - what is the best and worth pursuing. Rational self - management means actively using philosophical argumentation through ourselves rather than dogmas and authorities, engaging in arduous and active intellectual work, and using thought to control life.
The philosophical therapy based on rational self - management, due to its emphasis on rational autonomy and philosophical argumentation, is different from other forms of therapy, such as superstitious ideas and religious beliefs. The latter pin their hopes of pursuing a good life on prayer and faith, placing their hopes on other things. However, the results are unpredictable and uncontrollable. Philosophical therapy advocates eliminating this uncontrollable factor and using a rational art to reduce the uncertainty of life, making luck (tuche) subject to our reason. For example, in the medical field, rational technology ultimately replaced the traditional way of making wishes and praying. Although there was fierce competition among different philosophical schools in the Hellenistic period and different views on passions, what is important is to understand their commonalities: they all represent philosophical reason and are different from other traditional forms such as folk religions and superstitious ideas that are considered curative.

3. Rooting out Emotions

The Stoic eudaimonism holds that happiness is the highest goal (telos) of life. This goal is "the ultimate object of human desire" and "the highest good" (summum bonum). [^footnote8] Whether it is philosophers in the classical period or those in the Hellenistic period, they would agree that the realization of happiness is mainly internal and depends on a person's moral character. The Stoics took a more radical position, believing that happiness is completely equivalent to virtue and depends on virtue. Therefore, happiness does not require any external good. Virtue is a necessary and sufficient condition for achieving happiness. Epicurus, on the contrary, believed that virtue is a means to happiness and serves as an instrumental value to maximize pleasure. Kant opposed both of these views. The Epicurean school reduced virtue to happiness; conversely, the Stoics reduced happiness to virtue. This seemingly achieved the unity of virtue and happiness but actually dissolved one into the other.
The Stoics believed that a life in accordance with virtue is a life in harmony with nature. There are internal and external interpretations of the specific connotation of this virtue. The internal interpretation holds that virtue is internal logical consistency. Because the purpose of virtue itself is to realize the essence of humans. The most perfect rational state of humans is to be in line with the divine Logos. A completely rational being will be satisfied with the proper exercise of their rational abilities and achieve complete happiness here. The external interpretation holds that virtue is to live according to

external standards, requiring our will to be consistent with the nature of the universe. When our understanding of nature gets closer and closer to nature

Stoic eudaimonism posits that happiness (eudaimonia) is the supreme end (telos) of human life. This end is the "ultimate object of human desire" and the "highest good" (summum bonum) [Anthony A. Long & Liu Wei. The Stoic Theory of Happiness. Tsinghua Studies in Western Philosophy,. Philosophers from both the Classical and Hellenistic periods would agree that the attainment of happiness is primarily internal, dependent on an individual's moral character. The Stoics, however, adopted a more radical stance, asserting that happiness is completely equivalent to and dependent upon virtue (arete). Consequently, happiness requires no external goods; virtue alone is both the necessary and sufficient condition for achieving happiness. Epicurus, conversely, regarded virtue as a means to happiness, possessing instrumental value for maximizing pleasure. Kant rejected both approaches: Epicureanism reduced virtue to happiness, while Stoicism reduced happiness to virtue. Although this latter move appeared to unify virtue and happiness, in essence, it dissolved one into the other .

The Stoics maintained that a life in accordance with virtue is a life in accordance with nature. The specific connotation of this virtue is interpreted in two ways: internally and externally. The internal interpretation holds that virtue consists in internal logical coherence. The purpose of virtue itself is to realize human essence; the most perfect state of human reason lies in its harmony with the divine Logos. A perfectly rational being finds contentment in the proper exercise of their rational capacity, achieving complete happiness therein. The external interpretation holds that virtue means living according to an external standard, requiring our will to conform to the nature of the cosmos. As our understanding of nature increasingly approximates nature itself, our experiential life becomes increasingly consonant with nature, as expressed in Chrysippus's dictum: "To live virtuously is equivalent to living according to the experience of things which happen by nature; therefore, our end becomes living in agreement with nature". Achieving the state of virtue thus requires us to master knowledge of nature and to act in conformity with nature's "norms" .

These two interpretations represent the subjective and objective aspects of the same norm. In obeying universal law, one obeys one's own reason, akin to Kant's moral law conforming to practical law. Kant held that humans possess a dual nature: phenomenal (pursuing happiness) and noumenal (pursuing morality). The Stoics, however, saw humans as possessing a single nature; natural law and moral law are entirely identical. Thus, morality can be realized within the natural realm. The legislative principle underlying moral action can be grounded in experience, for the goods within this experiential world also belong to nature. Even when these values conflict, living in accordance with nature constitutes a rational state that is morality. Although Stoicism shares similarities with Kant–notably, that the criterion for moral evaluation is the purity of motive (acting from duty) rather than empirical outcomes–its eudaimonism has been derided as both hypocritical and impoverished. However, Stoicism's requirement regarding moral motivation and intention is less stringent. Moral action does not consist in the motive conforming to the moral law perse, but in

conforming to nature. That is, experiential goods and the moral law are not contradictory; they are coherent. The Stoics held an extreme view on this: disease is not an evil, nor even enslavement or torture, because these stem from external causes beyond our control and lie outside the sphere of our reason and happiness. Regardless of the adversity a Stoic faces, it cannot impair their virtue or happiness. Thus, Stoicism indeed dissolves the concept of empirical happiness; happiness resides solely in agreement with nature, meaning obedience to the universal law of the cosmos. In this sense, Stoic happiness resembles Kantian morality within practical reason.

For the Stoics, reason, virtue, and happiness are inextricably linked. They viewed virtue as essentially a state of rational perfection, determined not by external circumstances but by an individual's mastery over their own thoughts and actions. True happiness is an internal, enduring state, impervious to external vicissitudes. This view stands in stark contrast to the prevalent hedonism and materialism of contemporary times. The Stoics regarded virtue as the highest good and the sole path to happiness. This conception of virtue provides clear direction for the pursuit of happiness, attainable through the continuous cultivation and exercise of rational capacity.

The Stoic philosophers held a consistent view on the passions (pathe), proposing a counter-intuitive thesis: human nature is entirely devoid of passions. While acknowledging the physiological basis for appetites (hormai), they argued that all other human emotions depend on value judgments and beliefs. Zeno, in On Human Nature, stated: "A passion is an irrational and unnatural movement of the soul, an excessive impulse contrary to judgment" . For instance, fear arises from the value judgment that we are about to suffer serious harm undeservedly; anger stems from the thought that something we value highly is being slighted by others. Zeno equated passion with a type of judgment, implying that passions involve evaluative beliefs – beliefs concerning the value, benefit, harm, goodness, or badness of things. Chrysippus, in On Passions, further argued that passions arise when we judge external things to be sources of good or evil. In reality, however, only virtue is truly good, and only vice is truly evil. Chrysippus viewed passions as determined by our evaluative beliefs about how things exist. Passions contain a rational cognitive dimension; they are composed of, and depend upon, our evaluative beliefs about the world.

For example, breaking an ordinary glass would not cause me fear; I would not feel anger if someone took my pen; nor would I feel pity if someone lost a piece of paper. These examples illustrate that if an object can be easily replaced by another of equal value, it is insufficient to provoke an emotional disturbance; we deem such a loss insignificant. Emotions are intimately connected to our beliefs or judgments concerning value: the disparagement or valuation of external things beyond our control. In other words, our judgments about propositions are not merely expressions of irrational desires or preferences; they embody evaluative beliefs. These evaluative beliefs tend to focus our attention on external things we cannot control. For the Stoics, this state of life is irrational, not only because it leads to constant turmoil and suffering but also because it fosters intense anger and hatred, among other problems. Furthermore, our

attachments and emotions towards things like property, reputation, honor, and beauty do not arise naturally. The Stoics profoundly recognized that our prevalent beliefs about these things are primarily shaped by society; they are part of social conventions and public life. These beliefs become incorporated into the social system, internalized within it, and then subtly permeate our deepest thoughts. To some extent, most societies, ancient or modern, Eastern or Western, share erroneous beliefs. Stoics believed that attachment and emotions tied to external things amount to surrendering oneself to the whims of the world and relinquishing the sovereignty of one's mind to others.

The Stoics believed philosophy could eradicate the passions precisely because their theory revealed that passions are not sensual instincts but are composed of evaluative beliefs, possessing a rational cognitive element that can be altered by revising judgments and beliefs. Consequently, Stoic philosophers could make the eradication of passions a goal of philosophical therapy. According to Stoic eudaimonism, these attachments and emotions plunge the soul into disorder, diverting it from nature and virtue. Therefore, passions must be completely eradicated. By correcting false inferences and invalid premises to change cognition, the soul can maintain a rational state, thereby achieving a virtuous life. Linking passions to eudaimonism, Stoic philosophers asserted that a virtuous life must be devoid of all passion. Although this view has faced numerous criticisms, their theory of emotions remains highly instructive for philosophical therapy.

Firstly, this theory offers a method for coping with stress and anxiety. In modern society, people are often troubled by various pressures and anxieties. Stoicism teaches us that by distinguishing between what is within our control and what is not, we can reduce unnecessary distress and maintain inner tranquility. This approach holds significant practical value for alleviating psychological stress in contemporary life. Secondly, Stoic eudaimonism emphasizes the importance of inner cultivation. In an era dominated by materialism, people often equate happiness with external achievements and material possessions. Stoicism reminds us that true happiness stems from inner virtue and rational perfection. This perspective offers crucial insights for correcting modern society's value orientation and guiding people to focus on inner growth and self-cultivation. By studying and practicing Stoic eudaimonism, we may discover a more enduring and profound form of happiness within modern society.

Reference

Annas J, Barnes J, Sextus Empiricus. Outlines of scepticism[M]. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Beck MC. Tragedy and the Philosophical Life: A Response to Martha Nussbaum[M]. Lewiston: E. Mellen Press, 2006

Long A A, Sedley D N. The Hellenistic philosophers[M]. Cambridge University Press,1987.

Macksey R. Renegotiating ethics in literature, philosophy, and theory[M]. Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Raabe P. Philosophy's role in counseling and psychotherapy[M]. Rowman &Littlefield, 2013.

Sharon A. Plato's Symposium[M]. Focus, 1998.

Raabe P. Philosophy's role in counseling and psychotherapy[M]. Rowman &Littlefield,2014.

Nussbaum MC. Love's knowledge: Essays on philosophy and literature[M]. OUPUSA,1992

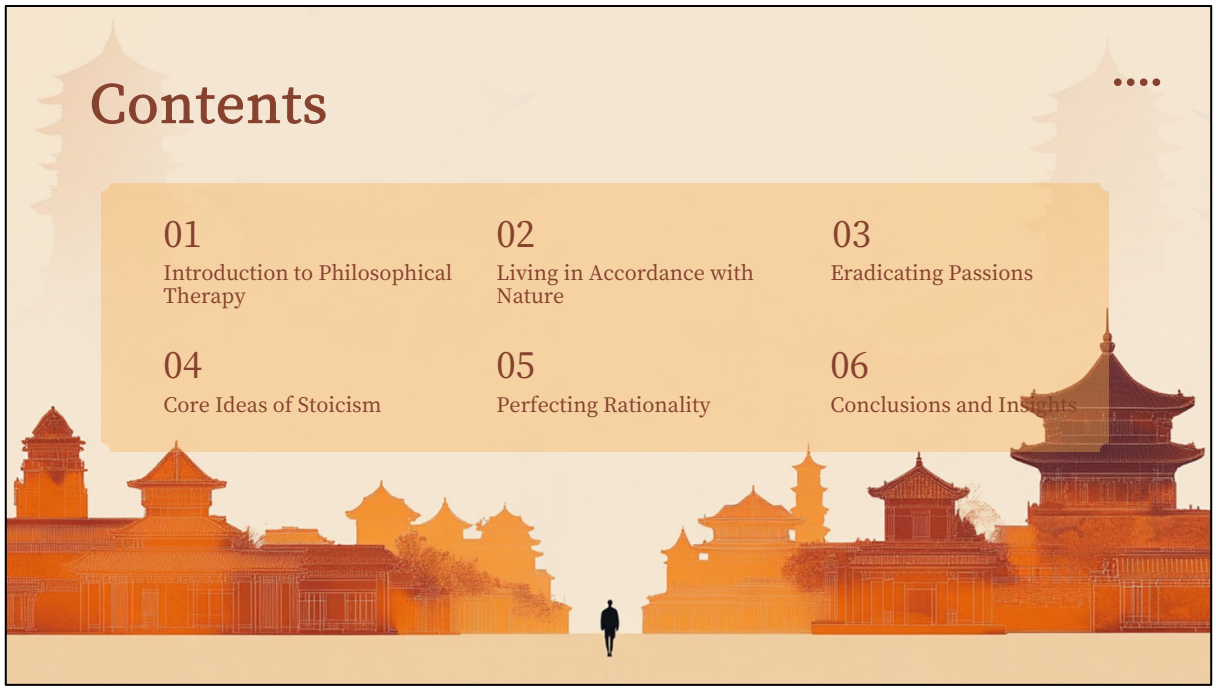
Nussbaum M C. The quality of life[M]. Clarendon Press,2007.

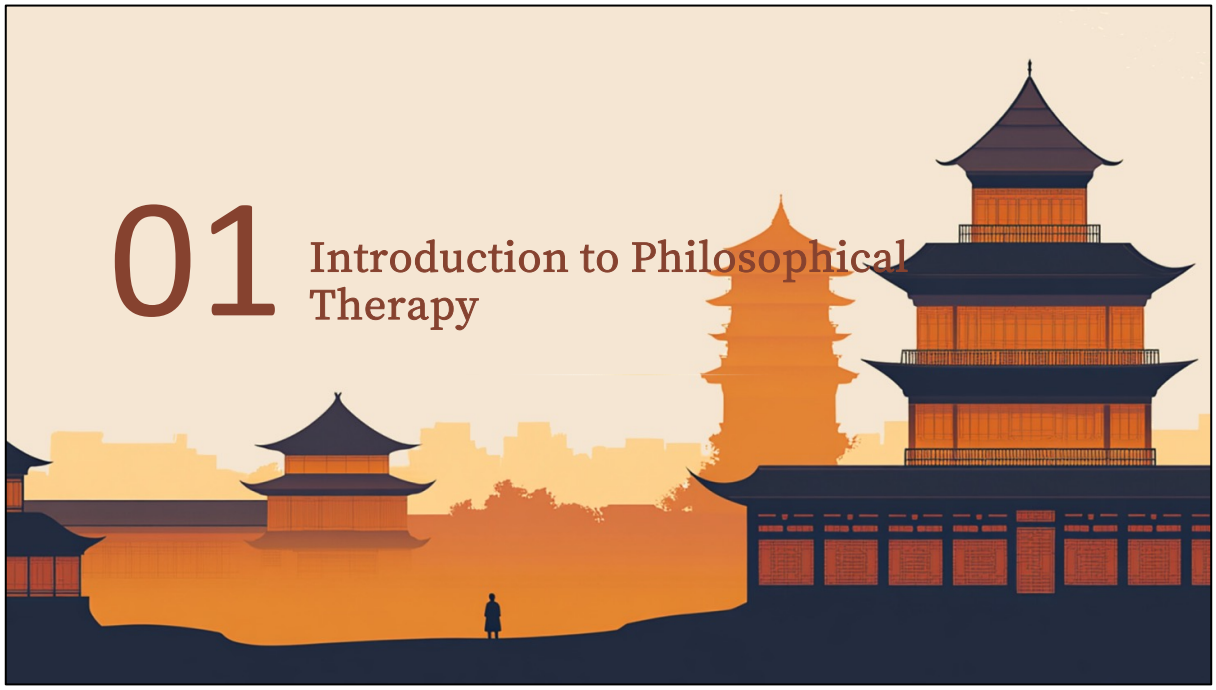
R. W. Sharples. Stoics Epicureans and Sceptics[M]. London and New York. 1996.

C. Taylor, Sources of the Self[M].Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA ,1999.

D. L. Laertius, Lives of Eminent Philosophers[M].Vol. II. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA ,1995.


Research on the Philosophical therapy of the Stoic school
Presenter: TAN QI Nanjing Agricultural University


Contents
01
Introduction to Philosophical Therapy
02
Living in Accordance with Nature
03
Eradicating Passions
04
Core Ideas of Stoicism
05
Perfecting Rationality
06
Conclusions and Insights



Definition of Philosophical Therapy

Definition

01 Philosophical therapy addresses individual spiritual distress, cognitive conflicts, and existential crises by engaging with philosophical concepts rather than psychological factors.

Distinction from Modern Therapy

02 The goal is to reconstruct beliefs and achieve inner balance, offering a broader perspective that includes the relationship between individuals and the world.

Goal

03 Unlike modern therapies that focus on psychological interventions, philosophical therapy emphasizes understanding existential questions and values.



Structure of Stoic Philosophy

Three Components

01 Stoic philosophy comprises physics, logic, and ethics, with ethics traditionally seen as the core but recent views suggesting a unified framework.

Core Objective

02 The ultimate aim is to attain inner tranquility (ataraxia) and self-sufficiency (autarkeia), enabling individuals to face life's uncertainties and sufferings.

Key Concepts

03 Central concepts include Logos, nature, and fate, which together form the basis for understanding the relationship between human nature and cosmic rationality.



Cosmology

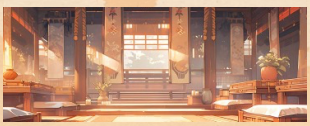


01 Rational Living Organism

The universe is viewed as a rational living organism, composed of active (reason, god) and passive (matter) principles, operating according to the Logos.

02 Interconnectedness of All Things

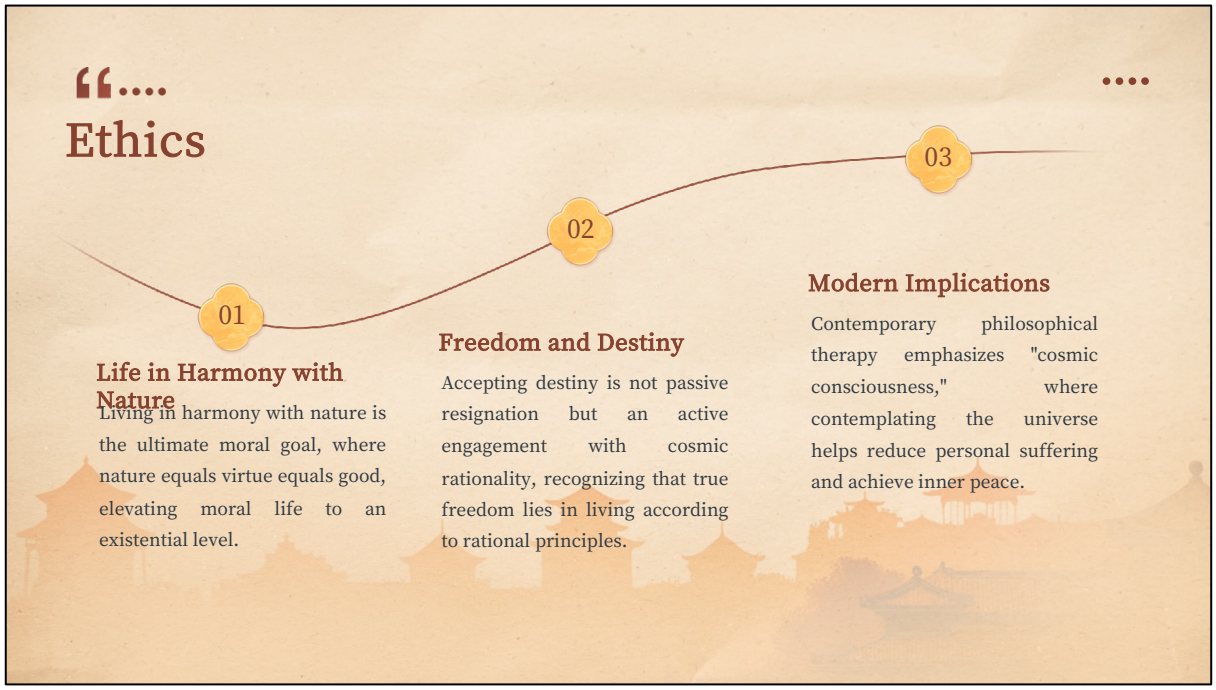
All things in the universe are interconnected through causal relationships, forming a unified whole under divine governance.





03 Relationship Between Humans and the Universe

Humans are seen as integral parts of the universe, with their nature aligned with cosmic rationality, providing a foundation for Stoic ethics.


Ethics
01
Life in Harmony with Nature
Living in harmony with nature is the ultimate moral goal, where nature equals virtue equals good, elevating moral life to an existential level.
02
Freedom and Destiny
Accepting destiny is not passive resignation but an active engagement with cosmic rationality, recognizing that true freedom lies in living according to rational principles.
03
Modern Implications
Contemporary philosophical therapy emphasizes "cosmic consciousness," where contemplating the universe helps reduce personal suffering and achieve inner peace.


04 Perfecting Rationality

Importance of Rationality

01
Rationality and Humanity

Rationality is the divine aspect of humans, essential for understanding the world and living in harmony with nature.

02
Cosmopolitanism

Rationality makes everyone a world citizen, transcending social status and promoting universal respect for humanity.

03
Rationality and Morality

Rationality is the source of moral law, with Kant's moral philosophy deeply influenced by Stoicism, emphasizing practical reason in moral actions.

Role of Dialectics

01
Dialectical Training

Dialectics is crucial for developing rational thinking, enabling individuals to analyze and synthesize information from various perspectives.

02
Self-Management of Rationality

Philosophical therapy advocates rational self-management to reduce life's uncertainties, making luck subject to reason.

03
Distinction from Other Therapies

Unlike religious or superstitious practices, philosophical therapy emphasizes rational autonomy and argumentation to achieve happiness.



"....
Nature of Passions

01
Passions and Judgment
Passions are irrational movements of the soul, resulting from excessive reactions to judgments about the value of things.

02
Passions and External Attachments
Passions stem from attachments to external things, whose values are often socially constructed, leading to irrational living.

03
Origins of Passions
Passions arise from erroneous beliefs about the world, which can be corrected through rational analysis.

Theory of Happiness

01 Happiness and Virtue

Happiness is equivalent to virtue, which is a state of rational perfection, emphasizing the importance of inner cultivation over external achievements.

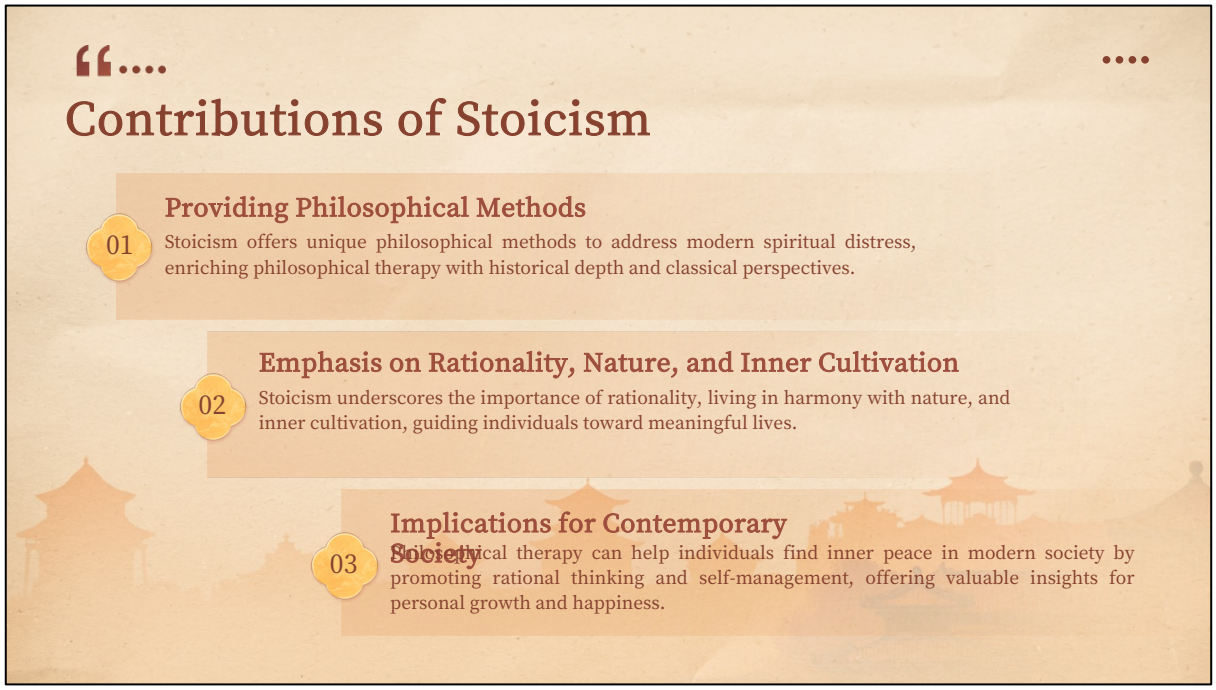
02 Modern Implications

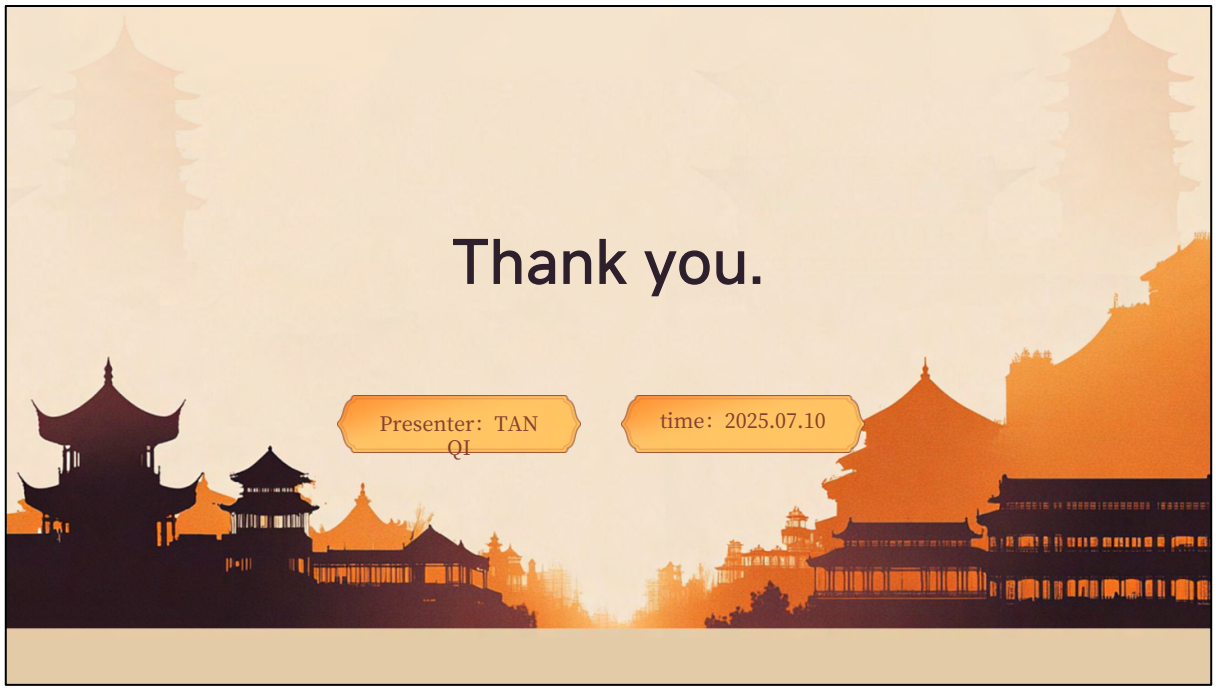
A virtuous life is free from passions, achieved by correcting faulty reasoning and maintaining a rational state of mind.

03 Passions and the Virtuous Life

This theory offers methods to cope with stress and anxiety by distinguishing between controllable and uncontrollable factors and focusing on inner growth.




Contributions of Stoicism
Providing Philosophical Methods
01
Stoicism offers unique philosophical methods to address modern spiritual distress, enriching philosophical therapy with historical depth and classical perspectives.
Emphasis on Rationality, Nature, and Inner Cultivation
02
Stoicism underscores the importance of rationality, living in harmony with nature, and inner cultivation, guiding individuals toward meaningful lives.
Implications for Contemporary Society
03
Stoic philosophical therapy can help individuals find inner peace in modern society by promoting rational thinking and self-management, offering valuable insights for personal growth and happiness.


Thank you.
Presenter: TAN QI
time: 2025.07.10

Yifei Hu · Zhonghe Liang (Sichuan University)

“The Harmony of Virtue, Reason and Soul - Plato's Practical Art of Healing the Body and Mind with Virtue and Justice”

Theoretical Source:

Plato was committed to demonstrating that justice brings happiness. He made numerous discussions on the practice of reason and justice within the body, and explored the division of the soul's desires and the interaction of the forces generated by each part. This article will start, interpret and develop the topic from the gymnastic training corresponding to the three parts of the soul in Plato's theory, and through the analysis of relevant texts in "The Republic" and "Timaeus", reveal the cooperation between reason and necessity in the psychological-physiological structure of the human body, and show that it is through the mutual interaction of reason and justice, through appropriate physical training, adjusting the ratio of soul and body, and achieving the movement to maintain and restore physical health, to align with the movement of the universe, assist the soul in returning to the divine intellect, and ultimately achieve the harmony of the soul. This is to practice what Plato emphasized: we need to purify the body to eliminate its diseases, and also need to purify the soul to eliminate its diseases, thereby realizing the management role of the soul.

This article aims to explore the philosophical exploration of Plato's body philosophy and practical skills in healing human mental diseases, achieving physical and mental balance, and realizing a good life. Plato indicated that the only way to respect our soul is to make it better. Besides, many behaviors we think respect the soul are actually detrimental to it. Plato's words and advice in "The Laws" Book V 727a show that if we respect the soul, we cannot wait for its imperfections to disappear by themselves. Every step we take to eliminate imperfection is a respect for the soul. In "The Republic" Book IV 444a, it is believed and called a just and good act in all things is the act that can maintain and promote such a state of mind, that is, to establish an order among the various factors in the body that conforms to their nature, so that they govern and are governed by each other.

The Cooperation of Rationality and Necessity in Human Psychological-Physiological Constitution

1. There are two diseases of the soul: stupidity and madness, and ignorance.

The way diseases of the body arise is like this, and diseases of the soul that arise from the condition of the body come about in the following way. Of course, it must be admitted that stupidity is a disease of the soul, and there are two kinds of stupidity: madness and ignorance. Therefore, any cause that leads to either of these two, excessive joy and pain causing madness, we must emphasize that the worst disease of the soul is excessive joy and pain. For when a person indulges in excessive pleasure or, conversely, suffers excessive pain and thus rushes headlong and immoderately towards pleasure and away from pain, he cannot see or hear anything correctly. Enveloped in confusion, his ability to reason is at its lowest. Whenever the

seeds in the marrow of a person grow abundantly and overflow, like a tree that bears too much fruit, and he gains much pain or pleasure through his desires and their consequences, again and again, most of his life is spent in madness. It is due to these great joys and sorrows that his soul, because of the structure of his body, is deprived of health and reason, and usually he is not regarded as sick but as deliberately evil. However, the truth about indulgence is that it is a disease of the soul mainly caused by a certain state of matter. Unrestrained pleasure is generally condemned as if evil were intentional, but such condemnation is unjust, for no one intends to do evil. Bad people become bad, rather, because of their poor physical condition and lack of education.

Everyone abhors and does not wish to have these evils, and in the same way, the pain of the body causes the soul to acquire so many evils. Whenever the acidic and inflammatory bile, phlegm and bitter liquid all wander around in the human body, unable to find any outlet and trapped inside, and mix their vapors with the movements of the soul, the resulting mixture causes all kinds of diseases of the soul, both strong and weak, ordinary and extraordinary, as they seep into the three regions of the soul. By acting in accordance with what they are attacked for, all kinds of bad tempers and dejection, as well as all kinds of rashness and timidity, forgetfulness and dullness, are produced. Therefore, when the political system that people with these defects are attached to is bad, the public and private discourses in the city-state are also bad, and when people do not learn the teachings that can cure them from childhood, all of us who are bad become so for two involuntary reasons. The parents, not the children, and the teachers, not the students, are always to blame. Even so, everyone should try their best to avoid evil through education, practice and learning.

2. Physical and mental health: The harmony of the soul and body ratio

It is reasonable and appropriate to treat the body and mind and thus protect them, for it is more proper to discuss the good than the evil. All good things are beautiful, and beautiful things are never excessive. Therefore, if a living being is good and beautiful, it will be in a harmonious and proportionate state. We can discern and calculate the less important ratios, but we have no rational grasp of the most important and greatest ratios, because whether there is a ratio or not between health and disease, virtue and vice, the soul itself and the body itself is of the greatest importance. But we pay no attention to it and are completely unaware of it. When a powerful and vigorous soul is dominated by an overly thin and weak body, or when the two are combined in the opposite way, the living being as a whole is not beautiful, because it is not harmonious in the most important ratio. And a living being in the opposite state is the most beautiful to those who can see it in all circumstances.

The most desirable and imaginable is a body lacking proportion because of overly long legs or some other part being too large. It is not only ugly, but any collaboration of it causes all kinds of trouble and fatigue, and it often twists and falls due to the lack of balance. In the combination of what we call a living being, the soul and the body, we should expect the same thing. Whenever the soul is stronger than the body, it violently

shakes the body and fills it with disease from within. And whenever it is absorbed in this or that study or inquiry, it wears out the body. Moreover, when the soul participates in public or private teaching or debate, due to the arguments or disputes that occur, it heats up and shakes the body, thereby causing the common cold that leads most so-called doctors to make misdiagnoses. But conversely, when a person has a body that is too large for his soul and a weak and powerless intellect, the stronger and more active part will rule and strengthen itself, making the soul dull, difficult to learn and forgetful, thus causing the most serious disease: ignorance.

3. The Necessity of Cultivating Both Body and Soul

There is a remedy for these two imbalances, which is to not separate the soul from the body while keeping the soul flexible and the body active, thereby maintaining an equal balance and state of health. Therefore, mathematicians or anyone else who is passionate about intellectual work should also exercise their bodies through gymnastics. Conversely, those who are diligent in physical fitness should correspondingly exercise their souls through the application of literature and all types of philosophy. Only in this way can both be truly worthy of beauty and goodness. Similarly, each part of the body should be cared for in the same way, that is, by imitating the form of the universe. Since the body is heated or cooled by what enters it and dried or moistened by what is outside it, it undergoes various changes due to these two movements.

Whenever a person allows his body to remain still to submit to these movements, the body is conquered and completely destroyed. But if he imitates what we call the universe's mother and nurse, and if possible, never allows the body to remain still but keeps it in motion, constantly and fully shaking it.It is naturally resists both internal and external movements, and through measured oscillations, it will adjust the particles and sensible qualities that roam throughout the body according to their kindred nature. The order between each other, as we described earlier in our discussion about the universe, so it will not allow hostile elements to be placed next to hostile elements, thereby breeding war and disease within the body. On the contrary, it will place friendly elements next to friendly elements, thus leading to the generation of health.

4. Exercises for Maintaining and Restoring Physical Health

Among all kinds of exercises, the best is the one that occurs within oneself and is caused by oneself, because it is the one most similar to the movement of reason and the universe. The second best is the movement caused by others. The worst is the inertia of remaining still, where the body is pushed bit by bit by external things, thus evolving and strengthening itself. The best exercise is through gymnastics. The second best is the rocking of a ship or any other non-exhausting movement of a vehicle. The third type of exercise is useful only in extreme necessity; otherwise, no rational person would accept it, which is the evolution through medicine. Because no disease without great danger should be stimulated by drugs, all diseases are structurally similar in some way to the natural nature of the organism, and the organism's structure

gives the entire species a designated life cycle. As for individual organisms, they each have their naturally determined life cycle, unless an accidental event occurs out of necessity. This is because the triangle of each organism, which is directly combined from the very beginning, has the ability to maintain itself for a sufficiently long time .Beyond this limit, its life cannot be prolonged. Regarding the organism as a whole and its various parts, as well as how a person should teach himself and be taught by himself in order to live most rationally.

5. Cultivating the Rational Soul: Aligning the Soul's Movement with the Movement of the Universe

We must first teach that part of us with the greatest possible care so that it may become the most beautiful and the best teacher. Now, merely to describe this subject in detail would be a sufficiently large task, but to treat it as a secondary topic, if based on our previous discussion and as a conclusion of the following observations, may not be so far off the mark. As we have said many times, there are three kinds of souls residing in three regions of our body, each with its own movement. Therefore, we can now say as briefly as possible that any soul that is lazy, lives lazily, and directs its movement towards stillness, will inevitably become the most cruel. And any soul that remains exercised is the healthiest. Therefore, we must pay close attention to ensure the harmony of their movements with each other. Regarding the most authoritative kind of soul within us, we should conceive of it as the guardian spirit bestowed upon each of us by the gods, which is what we call the soul residing at the top of our body. It lifts us from the earth towards the heavens, as if we were plants born from the heavens rather than the earth, and this is the most accurate way to describe it. This is because from the place where the soul first emerged, our divine part, our head or our roots are suspended, thus keeping our entire body upright.

So, if a person indulges in his desires or competitiveness and overexerts himself, then inevitably, all his opinions will become mortal, and it is entirely possible for him to become completely mortal. It is difficult for him to avoid this, because what he strengthens is precisely his mortal part. However, if a person is passionate about learning and true wisdom and thoroughly trains these aspects of himself, then he will undoubtedly have immortal and divine thoughts, and truth will be within his grasp. And insofar as human nature can partake in immortality, he will be in no way lacking, for he constantly cares for his most divine part and keeps the guardian spirit within him in good condition. Therefore, it must be well-ordered. Now, there is only one way to care for anything, which is to provide it with the nourishment and movement suitable for itself. And the movement that is akin to the divine part within us is the thought and rotation of the universe. Each of us must follow these movements and, through a thorough study of the harmonious rotation of the universe, correct the disordered rotation in our heads at birth, so that our rational intelligence can be in harmony with its object according to its original nature. By achieving this harmony, we will reach the goal set by the gods for humanity, which is the best for both the present and the future.

Training Report from a student of the Art College:

Gains from the sensory, free will, and rational physical and mental training in the course: In the sensory training of aerobics, I enhanced my perception of the details of body movements, enabling me to adjust my posture and movements more accurately, thereby improving the efficiency and accuracy of my exercise. In terms of free will, I learned to freely express my emotions and body language in the rhythm of the music. This freedom is not only physical but also a release of the soul. In the rational training, I developed the ability to think and judge quickly, as well as the ability to handle unexpected situations, which is also very practical in life. In terms of reflection, I believe that I can make my expression of free will more diverse and personalized and need to try and innovate more.

At the same time, in the rational training, I still need to improve my sensitivity to the rhythm of the music and the precision of body coordination. The four-direction gymnastics exercises in the pre-class warm-up activities helped me warm up my body, prevent sports injuries, and improve my body's flexibility and stability. These exercises allowed me to better perceive the movement trajectories and key points of movements in the four directions (front, back, left, and right). For sensory training, these gymnastics exercises improved my body perception ability, enabling me to grasp the details of movements more accurately. For free will training, the gymnastics exercises provided me with a space to display my body language, allowing me to express myself more freely in the rhythm of the music. For rational training, the gymnastics exercises developed my ability to think and judge quickly, as I needed to quickly adjust my body posture and movement direction in the rapidly changing movements. In summary, the sensory, free will, and rational physical and mental training in the course are of great significance to my personal growth and development.

Conclusion

The better part of the mortal soul, its passion, acts upon the heart, while the liver acts upon the worse part of the mortal soul, its desire. The immortal soul's reason directly acts upon the passion of the better part of the mortal soul and indirectly upon the desire of the worse part of the mortal soul through the liver and its medium. There is an internal interaction among the immortal soul's reason, the two parts of the mortal soul, passion and desire, and the two important organs of the body, the heart and the liver. The premise of the functional division, hierarchical structure and mutual influence of the three parts of the soul is that they have corresponding different body organs as material guarantees, so that they can first maintain their independent movements and different degrees of rationality without falling into the chaos of the pre-universe. The structure of the body ensures that the different parts of the soul can perform their respective duties without interfering with each other. In this sense, the order of the soul also depends on the order of the body's structure. The perfect combination of the threefold division in anatomy and psychology constitutes the cooperation of reason and necessity in human beings. The embodiment of the human soul is the combination

of the soul and the body, and this combination requires a bond. Plato did not say what these bonds were, only that they were bound in the marrow and became the source of life. And developing the quality of human love and enhancing our virtues is the driving force to stimulate the source of life.

Reflections and Gains from the Practice of Plato's Threefold Soul in Physical and Mental Training: In the application of Plato's tripartite soul in the process of physical and mental training in the classroom, there are unclear boundaries. It is necessary to obtain a fluid training perspective through long-term practice and observation to help people achieve physical and mental balance and continuously acquire the wisdom of maintaining a just and harmonious state of body and mind.

A2

Ying-Fen Su (Fu Jen Catholic University)

"A Multidimensional Exploration of Emotions in the Chapter "Fuao" in Qike"

I. Introduction: Diego de Pantoja and *Qike*

Diego de Pantoja (1571-1618) was a Spanish Jesuit and missionary to China. Ye Nong (葉農) indicates that *Qike* (《七克》, Septem Victoriis) written by Diego de Pantoja was very popular in China, and reprinted for several times. Therefore, Fr. Maurus Fang Hao (方豪), a famous scholar of history of the Catholic Church, called Diego de Pantoja "the greatest Spanish Sinologist".[1] Fr. Maurus Fang mentioned that Diego de Pantoja observed Chinese society from different perspectives and became an important bridge in Chinese and Western culture interaction in the late Ming early Qing period. Based on text, in 1596, 18 Church Fathers including Diego de Pantoja and Italian Jesuit Nicholas Longobardi (1559-1654) took ship ***Conceição*** departing from Lisbon. They spent 7 months arriving at Goa in India. In Goa, Pantoja had a preliminary understanding to Indian Buddhism and it also let Pantoja have basic theoretical foundation to critique Buddhism when he arrived in China. Following is an overview map of Pantoja trip to Eastern, the map marker identifies the location of Goa:



[1] Ye Nong (葉農), "Spanish Jesuit Diego de Pantoja and His works"〈西班牙籍耶穌會士龐迪我及其著作〉, *Journal of Monsoon Asian Studies*《季風亞洲研究》, Vol. 3 (October, 2016), pp. 99-137.

Fr. Maurus Fang Hao (方豪) indicates that “During late Ming and Qing period, most of missionary in China were Jesuits. The founder of Society of Jesus was a Spanish. However, there were very few Spanish Jesuits in China!.....Because after Portuguese imperial got Patronatus missionum, for European missionaries who intended to visit China, they had to depart from Lisbon and arrive at Macau. It was very hard for Spanish to intervene in.”2 Based on the text, Ye Nong (葉農) says3

> On the 23th of April 1597, led by the inspector of Jesuit mission Far Eastern, Italian Jesuit Alessandro Valignano, and Portuguese Jesuit Emmanuel Diaz Senior (1559-1639), Diego de Pantoja, Nicholas Longobardi and other missionaries took boat departing from Goa and sailed to Macau. Then finally on the 20th of July 1597, they arrived in China.

Indeed, during 1597~1599, Diego de Pantoja stayed at Colégio de São Paulo in Macau, and finished learning second phase and third phase of theology. Therefore, in the words “then finally on the 20th of July 1597, they arrived in China”, the “China” here actually should be “Macau”. Following Ye Nong describes how Pantoja and his partners went to Guangzhou (廣州) and then reached Nanjing (南京)[4]:

> In the late October 1599, under the excuse of fair trade in Guangzhou, Diego de Pantoja and Lazzaro Cattaneo blended into Portuguese businessmen, and sneaked into China. On the 1st of November 1599, in the night of All Saints Day, they dressed up in Chinese clothes, hid in a boat and headed north through Nanxiong (南雄), Nan'an (南安), Ganzhou (贛州), Ji'an (吉安) and Nanchang (南昌). They sailed across Poyang Lake (鄱陽湖) and entered Chang-jiang (長江, Yangtze River) through Hukou (湖口) . Then in March 1600, they reached Nanjing trough Anqing (安慶) and Wuhu (蕪湖).

---

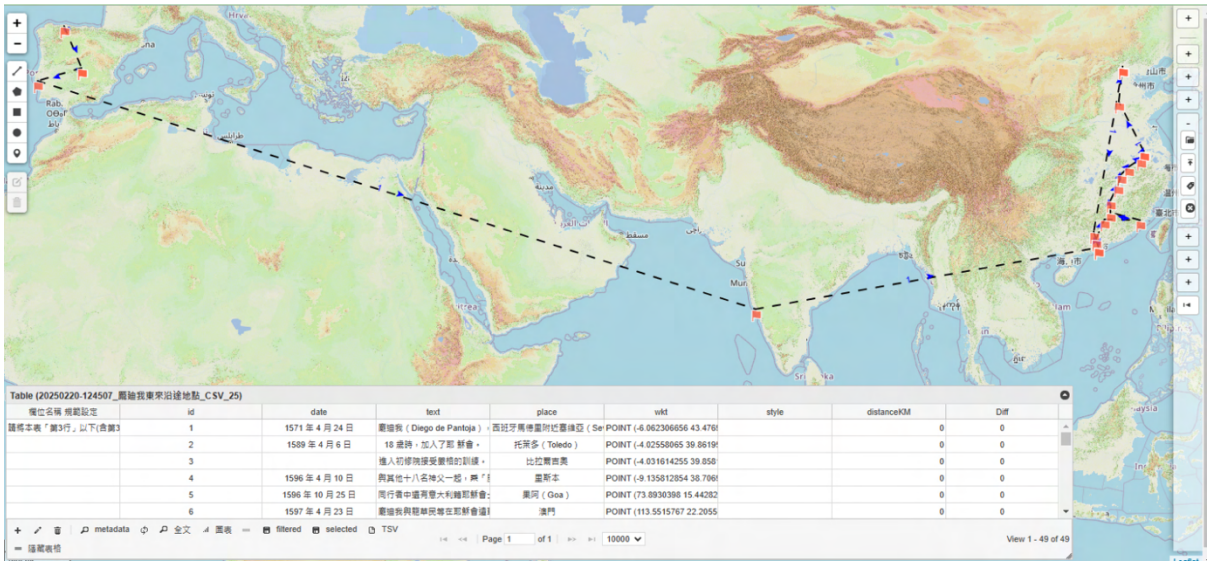
[2] Maurus Fang Hao (方豪), *Figures of History of the Catholic Church in China*《中國天主教史人物傳》, Shanghai: Kuangchi Program Service in Roman Catholic Diocese of Shanghai, 2003, p 103.

[3] Beatriz Moncó, “The China of the Jesits: Travels and Experiences of Diego de Pantoja and Adriano de las Cortes,” Culture and History Digital Journal, 1: 2 (2012), pp. 1-13. (adapted from Ye Nong (葉農), “Spanish Jesuit Diego de Pantoja and His works”〈西班牙籍耶穌會士龐迪我及其著作〉, *Journal of Monsoon Asian Studies*《季風亞洲研究》, Vol. 3 (October, 2016), pp. 99-137.)

[4] Ye Nong (葉農), “Spanish Jesuit Diego de Pantoja and His works”〈西班牙籍耶穌會士龐迪我及其著作〉, *Journal of Monsoon Asian Studies*《季風亞洲研究》, Vol. 3 (October, 2016), pp. 99-137.

These missionaries bought a “haunted house” in Hongwugang (洪武岗), Nanjing as their mission station. Living in a “haunted house” showed that “The Lord can suppress the ghost”. Therefore, it became a good opportunity for missionaries to do their missionary work in Nanjing. After staying Nanjing for a short term, on the 20th of May 1600, Matteo Ricci, Lazzaro Cattaneo and Diego de Pantoja departed from Nanjing. On the 3rd of July 1600, they reached Linqing port (臨清港) in Shandon (山東), and then finally they arrived in Beijing on the 24th of July 1600.

As Yang Tingyun (楊廷筠) mentioned in the preface of *Qike* “People sailed from the Far West for more than eighty thousand miles and spent three years arriving in China.”[5] In the “Preface of Pantoja” (author’s preface in *Qike*), Pantoja said “I undertook a three-year transoceanic journey to the East, which decimated a good number of friends who accompanied with me until finally arriving in unapparelled China.”[6] From October 1599 to January 1601, Pantoja traveled from Macau to Guangzhou, and then reached Nanjing where he stayed for a short term. He departed from Nanjing, through Linqing port in Shandon, and finally arrived in Beijing. Following is the route map of Pantoja’s journey to the East. It truly shows that Pantoja undertook a long transoceanic journey and sailed more than eighty thousand miles from the West to the Far East.



Ye Nong thinks *Qike* as an ethical work about morality and self-cultivation. After Nicolò Longobardo became Superior General of the Jesuit China mission and his involvement in the Chinese rites controversy, Pantoja completed his book *Qike* and

[5] Diego de Pantoja (1571-1618), *Qike*《七克》(Septem Victoriis), Beijin: Jingdu Shitai Datang 京都始胎大堂 (Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception) , 1798, pp. 1-2.

[6] Diego de Pantoja (1571-1618), *Qike*《七克》(Septem Victoriis), p3.

published it in the 42th year of the Wanli (萬曆) period (A. D. 1614). Ye Nong indicates that, in order not to let Chinese traditional scholars feel aversion to the Catholic doctrine in *Qike*, the words Pantoja used in *Qike* were always related to general and universal thought of human being. Pantoja tried to blur the boundary between Catholic doctrine and Confucianism, and find the correspondence between the two.[7]
Pantoja wrote *Qike* from the perspective of "reason and desire" and "self-cultivation", and focused on finding the correspondence. We can find it in Yang Tingyun's the preface of *Qike* "Revering God goes beyond ceremonies, you also have to love people, and therein lies the exact way to revere God. Loving people is not just a formality, you have to make an effort to love others genuinely."[8] And in Peng Duanwu (彭端吾)'s preface of *Xisheng Qibian* (Seven Treaties of the Saints of the West,《西聖七編序》) "If you use the seven virtues to overcome the seven passions, utilize reasons to overcome desires, actually, you are using the mind of Tian to overcome the mind of desire."[9]

II. The Methodology of *Qike*

Ye Nong indicates that "Pantoja cited lots of sayings and aphorism from ancient European scholars, and quoted stories from Aesop's Fables and Bible in *Qike* to express allegory.[10] As Zhang Kai (張鎧) indicates[11],

> In *Qike*, Pantoja cited dozens of quotations from Western scholars. For example, in chapter one, Pantoja citied over 60 quotations from more than 20 Western scholars such as St. Gregory the Great (9 times), St. John the Baptist, St. Bernard (9 times), St. Augustine (10 times), St. Bonaventure, Aristotle (6 times), St. Chrysostom (4 times), Antisthenes (亞塞捏), St.

---

[7] Ye Nong (葉農), "Spanish Jesuit Diego de Pantoja and His works" 〈西班牙籍耶穌會士龐迪我及其著作〉, *Journal of Monsoon Asian Studies*《季風亞洲研究》, Vol. 3 (October, 2016), pp. 99-137.

[8] Diego de Pantoja (1571-1618), *Qike*《七克》(Septem Victoriis), pp. 1-2.

[9] Diego de Pantoja (1571-1618), *Qike*《七克》(Septem Victoriis), p 2.

[10] Ye Nong (葉農), "Spanish Jesuit Diego de Pantoja and His works" 〈西班牙籍耶穌會士龐迪我及其著作〉, *Journal of Monsoon Asian Studies*《季風亞洲研究》, Vol. 3 (October, 2016), pp. 99-137.

[11] Zhang Kai (張鎧), *Diego de Pantojia and China : a Sudy on the Society of Jesus' "Policy of Adaptation"*《龐迪我與中國：耶穌會「適應」策略研究》, Zhengzhou: Da Xiang Publishing Co., 2009, p 381. (adapted from Ye Nong (葉農), "Spanish Jesuit Diego de Pantoja and His works" 〈西班牙籍耶穌會士龐迪我及其著作〉, *Journal of Monsoon Asian Studies*《季風亞洲研究》, Vol. 3 (October, 2016), pp. 99-137.)

Francis (4 times), St. Domingo, Seneca the younger (4 times), Suso (蘇瑣), Abraham (拔剌諳), Anton (暗當), Alexander (歷山), Bamber (邦薄), Jeremias (寄理瑪), St. Ignatius of Loyola, Adernus (亞得納斯), Manoah (門難)、St. John the Evangelist、Antony (暗多泥), St. Jerome, Gad (加德), King Solomon.

Besides citing lots of quotations from ancient Greek and Roman scholars, and using allusion from Greek mythology, the methodologies Pantoja used when he wrote *Qike* include: metaphor, storytelling, quotation, and dialogue:

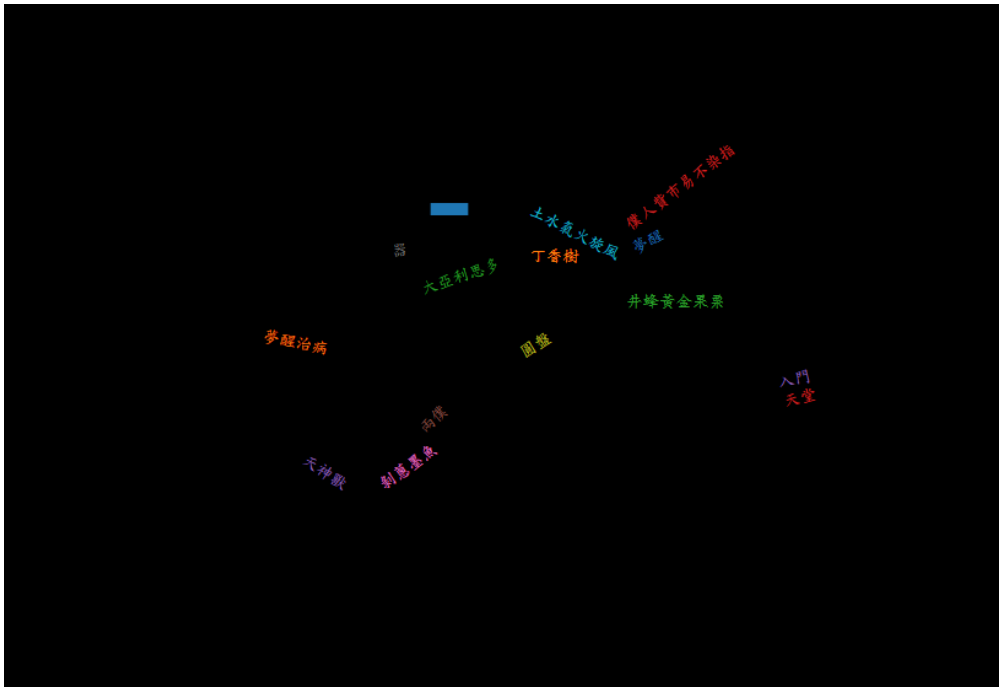
1. Metaphor:

In the beginning of *Qike*, Pantoja used “ru (如, like)” to refer to one thing by mentioning another: pride is like a fierce lion, greed is like making a fist tightly and never letting go, lust is like water overflowing, wrath is like burning fire, gluttony is like a big gully, envy is like a high wave, and sloth is like a tired inferior horse. Metaphor not only makes the concept of seven deadly sins more real, but also makes readers have association and sense of identity easily. Just as Cui Chang (崔涊) of Chiang-tung (江東) said in the short preface of chapter “Fuao” (〈伏傲〉, to subdue pride), “Pantoja compared different things and dewed the analogies between them. By doing so, it became his own unique view.”[12]

2. Storytelling:

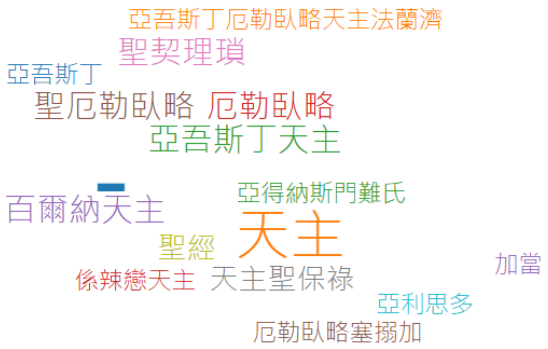
During late Ming and Qing period, most of Chinese did not know the stories of Aesop's Fables and Bible. Therefore, for Chinese in late Ming and Qing period, the stories of Aesop's Fables and Bible were very new and unique, and can attract their attention. For example, in Aesop’s fable “The Fox and the Crow”: the cunning fox uses flattering words to trick a proud crow into dropping its meat from the beak to the ground where the fox gobbled the meat up. This fable would teach readers: “the flatter lives at the expense of those who will listen to him.” In addition, in the story “Lilac Tree”, Pantoja described that a mature lilac tree produces and releases an aromatic chemical substance that causes nearby plants to wither. By describing this feature of lilac tree, Pantoja indicated that one personality trait of the proud is exclusivity. Following shows the word cloud of “storytelling” in *Qike*:

[12] Diego de Pantoja (1571-1618), *Qike*《七克》(Septem Victoriis), p 2.



3. Quotation:

In *Qike*, Pantoja cited dozens of quotations and aphorisms from European ancient scholars to support his viewpoints. Although the calculation of quotations is different from that of Zhang Kai, this paper finds that Pantoja mentioned “The God (天主)” for more than 14 times, and secondly, he mentioned St. Augustine (亞吾斯丁/聖奧斯定), St. Gregory the Great (聖厄勒臥略), St. Chrysostom (聖契理瑣), and St. Paul (聖保祿); besides, he also mentioned well-known theologians and philosophers such as Aristotle (亞利思多), Seneca the younger (塞搦加/ 塞內卡), and St. Ignatius of Loyola (聖意納爵). Following shows the word cloud of “quotation” in *Qike*:



4. Dialogue:

The "dialogue" in *Qike* is question-and-answer session between two or more people. Pantoja would raise questions beginning with the phrase "someone asked", and replied by using the phrase "the other speaker said" to express his viewpoint. Finally, Pantoja cited quotations from ancient scholars to support his viewpoint. The "dialogue" is like happened between a master and a student or between two friends, very interesting and vivid. Taking the dialogue between St. Bernard and someone as an example.

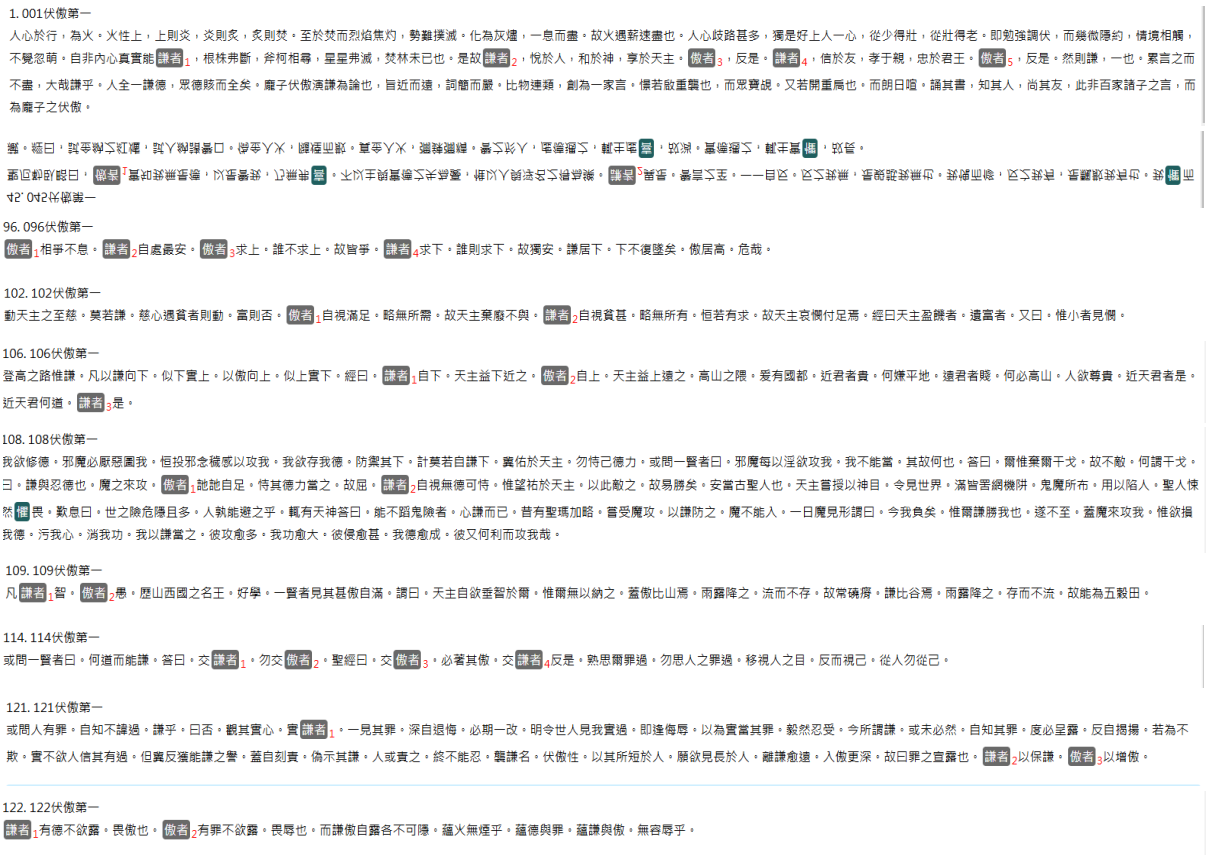


The reason why *Qike* became so popular and welcomed by Chinese scholars in late Ming dynasty is related to Pantoja's writing method. First of all, Pantoja used "metaphor" to make clear the purpose and theme from the very beginning. The second is "storytelling". Pantoja chose new and unique stories from Aesop's Fables and Bible, and interpreted his viewpoint by telling stories. In addition, by citing "quotation" from classics to support his viewpoint, Pantoja made his argument more powerful and effective. As to "dialogue", *Analects* is the origin of "dialogue style" in Chinese classics, and *Chuanxi lu* (《傳習錄》, *Record of Transmission and Practice*) written by Wang Yang-ming (王陽明) in late Ming dynasty is also a question-and-answer dialogue between masters and students. Therefore, within dialogue style, *Qike* gained high acceptance in Chinese scholars. In addition, the concept of chapter "Fuao" focused

on cultivating mind with virtue to overcome desire. Thus, Pantoja's *Qike* corresponded to the issue of "li" (理, reason) and "yu" (欲, desire) in the late Ming dynasty.

III. The Meaning of "Pride":

To begin with, this paper analyzes the meaning of "ào (傲, pride)" through a keyword-based textual analysis of the terms "ào zhě (傲者, the proud)" and "qiān zhě (謙者, the humble). In chapter "Fuao", "ào zhě (傲者)" appeared 21 times across 17 passages, while "qiān zhě (謙者)" appeared 22 times across 15 passages. Then, through cross-referencing, the two terms "ào zhě (傲者)"and "qiān zhě (謙者)" were found to co-occur in the same textual with a total of 10 occurrences. For example,



1. 001伏傲第一
人心於行，為火。火性上，上則炎，炎則炙，炙則焚。至於焚而烈焰焦灼，勢難撲滅。化為灰燼，一息而盡。故火遇薪速盡也。人心歧路甚多，獨是好上人一心，從少得壯，從壯得老。即勉強調伏，而幾微隱約，情境相觸，不覺忽萌，自非內心真實能謙者1，根株弗斷，斧柯相尋，星星弗滅，焚林末已也。是故謙者2，悅於人，和於神，享於天主。傲者3，反是。謙者4，信於友，孝於親，忠於君王。傲者5，反是。然則謙，一也。累言之而不盡，大哉謙乎。人全一謙德，眾德賅而全矣。龐子伏傲演謙為論也，旨近而遠，詞簡而嚴，比物連類，創為一家言。儻若啟重鼢也，而眾寶誕。又若開重扃也，而朗日暗。誦其書，知其人，尚其友，此非百家諸子之言，而為龐子之伏傲。

96. 096伏傲第一
傲者1相爭不息。謙者2自處最安。傲者3求上，誰不求上。故皆爭。謙者4求下，誰則求下，故獨安。謙居下。下不復墜矣。傲居高，危哉。

102. 102伏傲第一
動天主之至慈。莫若謙，慈遇貧者則動，富則否。傲者1自視滿足，賂無所需，故天主棄廢不與。謙者2自視貧甚，賂無所有。恒若有求。故天主哀憫付足焉。經曰天主盈餼者。遺富者。又曰。惟小者見憫。

106. 106伏傲第一
登高之路惟謙，凡以謙向下。似下實上。以傲向上。似上實下。經曰。謙者1自下。天主益下近之。傲者2自上。天主益上遠之。高山之限。爰有國都。近君者貴。何嫌平地。遠君者賤。何必高山。人欲尊貴。近天君者是。近天君何道。謙者3是。

108. 108伏傲第一
我欲修德。邪魔必厭惡圖我。恒投邪念襍感以攻我。我欲存我德。防禦其下。計莫若自謙下。冀佑於天主。勿恃己德力。或問一賢者曰。邪魔每以淫欲攻我。我不能當。其故何也。答曰。爾惟棄爾干戈。故不敵。何請干戈。曰。謙與忍德也。魔之來攻。傲者1詆詆自足。恃其德力當之。故屈。謙者2自視無德可恃。惟望祐於天主。以此敵之。故易勝矣。安當古聖人也。天主嘗授以神目。令見世界。滿皆罟網機阱。鬼魔所布。用以陷人。聖人悚然懼畏。歎息曰。世之險危隱且多。人孰能避之乎。輒有天神答曰。能不蹈鬼險者。心謙而已。昔有聖瑪加略。嘗受魔攻。以謙防之。魔不能入。一日魔見形謂曰。今我負矣。惟爾謙勝我也。遂不至。蓋魔來攻我。惟欲損我德。污我心。消我功。我以謙當之。彼攻愈多。我功愈大。彼侵愈甚。我德愈成。彼又何利而攻我哉。

109. 109伏傲第一
凡謙者1智。傲者2愚。歷山西國之名王。好學。一賢者見其甚傲自滿。謂曰。天主自欲垂智於爾。惟爾無以納之。蓋傲比山焉。雨露降之。流而不存。故常磽瘠。謙比谷焉。雨露降之。存而不流。故能為五穀田。

114. 114伏傲第一
或問一賢者曰。何道而能謙。答曰。交謙者1。勿交傲者2。聖經曰。交傲者3。必著其傲。交謙者4反是。熟思爾罪過。勿思人之罪過。移視人之目。反而視己。從人勿從己。

121. 121伏傲第一
或問人有罪。自知不諱過。謙乎。曰否。觀其實心。實謙者1。一見其罪。深自追悔。必期一改。明令世人見我實過。即逢侮辱。以為實當其罪。毅然忍受。今所謂謙。或未必然。自知其罪。度必呈露。反自揚揚。若為不欺。實不欲人信其有過。但冀反獲能謙之譽。蓋自刻責。偽示其謙。人或責之。終不能忍。襲謙名。伏傲性。以其所短於人。勝欲見長於人。離謙愈遠。入傲更深。故曰罪之宣露也。謙者2以保謙。傲者3以增傲。

122. 122伏傲第一
謙者1有德不欲露。畏傲也。傲者2有罪不欲露。畏辱也。而謙傲自露各不可隱。蘊火無煙乎。蘊德與罪。蘊謙與傲，無容辱乎。

For these 10 textual contexts, firstly this paper categorizes them into two groups:

1. Using "fan shih" (反是, doing the opposite of this) to accentuate the contrast between "the proud" and "the humble":

Taking the first paragraph mentioned above as an example, "therefore, the humble is delighted with others and lives in harmony with God, and the favor

of the Lord is upon him. Whereas, the proud does the opposite of this. The humble is trusted by friend, expresses filial piety to parents, and loyal to the king. Whereas, the proud does the opposite of this." In order to let readers introspect themselves, it is quite common to see the contrast between the superior man and the mean man in *Analects* as well.

2. The difference of emotional expression between "the proud" and "the humble":

Taking the second paragraph as an example, "Like St. Gregory the Great said, the proud actually knows himself with no virtue. If others praise for him, he will be flattered. The proud is not frightened lose God's grace and true virtue. He only cares about other's judgement and is fond of undeserved reputation. Whereas, the humble does the opposite of this. As reputation comes, the humble will be on self-examination. If it is an undeserved reputation, the humble will be ashamed of it. If it is a deserved reputation, the humble will and restrained. As mentioned in Bible, the purity of gold is tested by putting them is the fire. The purity of human hearts is tested by giving them a little fame. The false gold tested in fire will be destroyed, Whereas the true gold tested in fire will be refined. So as reputation to man. For unvirtuous man, it only brings fake joyfulness and disappears easily. For virtuous man, he will fear becoming proud. Therefore, more virtuous a virtuous man can become." Moreover, in the 10th paragraph, "the humble possess virtue but do not wish to show it because they fear becoming proud. The proud carry guilt but do not wish to expose it because they fear being humiliated by others. However, humility and pride each reveal themselves and cannot keep hidden. Can a hidden fire produce no smoke? Likewise, concealed virtue and guilt, or concealed humility and pride, none of them can avoid being exposed to either honor or shame.

For the proud, his emotional expression such as "happiness" and "joyfulness" will be easily controlled by reputation. Whereas the humble is modesty and restrained, and frightened to feel pride. For feeling fear, the proud fears being humiliated, while the humble fears being too proud. As mentioned in chapter "Ji shi" (〈季氏〉) of *Analects*, "Confucius said, there are three things of which the superior man stands in awe. He stands in awe of the ordinances of Heaven. He stands in awe of great men. He stands in awe of the words of sages. The mean man does not know the ordinances of Heaven, and consequently does not stand in awe of them. He is disrespectful to great men. He

makes sport of the words of sages." Meng Pei Yuan (蒙培元) indicates that, the "wèi (畏)" actually means "in awe of"[13], not "in fear of".

Secondly, this paper analyzes these 10 paragraphs, and finds that in these paragraphs, Pantoja used contrast writing, which Confucianism scholars were familiar with, to show God's perspective such as "superior and inferior", "peaceful and worried", "wise and foolish", and "mountain and valley". Taking the third paragraph as an example, "the proud keeps disputing with others. In contrast, the humble gets alone with himself peacefully. The proud pursuits superior position than others. However, every proud man wants to be superior, so the proud man is competing with one another. The humble wants to be inferior, but no one wants to be in inferior position than others except the humble. Therefore, the humble can get alone with himself peacefully and modestly. Since the humble stays in inferior position, he is not afraid of falling from grace. In contrast, the proud, who stays in superior position, is worried about falling from grace." Also, in the 7th paragraph: "How wise the humble is. How foolish the proud is. Once a famous Western king was very devoted in learning, but he was too proud of himself. Seeing such a proud king, a sage said, although God wants to give you wisdom, you seem have no place in your mind to receive the wisdom from God. It is because your proud mind is like a high mountain, and the wisdom, like a rain falling to the high mountain, cannot be kept and received. Therefore, the mountain is always arid. In contrast, if you have an open mind as broad as a valley, you can receive and keep the wisdom from God, and cultivate yourself, like a farm with different kinds of grains.

Finally, this paper categorizes the meaning of pride in to three kinds: 1) an emotion provoked by external factors, especially happened on people in a positive way. This emotion will let people become too proud, and the external behavior is "extravagant glory". 2) The proud only believe in themselves. They are domineering, and have different kinds of imagination in the mind. If things or situation can not satisfy them, they will be in negative mood and become overthinking. For example, "the proud aree self-deceived and self-centered…. Envy lets people lose their friends. Wrath let people lose themselves. Pride separates people from the God who loves them. 3) The proud have double standard when treating others. For example, "The proud dislike other doing good favor. But they are smug and self-satisfied even though they merely completed a small thing. The proud deprecates others' contribution, but they always talk up what they have done. The proud think themselves superior over others, while they belittle others. The proud think that nothing can go smoothly and well-done without them" Therefore, when getting along with others, the proud always niggle over everything, and are easy to have conflicts with others. In addition, the proud indeed

[13] The feeling of "jìng (敬, respect)" or "jìng wèi (敬畏, awe)" is kind of religious affection. The religious spirit of Confucianism is mainly reflected on "jìng (敬)" or "jìng wèi (敬畏). " Meng Pei Yuan (蒙培元), *Emotion and Rationality*《情感與理性》, Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2002, p 172.

get confidence from others. “The proud are very confident when doing everything except for their own affairs. However, if they encounter thier own affairs, they tend to believe in others rather than himself. The proud actually know that they are lack of neither ability nor virtue. However, they are flattered by others. If the proud meet someone more authoritative, they will turn to believe the authoritative.” Indeed, the proud are easier to believe the authoritative. Moreover, the proud fear that no one knows them rather than not knows themselves well.

IV. The Emotional Types of “Pride”: Smugness, Fear, and nvy,

The emotion of pride can be demonstrated in “visible way” and “invisible way”. In visible way, the proud one shows delightfulness on his or her expression and envied by others easily. However, indeed, the pride makes people overthinking seriously and produces fear in mind. The reason and emotion are often locked in a tug-of-war, even influencing subsequent choices. The emotional types of pride can be categorized as smugness, fear, and envy.

1. Smugness:

The “smugness” includes overflowing with emotion, being flattered, and being overwhelmed with joy. A keyword-based textual analysis identified 25 instances involving the terms “xǐ (喜, joy)”, “lè (樂, happy)” and “yù (譽, fame)”. The “yù (譽)” appeared with the highest frequency (21 times) among these results. Both the “xǐ (喜)” and “lè (樂)” appeared 9 times respectively. The occurance of “xǐ (喜)” and “lè (樂)”, “lè (樂)” and “yù (譽)”, or “xǐ (喜)” and “yù (譽)” appeared together reached to 10 times in the text. However, there are only two instances in which “xǐ (喜)”, “lè (樂)” and “yù (譽)” appeared simultaneously in the same text.

45. 045伏傚第一

聖厄勒臥略曰，傚者實知我無是德，以是譽我，乃無弗喜。不以主與實德之失為憂，惟以人與浮名之得為樂。謙者異是。譽言之至。一一自反。反之我無，是毀詆我無也。我愧而修，反之我有，是飄散我有也。我懼而藏。經曰，試金納之紅爐，試人納諸譽口。偽金入火，隨煙而散。真金入火，彌鍊彌精。譽之於人，虛德遇之，輒生虛喜，故消。實德遇之，輒生實懼，故長。

57. 057伏傚第一

聽樂者，美聲暱耳，靜時猶聞，陽陽自思。習業俱廢矣。聽譽者，美言暱心，過時猶憶欣欣自喜。實德實行，要業俱弛矣，故曰智者。傾耳以聽譽，則愚。既聽而自喜，則狂也。

First of all, an analysis of the two texts mentioned above reveals that xǐ (喜, joy) arises from receiving praise from others, which means an expression of the desire to impress or draw attention. Like a conceited person is eager to let others know how virtuous he or she is. He or she will become smug if he or she is admired and praised by others.

Like St. Chrysostom said “If one first eliminates the desire to show off, other negative emotions will be easier to subdue.” (聖契理瑣曰，先除炫人之情，他情易除) Secondly, Pantoja made a distinction between “spiritual happiness (心樂)” and “physical happiness (形樂)”. If people want their knowledge and action different from those of others, they should chase “spiritual happiness” rather than “physical happiness”. The meaning of “spiritual happiness” and “physical happiness” are like what Mencius (孟子) said “Those who follow that part of themselves which is great are great men; those who follow that part which is little are little men.” (from chapter Gaozi I (告子上), *Mengz*i). All are equally men, some follow that part of themselves which is great are great men; and some follow that part of themselves which is little are little men. It is very easy to make a distinction between “great men” and “little men”

Moreover, the proud are meretricious. They know themselves indeed virtueless. Once they are praised by others, they become smug and misunderstand that being popular and chasing reputation can bring happiness. An “undeserved reputation” means “People seem can be proud when they are praised by others. However, if things can not measure up to their expectations, they will become frustrated, and their mood will be affected by the reputation gained from others. For those who worry about what others think of them, they become proud when they are praised by others, and they become frustrated when they are criticized by others. It means their mood depends on others’ comments, not themselves. In addition, for the proud, their virtue actually is inauthentic. Therefore, they always gain undeserved reputation, leading to disappointment (false happiness). Finally, Pantoja said, “those who are fond of undeserved reputation are fool. If they are highly satisfied by undeserved reputation, they become crazy.” An undeserved reputation is like a trick which only makes others laugh but nothing. Therefore, Seneca said, “Loving to hear praise will lead a person further from the right path.” (塞搦加曰，離人於正，莫如喜聽譽也) People always pay attention on what makes them happy. The proud not only pay attention on what makes them happy, but also like to compare themselves to others. The tendency to compare oneself with others arises in the mind. Once such thoughts emerge, they give rise to arrogance and disparagement.

2. Fear:

The feeling of “fear” includes anxiety (worry about arousing envy or being deprived of something), dread (fear of not being recognized or praised), and intimidated (fear of losing face or suffering from humiliation). A keyword-based textual analysis identified 18 instances involving the terms “yōu (憂, worry)”, “jù (懼, dread)”, and “wèi (畏, fear or intimidation)”. Of these, “wèi (畏)” appeared with the highest frequency (13 times), followed by “jù (懼)” with 8

occurrences, and “yōu (憂)” with 5. There are 2 instances where “yōu (憂)” and “jù (懼)” appeared together in the same text. The combination of “jù (懼)” and “wèi (畏)”, in either order, appears 5 times. The pairing of “yōu (憂)” and “wèi (畏)” occured only once. There are no instances in which “yōu (憂)”, “jù (懼)”, and “wèi (畏)” all appeared together in the same text. The following section analyzes five instances in which “jù (懼)” and “wèi (畏)” appeared together in either order:



40. 040伏傲第一
我有寶賄明示人，是誨盜也，譬欲語人。汝何不知我此寶。則是語人。汝何不取我此寶，德身寶也，爾急露之，羨者歎賞，令爾自喜，妒者嘗議，令爾懼而輟，或不忍而怒，此皆消德損功之緣矣。故修德宜如播麥，播麥者，喜寒畏熱。方種之時，其根最淺。一遇風熱，即芽?乾枯無復此麥。故種德者務居於靜以深其根。後雖有稱毀之風熱，犯之終不搖矣。

68. 068伏傲第一
或曰，名譽隨德，如鼓應桴，必畏名譽。恐修德者懼矣，曰，有德欲人知之，本非罪也。經曰，爾光明顯於人前，俾視爾善行，而讚美在天爾等父者。惟以德自歸，及以善圖名，是為罪矣。夫榮譽有虛有實。當去當就。所宜自檢者三。一為所以受榮譽之事。二謂授榮譽之人。三謂圖榮譽之人志意。吾所以受榮譽之事，宜實為之。若其過情，恥也。取非其有。謂之盜矣。亞吾斯定聖人曰。吾不喜愛我者。譽我以所未有，此非譽我，乃別譽一人係名於我耳。授譽之人。苟非明，誠不辨虛實，其言弗可聽也，故曰譽我於污人，譽我以污事，兩辱等耳。又曰，爾不見善於惡類，爾德未真。況見譽於惡類，可得為實譽乎。又曰譽爾者。勿論幾人，惟論何人。沽名者。在自見，無心向上以求讚頌天主。及為人之利益，其榮甚虛矣。夫名譽非可願愛之物，惟有益於人，始可願愛。夫我有其德。令人見我德，遂能讚頌天主。知為萬德之原。觀我善行，各自警策懈惰，欽從訓誡。是於我事天主，愛人真心。大有利益也。如是則名譽足貴也。

79. 079伏傲第一
好貴者。其末得時，謀望既為心患。其已得時，竊據更為心患。至於失位。愈又更為心患。其始謀望時，得位心重，暹計其他，遂不知天主。不知人。不知己。皆大患也，內多歉畏。恐失人意，語言行事，無不求媚於人。偽為謙恭，又如不欲得者，屈己徇人，諂諛百出，是眾役也，心分兩念，自相為鬥。其一惡情本欲為不善。又因好貴。懼人知覺。姑強抑之。兩惡心相反。不許有靜時，既處高位，身心最險。蓋有位為惡，其勢既便。又無從旁畜止者。是以在位彌久。造罪彌深。迨既失位。而受居位不善之永罰。其患又極矣。聖經曰。大者受苦亦大。亞利思多喻好大者曰。人視貴位。俱宜視後。不宜視前。蓋先寬後窄。先甘後苦，如生果焉。色美而味酸。方見輒欲嘗。方嘗輒受其苦矣。

81. 081伏傲第一
人無有自值所不能為者。與縫人以尺布。而欲為衣。與層人以寸皮。而欲為鞋。必決超而力辭。居貴任以治人最難為之事。而無人自識其難也。甚狹不足。以為甚有餘。惟真能辭者。乃真能任焉。寓言曰。眾樹共議。欲立一樹為長。共宗之。首推阿理襪。阿理襪美果美膏之樹也。辭曰。我膏甚潤。為人用。不願散我潤，易爾眾樹長也。次推葡萄。辭曰。我果甚甘。我酒甚美。為人用。不願散我甘美。易眾樹長也。已及棘末。棘末者。棘屬也。無花葉實。叢生多刺。一無可用。燎爨而已。遂躍超曰。信然耶。則當來就我影下。惟我所為。誰敢逆者。逆則我棘末當出火焚之矣。夫有德者。滿於膏。豐於實。懼因貴任而散也。微特不喜。且畏之。微特不求。且避之。愚者拙者。無美可懼散。不畏不避。則棘末而已。

108. 108伏傲第一
我欲修德。邪魔必厭惡圍我。恒投邪念穢感以攻我。我欲存我德。防禦其下。計奠若自謙下。冀佑於天主。勿恃己德力。或問一聖者曰。邪魔每以淫欲攻我。我不能當。其故何也。答曰。爾惟棄爾干戈。故不敵。何謂干戈。曰。謙與忍德也。魔之來攻。傲者詘詘自足。恃其德力當之。故屈。謙者自視無德可恃。惟望祐於天主。以此敵之。故易勝矣。安當古聖人也。天主普授以神目。令見世界。滿皆罟網機阱。鬼魔所布。用以陷人。聖人悚然懼畏。歎息曰。世之險危隱且多。人孰能避之乎。輒有天神答曰。能不蹈鬼險者。心謙而已。昔有聖瑪加略。嘗受魔攻。以謙防之。魔不能入。一日魔見形謂曰。今我負矣。惟爾謙勝我也。遂不至。蓋魔來攻我。惟欲損我德。污我心。消我功。我以謙當之。彼攻愈多。我功愈大。彼侵愈甚。我德愈成。彼又何利而攻我哉。

Based on the contents of the text, we can know that even having good reputation or high social status, and being praised by others, indeed, the proud are always worrying about losing their reputation and social status. For one reason, they fear comes from the mind of gain and loss. “Those who desire high status are always suffering. Before they attain it, they are troubled by longing. Once they have it, they are troubled by the fear of losing it; and when they lose it, their suffering becomes even greater.” The proud are longing for high status before getting it. So, they are racking brains and trying hard to get it. When they get high status, they are worrying about be envied or even be deprived by others. They are afraid of losing their high status. Once they lose it, they will feel great loss and suffer from humiliation. As a result, the fear of losing becomes stronger and stronger. For the other reason, the proud are always feeling anxious and not relaxed. What they say and how they act are only trying to please others. “The proud are inwardly full of guilt and fear. They are afraid of losing others’ favor. What they say and how they act are only to please others.” The proud suppress their true feelings to pander to others. “They bend themselves to accommodate others,

engaging in endless flattery—this is what it means to pander to others.” The proud are afraid of being seen through or criticized by others especially when their reason and emotion are locked in a tug-of-war. “Their evil intentions would like to commit wrongdoing, but due to a desire for status and fear of being exposed, they reluctantly suppress those urges. These two conflicting evils within their heart constantly oppose each other, leaving they no moment of inner peace.” Since the proud reluctantly suppress their feelings and desires, they have no moment of inner peace, and even influences their subsequent choices and decisions.

3. Envy:

The proud are easily envied and hated by others. They worry about being ostracized by the others or outdone by others. The proud are always suffering from overthinking. A keyword-based textual analysis identified 32 instances involving the terms “dù (妒, envy)”, “xiàn (羨, admire)”, “yàn (厭, hate)”and “wù (惡, dislike)”. Of these, “wù (惡)” appeared with the highest frequency (22 times), followed by “yàn (厭)” with 3 occurrences. There are 4 instances where “wù (惡)” and “yàn (厭)” in either order appeared 4 times together in the same text. The pairing of “wù (惡)” and “dù (妒)” occurred twice, whereas the pairing of “xiàn (羨)”,and “dù (妒)” occurred only once. There are no instances in which “dù (妒)”, “xiàn (羨)”, “yàn (厭)”and “wù (惡)” all appeared together in the same text. The following section analyzes 2 instances in which the pairing of “wù (惡)” and “dù (妒)” appeared, and 1 instance in which the “xiàn (羨)” and “dù (妒)” appeared together:


4. 004伏傲第一
聖厄勒臥略曰。傲為百罪之王。一入於心。罪惡萬端群從之。一不獨至。善德萬端俱去之。一不並立。何也。他欲倍德。以一對一而已。忿倍忍。妒倍怨。一雖壞，他未全壞。惟傲反謙。謙為萬德根。根毀矣。德安積。故傲雖一罪。萬罪總焉。

7. 007伏傲第一
天主惡傲何故，萬善萬福，皆天主賦予。傲者以主賦為己自有。若斯倍負，是以所受於天主者。反與為敵仇也。天主豈不與為敵仇哉。世人皆天主所育，皆所慈愛。傲者心心事事，惟膳尊己。盡人類欲凌轢屈抑之。則天人交惡焉，故他罪離於天主。傲罪遠於天主。妒奪人，怒奪我，傲奪天主。

40. 040伏傲第一
我有寶賄明示人，是誨盜也。嘗欲語人。汝何不知我此寶。則是語人。汝何不取我此寶，德身寶也。爾急露之，羨者歎賞，令爾自喜。妒者曾譏，令爾懼而輟。或不忍而怒，此皆消德損功之緣矣。故修德宜如播麥，播麥者，喜寒畏熱。方種之時，其根最淺。一遇風熱，即芽?乾枯無復此麥。故種德者務居於靜以深其根。後雖有稱毀之風熱，犯之終不搖矣。

“If I openly show my treasures, it is as if I am teaching others to steal my treasures. Virtue is like the treasure we have. If you hastily expose it, those who admire you will praise it, making you become self-satisfied. those who are jealous will criticize you, making you fear and retreat. Those who are unable to tolerate it, will grow angry and strive to surpass your virtue, confronting you head-on.” Taking this text as an example, those who do not show their treasures to others can protect themselves, and will not motivate others’ intention of stealing. Virtue is like the treasure we have. “If we tell

others that we have such treasure, it is as if we are teaching others to steal it." Arrogance is easily admired, envied, hated and disliked by others; or even more, being isolated or bullied by others. Although Zuo Zongtang (左宗棠) said "one who is not subject to jealousy is mediocre", the proud are not willing to be mediocre. However, the discord of interpersonal relationship will result in being isolated and bullied, and it will make a person self-loathing and hate others. Moreover, it will make a person suffered a breakdown, dissociation, and imbalance the bod and mind. There are two reasons. For one reason is, "anger undermines patience, and envy destroys forgiveness. Even if only part of your virtue is damaged, others may not fully forgive you. Only pride opposes humility. Humility is the root of all virtue. If the root (humility) is destroyed, how can virtue ever be cultivated?" The virtue can overcome the desire, and extinct anger with tolerance. The compassion and benevolence can forgive jealousy. Once the pride arises in mind, all the evils come. Therefore, St. Gregory the Great said "For when pride, the queen of sins, has fully possessed a conquered heart, she surrenders it immediately to seven principal sins, as if to some of her generals, to lay it waste." (聖厄勒臥略曰，傲為百罪之王。一入於心，罪惡萬端群從之。) For the other reason is, when pride enters the mind, it is like a film clouding the eyes. The pride makes a person no longer knows the Lord of Heaven, sees others clearly, or recognizes oneself. "The proud regard what Heaven has bestowed as if it were innately theirs." The proud think that what they have possesses are all out of their own effort. They not only elevate themselves to higher status, but also very arrogant. Moreover, they want to be respected and admired by others. "In every thought and action, the proud seek only to elevate themselves. They suppress and trample others in their pursuit of self-exaltation, thereby turning themselves against Heaven and mankind." They do not know the Lord of Heaven, do not fear the mandate of Heaven, live in disharmony with others, are at odds with themselves, and ultimately stand in opposition to Heaven. "Jealousy robs others, anger robs me, pride robs God." Like Carl G. Jung (1875~1961) said, loss of roots and lack of tradition and culture, alienation from others, and uprootedness and identification with one's conscious knowledge of oneself are major causes of the modern psychological dilemma brought about by industrialization.[14]

[14] In *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, Carl G. Jung (1875~1961) identified three major causes of the modern psychological dilemma brought about by industrialization: used three main reasons: 1) loss of roots and lack of tradition and culture, 2) alienation from others, and 3) uprootedness and identification with one's conscious knowledge of oneself. Tseng Chun Hai (曾春海), "Healing of Mind, Body, and Spirit from a Confucian Perspective - The Example of Wang Yang-Ming"〈儒家對身心靈的治療——以王陽明為範例〉, *Fujen Religious Studies*《輔仁宗教研究》, Vol. 14 (Winter, 2006), pp. 33-34.

V. Conclusion: Only Humility Can Subdue Pride.

First of all, a keyword-based textual analysis of the chapter “Fuao” identified 55 passages containing the terms “qiān (謙, humility)”, “qiān zhě (謙者, the humble)”, and “qiān dé (謙德, the virtue of humility)”. These terms appeared a total of 197 times across the 55 instances. After recalculation, the term “qiān zhě (謙者)” appeared 24 times across 15 instances, while “qiān dé (謙德)” appeared 37 times across 29 instances. Through cross-referencing, the two terms “qiān zhě (謙者)” and “qiān dé (謙德)” were found to co-occur in the same textual context 34 times, with a total of 61 occurrences. In addition, “qiān (謙)” and “qiān zhě (謙者)” appeared together in 10 instances, and “qiān (謙)” and “qiān dé (謙德)” appeared together in 4 instances. There are only 3 instances where “qiān (謙)”, “qiān zhě (謙者)”, and “qiān dé (謙德)” appeared together in the same passages as listed below:


1. 001伏傲第一
人心於行，為火。火性上，上則炎，炎則炙，炙則焚。至於焚而烈焰焦灼，勢難撲滅。化為灰燼，一息而盡。故火遇薪速盡也。人心歧路甚多，獨是好上人一心，從少得壯，從壯得老。即勉強調伏，而幾微陽約，情境相觸，不覺忽萌。自非內心真實能謙者，根株弗斷，斧柯相尋，星星弗滅，焚林未已也。是故謙者，悅於人，和於神，享於天主。傲者，反是。謙者，信於友，孝于親，忠於君王。傲者，反是。然則謙，一也。累言之而不盡，大哉謙乎。人全一謙德，眾德賅而全矣。龐子伏傲演謙為論也，旨近而遠，詞簡而嚴。比物連類，創為一家言。儻若啟重襲也，而眾寶覘。又若開重扃也。而朗日暄。誦其書，知其人，尚其友，此非百家諸子之言，而為龐子之伏傲。

伏傲小序

89. 089伏傲第一
謙者何。自居賤。自居下也。人思天主之大。己之渺焉。非主弗生弗成。弗賢弗聖。其心下於天主。即下於人。斯謙己。謙為德根。凡德不絕於是根。則暢達焉。悅茂焉。不則。摧折焉。枯萎焉。聖亞吾斯定曰。謙德斯須不可離。謙者先善以引善。配善以固善。隨善以掩善。不則做目取譽以入。全奪我矣。

100. 100伏傲第一
謙心者。注美德美智之器也。他器愈注愈滿。此器愈注愈虛。故愈注愈容。他德長。謙德與俱長。德愈實。自視愈虛。謙愈厚。並已無謙。是以愈受愈虛。愈虛。天主愈授之。故謙者如貧而日富。如賤而益貴。如愚而大智。如世人。而實天上人也。

For the first one, according to the short preface of chapter “Fuao”(〈伏傲小序〉) written by Cui Chang (崔淐) of Chiang-tung (江東): “Even if one forcibly suppresses pride in subtle and indistinct ways, when there is conflict between feelings and situations, unknowingly pride will arise. Unless one possesses genuine humility in mind, it is impossible to truly subdue pride. …If a person fully embodies true humility, all other virtues are thereby included and perfected.” Cui Chang directly indicated the difference between the humble and the pride: those who only appear humble in form are not truly endowed with the virtue of humility. As to the second one, it quoted from St. Augustine: “In nothing can the two virtues of humility and charity be separated.” (聖亞吾斯丁曰，謙德斯須不可離。) St. Augustine’s words echoes the concept mentioned in chapter “Dà Yǔ mó (〈大禹謨〉, Counsels of Great Yu)” in the *Book of Yu* (《虞書》, *Yú Shū*) from the *Book of Documents* (《尚書》, *Shàng Shū*): “The mind of

man is restless, prone (to err); its affinity to what is right is small. Be discriminating, be uniform (in the pursuit of what is right), that you may sincerely hold fast the Mean" Only by cultivating the virtue of humility can people truly subdue pride.

The last one takes a vessel as an example to a humble heart: "A humble heart is like a vessel that holds virtue and wisdom. An ordinary vessel become full as more is poured into them; but this vessel, the heart of humility, becomes emptier the more it is filled, and thus can hold even more. As one's virtues grows, humility grows with them. The more substantial the virtue, the more one sees oneself as insignificant. The deeper the humility, the less one is even aware of being humble. Thus, the more it (a humble heart) receives, the emptier it becomes." It is just like what Laozi (老子) said, "shrinking from taking precedence of others, I can become a vessel of the highest honor".[15]

In conclusion, "only humility can subdue pride" means only with a humble heart can the humble subdue pride (which is like a fierce lion). As to how to cultivate "virtue of humility", Pantoja quoted the words from St. Chrysostom: "If one introspects oneself on even a single fault every day, it can preserve a lifetime of virtue. How much more so when one considers the many faults committed over a lifetime. Thus, it depends on oneself to maintain humility and reject pride." (聖契理瑣曰，自省一日罪過，可保終身之德，況終身之多罪乎。故欲存謙辟傲，視己而已) We people should introspect ourselves everyday like Zengzi (曾子) said "I daily examine myself on three points."[16] Also, we should introspect ourselves whether "pride finds its way in through the deliberate seeking of discord?" Can we have no fear of reputation, and have no fear of envy and hatefulness from others? "When people contemplate the greatness of God, they can understand the smallness of themselves." Like mentioned in The *Book of Change* (《易經》) , "The superior man who adds

---

[15] In chapter 67 of *Tao Te Ching* (《道德經》): "I have three precious things which I prize and hold fast. The first is gentleness; the second is economy; and the third is shrinking from taking precedence of others. With that gentleness I can be bold; with that economy I can be liberal; shrinking from taking precedence of others, I can become a vessel of the highest honor." There are different kinds of commentaries on "become a vessel of the highest honor (成器長)". As to Wu Yi (吳怡)'s commentary, "成器長" means "to become the precursor of all things". Wu Yi (吳怡), *Laozi: A New Translation and Commentary*《新譯老子解義》, Taipei: San Min Book Co.,Ltd., 2003, p 406.

[16] In chapter "Xué ér" (學而, Studying and Practicing) of the *Analects*, the philosopher Zeng said "I daily examine myself on three points: whether, in transacting business for others, I may have been not faithful; whether, in intercourse with friends, I may have been not sincere; whether I may have not mastered and practiced (習, xí) the instructions of my teacher." The word "xí (習)" means "to master and practice", not "to review". Wang Ruilai (王瑞來), "The Opening and Reveal of the *Analects*" 〈《論語》開篇發覆〉, *Contemporary Philosophy*《現代哲學》, Vol. 5 (May, 2008), pp. 104-110.

humility to humility' is one who nourishes his (virtue) in lowliness." Only by willingly placing oneself in a humble position can one become a superior man.[17]

[17] As "Qian (謙, humble) hexagram"from "Treatise on the Xiang (〈象傳〉, overall image)" of *Yi Ching* (《周易》, *Book of Changes*) mentioned: "The superior man who adds humility to humility is one who nourishes his (virtue) in lowliness." Cheng Yi (程頤, 1033-1107), *Yi Cheng Zhuan*《易程傳》(Cheng Yi's Commentary on the *Book of Changes*), Taipei: Wen Chin Publishing Co., Ltd, 1987, p140.

Reference

Beatriz Moncó, “The China of the Jesits: Travels and Experiences of Diego de Pantoja and Adriano de las Cortes,” Culture and History Digital Journal, 1: 2 (2012), pp. 1-13.

Cheng Yi (程頤, 1033-1107), *Yi Cheng Zhuan*《易程傳》(Cheng Yi’s Commentary on *the Book of Changes*), Taipei: Wen Chin Publishing Co., Ltd., 1987.

Maurus Fang Hao (方豪), *Figures of History of the Catholic Church in China*《中國天主教史人物傳》, Shanghai: Kuangchi Program Service in Roman Catholic Diocese of Shanghai, 2003.

Wang Ruilai (王瑞來), “The Opening and Reveal of the *Analects*”〈《論語》開篇發覆〉, *Contemporary Philosophy*《現代哲學》, Vol. 5 (May, 2008), pp. 104-110.

Wu Yi (吳怡), *Laozi: A New Translation and Commentary*《新譯老子解義》, Taipei: San Min Book Co.,Ltd., 2003.

Zhang Kai (張鎧), *Diego de Pantojia and China : a Sudy on the Society of Jesus' “Policy of Adaptation”*《龐迪我與中國：耶穌會「適應」策略研究》, Zhengzhou: Da Xiang Publishing Co., 2009.

Tseng Chun Hai (曾春海), “Healing of Mind, Body, and Spirit from a Confucian Perspective - The Example of Wang Yang-Ming”〈儒家對身心靈的治療——以王陽明為範例〉, *Fujen Religious Studies*《輔仁宗教研究》, Vol. 14 (Winter, 2006), pp. 33-47.

Ye Nong (葉農), “Spanish Jesuit Diego de Pantoja and His works”〈西班牙籍耶穌會士龐迪我及其著作〉, *Journal of Monsoon Asian Studies*《季風亞洲研究》, Vol. 3 (October, 2016), pp. 99-137.

Meng Pei Yuan (蒙培元), *Emotion and Rationality*《情感與理性》, Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2002.

Diego de Pantoja (1571-1618), *Qike*《七克》(Septem Victoriis), Beijin: Jingdu Shitai Datang 京都始胎大堂 (Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception), 1798.

Zihan Tang (Yangzhou University)

"The Concept and Practical Efficacy of Philosophical Counseling from the Perspective of Rogers' Humanistic Psychology"

Originating in the 1980s, the philosophical practice movement is fundamentally defined as follows:
"By employing philosophical theories or methods, individuals are guided to examine their own beliefs, gain insight into their experiences, and improve their ways of thinking. Through this process, participants learn to think like philosophers, thereby helping them resolve practical problems or existential issues encountered in everyday life. Ultimately, this leads to deeper self-understanding, personal growth, and inner peace." [1] In this sense, philosophical practice is often regarded as a form of philosophical counseling. Philosophical counseling, to a certain extent, more explicitly highlights the object and purpose of philosophical practice—namely, philosophy addressing and healing the ailments of the soul or mental disturbances through the method of "counseling." However, since directly confronting and treating mental illness is typically viewed as one of the primary aims of psychology, philosophical counseling inevitably faces potential conflict or competition with psychological therapy. Although philosophical counseling endeavors to draw comparisons with psychological therapy and argues that philosophical therapy should serve as a necessary complement to psychological treatment, the psychological community has not demonstrated significant interest in this proposition. In the contemporary discourse on mental health treatment, the role of philosophical counseling appears marginal. Furthermore, the philosophical community itself has shown limited enthusiasm for the therapeutic potential of philosophical counseling.

Therefore, while the ambition to develop a new direction of philosophical research at the intersection of mainstream philosophy and psychology, and to highlight its therapeutic efficacy, is commendable, addressing the current marginalization of philosophical counseling—neither embraced by psychology nor fully recognized by philosophy—requires a profound logical analysis of the interplay between these disciplines. This analysis can be approached from two perspectives: first, the logical derivation of philosophical counseling from traditional philosophical research, and second, the logical derivation of philosophical counseling from the empirically observed therapeutic effects of psychology. A comprehensive examination of Carl Rogers' humanistic psychology and its inherent challenges provides a practical opportunity to achieve this goal.

[1] Pan Tianqun.Selected Literature on Philosophical Practice[M].Nan Jing.NanJing University Press,2023:1-15.

I. Humanistic Psychology as the External Opportunity for Philosophical Counseling

Psychological disorders represent a significant manifestation of mental illness, and psychology, as the study of psychological states, naturally assumes the responsibility of addressing these conditions.

However, psychological therapy faces two significant challenges: first, it often equates or reduces mental illnesses to psychological disorders; second, its approach to treating psychological disorders lacks thoroughness. These two issues have driven the diversification and deepening of psychological therapy, leading to the emergence of three main branches within psychology: experimental psychology, psychoanalysis (or analytical psychology), and humanistic psychology. Humanistic psychology, positioned as the "third force" within this framework, not only signifies its distinction from the other two branches but also reflects its logical and historical role in the evolution of psychology. In other words, humanistic psychology has, to a certain extent, arisen as a sublation of the traditional two forces. Therefore, an examination of humanistic psychology not only helps us understand the logical progression of psychological therapy but also enables us to grasp the profound challenges inherent in psychological treatment. By following this logical approach and understanding these issues, we can gain a clearer perspective on how philosophical counseling transcends psychological therapy and achieves its practical efficacy.

Carl Rogers, an American psychologist, is widely recognized as the seminal figure in humanistic psychology. His foundational theories and practical contributions offer an effective entry point for understanding humanistic psychology. At the core of Rogers' humanistic psychology is the concept of "client-centered therapy." This approach not only continues the basic presuppositions of psychological theory but also defines the specific methods of psychological treatment.

The direct theoretical foundation of the "client-centered" approach lies in Rogers' theory of "personal experience." Rogers argued that the core of addressing psychological problems does not reside in the method itself, as different methods rely on different premises. Instead, the only truly effective premise is personal experience. He stated: "All that one person can do is to describe his own experience and the evidence which grows out of that experience" [2], and "The evidence upon which he can base a value judgment is supplied by his own senses, his own experience"[3]. Based on this theory, Rogers proposed that when the client clearly recognizes that the therapist's assessment of them is grounded in their own personal experience, an interdependent relationship between the client and the therapist is established [4]. By further accepting the therapist's suggestions, the client is, in essence, accepting and mastering themselves: " It is for this reason that the person who has come to accept

[2] Carl Rogers: Client-centered therapy: its current practice, implications, and theory, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1951, p.48.
[3] Ibid., p. 150.
[4] cf., Ibid., p. 215.

his own experiences also acquires the feeling of being in control of himself"[5]. This theory vividly demonstrates the connection between theory and practice, to the extent that it could be said to be less of a theory and more of a specific practical skill. Rogers himself acknowledged this: "Therapy is the experience in which I can let myself go subjectively. Research is the experience in which I can stand off and try to view this rich subjective experience with objectivity, applying all the elegant methods of science to determine whether I have been deceiving myself" [6] However, there are at least two reasons why it can still be regarded as a theory. First, it represents a rebellion against past psychological theories; whether or not it aligns with past theories or even with the concept of theory itself, it inevitably becomes a kind of theory. Second, although personal experience is filled with various subjective and present elements, the belief in the validity of these subjective present experiences is itself a theoretical presupposition. This presupposition can be constructed into an ordered and comprehensible theoretical system through rational methods. While the first reason may seem somewhat forced, the second reason holds significant weight. Rogers elaborated on this by stating: "I have come to see both scientific research and the process of theory construction as being aimed toward the inward ordering of significant experience. Research is the persistent disciplined effort to make sense and order out of the phenomena of subjective experience" [7]Undoubtedly, the theory of personal experience is legitimate as a theory.

In fact, the theory of personal experience constitutes a distinct psychological framework for addressing human psychological states. It differs significantly from experimental psychology and analytical psychology in two major ways: first, it rejects the notion that human psychological states can be accurately described through experimental or analytical methods; second, it opposes the use of predefined psychological states to measure an individual's subjective psychology and subsequently correct so-called abnormal psychological states or behaviors. Positively stated, the core tenet of the theory of personal experience is its emphasis on the validity of subjective psychological experience. This includes two key aspects: first, that the subjective psychological experience expressed by any individual under any condition possesses genuine reliability; and second, that such subjective experiences can be accurately grasped and understood.

It is evident that Rogers' theory of personal experience is grounded in these two beliefs. If we further inquire: Why does Rogers place such trust in this theory? His answer rests on two distinct premises. The first premise is the inherent human drive for "self-actualization." Rogers posited that even the most antisocial behaviors or abnormal emotions are genuine, and deep within, every individual possesses a positive developmental direction—namely, " towards self-actualization, maturity, and

[5] Ibid., p. 514.
[6] Carl Rogers: On Becoming a Person: Therapist's View of Psychotherapy, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961, p.14.
[7] Ibid., 1961, pp. 24-25.

socialization " [8]Thorne elaborates that this is regarded as an instinctive human need because its validity is rooted in our immediate lived environment, which reflects nature's "simple principle" and is deeply embedded in each person's psyche as "an underlying and inherent tendency" [9]. The second premise is drawn from contemporary phenomenological philosophy. Phenomenology is characterized by two fundamental aspects. First, it reduces all knowledge to the experience of the perceiving subject: "In all of its manifestations, knowledge is a mental experience: knowledge belongs to a knowing subject" [10] . Second, it affirms the reliability of subjective experience. Perceived phenomena are essentially the experiences of the perceiving subject: "Likewise, memory and expectation are subjective experiences, along with all the acts of thought built upon them, on the basis of which we mediately posit real existence and determine any truth about such existence" [11] . Rogers integrated the phenomenological method into his psychological practice. In his therapeutic framework, the belief in the reliability of subjective experience encompasses two dimensions: first, trust in the client's subjective experience, and second, trust in the therapist's subjective experience. In other words, " each of us behaves in accordance with our subjective awareness of ourselves and of the world we inhabit"[12]. In short, therapy is "the experience in which I can let myself go subjectively"[13], because "therapy in its occurrence is a highly personal, subjective experience" [14]. It is clear that both premises are intuitive. However, the first intuitive tendency, rooted in sensory experience, may lack sufficient depth and rigor. In contrast, the second intuitive tendency, grounded in phenomenology with its profound philosophical influence, effectively compensates for the limitations of the first. In this sense, the theory of personal experience bridges philosophical theory and psychological treatment methods: on one hand, its theoretical foundation lies in phenomenology and its associated existential philosophy; on the other hand, its practical application is realized through psychological therapeutic techniques. Rogers' stance is unequivocal: he asserts that his psychotherapy theory is connected to psychology, psychiatry, and philosophy, particularly phenomenology and existential philosophy[15].

The current question is: Does the theory of personal experience, based on philosophical thought, represent an independent theory that replaces philosophy in treating psychological disorders? Or perhaps the question is milder: as a psychological theory, does the theory of personal experience make up for the lack of practical efficacy in treating psychological or mental illnesses in philosophy? Before the emergence or attention to philosophical counseling, people generally believed that

[8] Ibid., 1961, pp. 26-27.
[9] Brian Thorne: Carl Rogers, London: SAGE Publications, 2003, p. 26
[10] Edmund Husserl, The Idea of Phenomenology, trans. Lee Hardy, London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999, p. 17
[11] Ibid.
[12] Thorne, 2003, p. 25
[13] Rogers, 1961, p. 14
[14] Ibid., p. 66
[15] cf., Rogers, 1961, p. ix

philosophy needed to rely on psychology to engage in the practice of treating mental disorders. Psychology, at a deeper level, does not shy away from this point, as many of its theories can be traced back to philosophy. However, psychology often prevents philosophy from entering the field of treating psychological disorders, claiming that this is not within the scope of philosophy.

The Current Inquiry: Does the theory of personal experience, grounded in philosophical thought, constitute an independent theoretical framework capable of replacing philosophy in the treatment of psychological disorders? Alternatively, phrased more moderately: As a psychological theory, does the theory of personal experience compensate for the lack of practical efficacy in philosophy's approach to treating psychological or mental illnesses? Historically, prior to the emergence or recognition of philosophical counseling, the prevailing assumption was that philosophy needed to rely on psychology to engage in the treatment of mental disorders. Psychology, at its core, does not deny this connection—indeed, many of its theories trace their origins to philosophical foundations. However, psychology often resists philosophy's direct involvement in the treatment of psychological disorders, asserting that such interventions fall outside the scope of philosophical inquiry.

Nevertheless, as the foundational theories of psychological treatment evolved from experimental psychology to psychoanalysis and eventually to humanistic psychology, this transformation undoubtedly highlighted the futility of psychology's attempts to exclude philosophy from the therapeutic domain. This argument constitutes a significant external factor emphasizing the significance of philosophical counseling. Undoubtedly, within the current paradigm dominated by psychological treatment, examining Rogers' humanistic psychology and its therapeutic theory provides a crucial external impetus for reversing the declining trajectory of philosophical counseling.

II. The Essence and Issues of Humanistic Psychology's Therapeutic Method

By applying the theory of personal experience to psychological treatment, Rogers developed a therapeutic framework distinct from both experimental psychology and psychoanalysis. This system can be summarized through three key dimensions: three paradigm shifts, three core conditions, and three therapeutic goals.

First, Rogers proposed three fundamental shifts in response to the limitations of traditional psychological therapeutic theories. The first shift involves redefining the therapeutic relationship—moving away from the traditional therapist-patient dynamic to a counselor-client relationship. Rogers rejected terms such as "patient," "sick person," or "analysand," advocating instead for the use of "client." He explained, "The client, as the term has acquired its meaning, is one who comes actively and voluntarily to gain help on a problem, but without any notion of surrendering his own responsibility for the situation. […] It avoids the connotation that he is sick, or the object of an experiment, and so on. […] For the present, however, this seems the term most

appropriately related to our concept of the person coming for help"[16]. By eliminating the notion of "patients" or "sick individuals," the traditional hierarchical relationship is replaced by a more collaborative counselor-client dynamic.

The second shift involves the adoption of a "client-centered" approach. This approach posits that clients are not only capable of understanding their psychological issues but can also identify the sources of their distress and determine the direction needed for healing. As Brian Thorne notes, "In his clinical practice he increasingly became convinced that it is always the client who knows what hurts and in what direction he or she needs to proceed if healing is to take place" [17]. This shift is grounded in two theoretical foundations: Freud's emphasis on unconscious psychological experiences and the revolutionary student-centered approach in education. Rogers acknowledged that without Freud's "the appreciation of man's unconscious strivings and complex emotional nature", client-centered therapy would not have been possible[18]. Similarly, just as the student-centered approach in education resolves the dilemma of "What shall I teach? How can I prove that I have taught it? How can I 'cover' all that I should teach?" the client-centered approach enables therapists to enter the client's inner world and facilitate their healing process [19].

The third shift concerns the role of the counselor. Rather than directing or interpreting the client's experiences, the counselor's role is to "perceive as sensitively and accurately as possible all of the perceptual field as it is being experienced by the client" [20]. In practice, this means the counselor strives to fully understand the client's inner world, communicating with the client's perceptual field as if they were the client themselves. Counselors do not impose solutions or make subjective interpretations of the client's problems. Instead, they assist clients in exploring, identifying, and clarifying their own inner experiences.

Next, to effectively understand and respond to the client's subjective experience, Rogers proposed three core conditions. The first is congruence. Rogers defined this concept abstractly as: "Congruence is the term we have used to indicate an accurate matching of experiencing and awareness. It may be still further extended to cover a matching of experience, awareness, and communication" [21]. In simpler terms, congruence refers to the alignment of action, awareness, and expression. This means the counselor is "transparent" to both the client and themselves, and is able to "express if necessary, the thoughts, feelings and attitudes which are currently flowing within him or her" [22]. Congruence ensures that both the counselor and the client can genuinely understand and articulate their inner experiences, with the counselor being capable of engaging in direct and sincere communication at any time.

---

[16] Carl Rogers: Client-Centered Therapy: Its Current Practice, Implications, and Theory, p. 7
[17] Brian Thorne: Carl Rogers, London: SAGE Publications, 2003, p. 25
[18] Client-Centered Therapy, p. 4
[19] Ibid., p. 389
[20] Ibid., p. 34
[21] Carl Rogers: On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy, p. 339
[22] Brian Thorne: Carl Rogers, 2003, p. 37

The second core condition is acceptance. This refers to "a warm regard" for the client "as a person of unconditional self-worth—of value no matter what his condition, his behavior, or his feelings" [23]. Rogers emphasized, "as a person of unconditional self-worth--of value no matter what his condition, his behavior, or his feelings"[24]. He believed that accepting every aspect of the client fosters a relationship characterized by warmth and safety. The sense of being valued and appreciated, Rogers argued, is a crucial element in any helping relationship.（有删减）

The third core condition is empathy. Rogers described empathy as the ability "To sense the client's private world as if it were your own" [25]. This involves two key aspects: on the one hand, the counselor must "constantly sensitively feels the changing feelings of the client, such as the fear, anger, tenderness, or confusion"; on the other hand, the counselor must "temporarily living in his/her life, moving about in it delicately without making judgements, sensing meaning of which he/she is scarcely aware, but not trying to uncover feelings of which the person is totally unaware, since this would be too threatening"[26]. Rogers used the term "as if" to capture the essence of empathy: the counselor enters the client's inner world as if becoming one with the client, yet maintains the clarity of an observer, unaffected by the client's confusion or anger [27].

From a practical perspective, these three conditions—congruence, acceptance, and empathy—exhibit a progressive relationship: only when the counselor achieves congruence with the client can they fully accept the client, and only then can true empathy be realized. However, from a logical standpoint, empathy is the foundation that enables the first two conditions. The "as if" quality of empathy is profound; it reveals the deep dynamic between the counselor and the client: the counselor enters the client's confusion without being consumed by it, while the client, initially trapped in confusion, begins to see a glimmer of hope and a path forward. In this sense, empathy serves as a precursor to successfully navigating and resolving confusion.

Finally, Rogers articulated three primary objectives that psychological therapy aims to achieve. Regarding the goals of humanistic psychological therapy, Rogers initially proposed five dimensions through which the counselor facilitates change in the client, leading to various outcomes[28]. Thorne later condensed these complex objectives into three levels: the first is to "be relieved of intolerable psychological pain"; the second is to reach "a level of functioning that far outstrips the original modest expectations which were present at the outset of therapy"; and the third is to develop "the client's increasing capacity to be congruent" [29]. This summary reflects a clear hierarchical structure: the first level is immediate, focusing on alleviating symptoms; the second level represents the typical aim of psychological therapy, i.e., helping the client

[23] Carl Rogers: On Becoming a Person, p. 34
[24] Carl Rogers: On Becoming a Person: Therapist's View of Psychotherapy, p.34
[25] Carl Rogers: On Becoming a Person, 1961, p. 284
[26] Carl Rogers: A Way of Being, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1980, p. 142
[27] cf. Carl Rogers: On Becoming a Person, p. 284
[28] Ibid., pp. 165-175
[29] Brian Thorne: Carl Rogers, London: SAGE Publications, 2003, pp. 40-41

become a "normal" functioning individual; and the third level is societal, signifying the full realization of individual self-reliance, which equates to personal maturity and health. Thus, these three objectives form a progressive relationship, with the ultimate goal being the maturation of personality.

This emphasis on personality maturity distinguishes humanistic psychology from traditional psychology, particularly experimental psychology, and underscores its unique philosophical dimension. Rogers himself placed significant value on this aspect, stating that the counselor's goal is to assist the client—and even the counselor themselves—in achieving their true self: "To use Kierkcgaard's more aesthetically satisfying terms, it means 'to be that serf which one truly is'"[30]. Rogers further emphasized, "this is not an easy direction to move, nor one which is ever completed. It is a continuing way of life"[31].

Moreover, Rogers' humanistic psychology bridges the gap between psychology and philosophy. The ability to independently navigate the realities of everyday life, as advocated by Rogers, aligns with what philosophy traditionally refers to as wisdom. This connection highlights the profound implications of humanistic psychology, transcending the boundaries of conventional psychological practice and venturing into the realm of philosophical inquiry.

In summary, the analysis of these three dimensions reveals that the central driver in humanistic psychological therapy is neither the counselor nor the client, but rather the therapeutic methodology itself. Three interrelated arguments substantiate this conclusion.

First, regarding the three paradigm shifts, the "client-centered" framework does not imply "client-dominated" therapy. Instead, the dominant force lies in the relational dynamic between counselor and client. In other words, only when the counselor employs the appropriate therapeutic approach can these shifts be actualized, thereby realizing the client-centered ethos.

Second, among the three core therapeutic conditions, empathy serves as the foundational link between congruence and acceptance. This is not only because empathy inherently encompasses both congruence and acceptance but also because it functions as the connective bond facilitating mutual understanding between counselor and client.

Third, concerning the three therapeutic goals, the ultimate objective of personality maturity fundamentally reflects relational harmony—a practical outcome of the three paradigm shifts and core conditions. To clarify further, the three shifts are operational manifestations of the core conditions. Consequently, empathy emerges as the linchpin of psychological therapy.

Drawing from Rogers' dual conceptualization of empathy—as both the basis of counselor-client communication and the essential condition for their collaborative alignment—it becomes evident that empathy transcends mere technique. It represents

[30] Carl Rogers: On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy, 1961, p. 181
[31] Ibid.

a philosophical commitment to understanding and shared humanity, bridging psychological practice with existential principles.

From the perspective of psychological therapy, empathy, as the cornerstone of humanistic psychology, functions not merely as a foundational therapeutic condition but as an intrinsic methodology. It constitutes the core essence of humanistic psychology's therapeutic theory and practice. In other words, for Rogers, empathy is both a fundamental prerequisite and a substantive technique for facilitating the mutual transformation and integration of subjective experiences between counselor and client.

However, Rogers' approach of blending theoretical foundations with practical methods has inevitably led to certain criticisms. Generally, in the realm of therapeutic techniques, psychology traditionally relies on the concept of transference—defined as the process through which clients project past experiences and emotions onto the therapist. As Brian Thorne notes, "the 'working through' of the transference is often seen as fundamental to the successful outcome of therapy"[32]. Rogers' exclusive focus on empathy, to the exclusion of transference, has drawn significant critique:

"Because of Rogers' inadequate attention to unconscious forces, as the analyst sees it, the whole transference–countertransference dynamic is missing from client-centred therapy, at least in an overt way. The analytical criticism, however, revolves around the belief that transference takes place whether the therapist acknowledges this or not and that Rogers, by his failure to give due respect to this unconscious dimension, is in danger of attributing to the relationship which he forms with his clients a quality of present reality that cannot be sustained"[33].

This critique highlights a fundamental tension between Rogers' humanistic approach and traditional psychoanalytic perspectives. While Rogers emphasizes the conscious, present-moment relational dynamics facilitated by empathy, psychoanalytic theorists argue that ignoring the unconscious processes of transference risks oversimplifying the therapeutic relationship.

However, a thorough understanding of the three aspects outlined above reveals that this criticism is largely unfounded. On the one hand, Rogers' concept of empathy effectively fulfills the practical function traditionally ascribed to transference. The role of transference lies in facilitating the client's projection of latent emotions onto the counselor, thereby enabling the client to experience authentic and effective interpersonal relationships in their daily lives. This process provides a crucial opportunity for the client to restore normal interpersonal communication. Clearly, this aligns with empathy, which integrates congruence and acceptance. Thus, it can be argued that the essence of Rogers' humanistic psychological therapy lies in empathy.

On the other hand, empathy also achieves the practical effects of transference. As the connective bond in interpersonal communication, the successful realization of empathy signifies the normalization and maturation of personality—a concrete manifestation of mental health restoration. From these two perspectives, it becomes

[32] Brian Thorne: Carl Rogers, 2003, p. 75
[33] Ibid.

evident that Rogers' omission of transference was not an oversight but a deliberate choice. Replacing transference with empathy is, in fact, central to the nature of humanistic psychology.

It is worth noting that empathy (*Einfühlung*) is also a pivotal concept in phenomenology, referring to the "experience of others" [34]. Its function can be understood in two key dimensions: first, "In empathy I realize that the other ego is not like another object, it is like me"; and second, "The empathy of the other ego acquires ontological status when it is presented embodied in a body. The empathy offers me the experience of another ego which is embodied and acts in its body" [35]. This demonstrates that empathy is not merely the harmonious blending of psychological states between individuals but also the realization of self-consciousness or the self.

"Self-realization" is precisely the focal point of Rogers' humanistic psychology. The "client-centered" theory, coupled with empathy as its core condition, represents the psychological pathway toward self-realization. Therefore, while empathy serves as the dominant substance of therapy, self-realization acts as the intrinsic driving force behind this therapeutic approach.

However, regarding the concept of self-realization, empathy grounded in psychological methodology remains insufficient to function as the foundational therapeutic mechanism. While empathy as a substantive therapeutic technique necessitates collaborative engagement between counselor and client—and philosophically *should* occupy a central role—its dominance is often obscured in practice by the counselor's inadvertent authority. Two factors contribute to this paradox:

First, during therapy, the client is encouraged to freely and fully express their psychological experiences, whereas the counselor must selectively and purposefully interpret and integrate these experiences. Second, clients often struggle to articulate their inner states voluntarily; when they do, their expressions are typically fragmented or ambiguous. Consequently, the counselor must not only employ empathy to guide the client's emotional exploration but also intervene to clarify and contextualize these expressions.

Thus, despite Rogers' meticulous efforts to avoid therapist-centric dominance, his framework inadvertently reinforces the counselor's authoritative role. In essence, the success of empathy as a therapeutic method within Rogers' theory remains contingent on the counselor's capacity to navigate and respond to the client's needs. If the counselor fails to attune to the client's emotional or psychological demands, the therapeutic process risks failure.

So, how did Rogers' empathy achieve such remarkable success? The answer lies in the specific conditions Rogers introduced into the therapeutic process: (1) appropriate empathy or congruence, which entails shared emotional engagement within the therapeutic context; (2) the client's appropriate disclosure of their experiences; and (3)

[34] Victor Velarde-Mayol: On Husserl, Belmont: Wadsworth Philosophers, 2000, p. 75
[35] Ibid., p. 77

the counselor's appropriate acceptance (which may also include selective rejection). To a significant extent, the notion of universal human empathy serves as a presupposition rather than a prerequisite for therapy. Empathy as a therapeutic method is not a one-size-fits-all solution; its efficacy hinges on context-specific communication.

This brings us back to the central question of Rogers' humanistic psychology: how can subjective experience be trusted? The key lies in the concept of appropriate empathy, which serves both as the foundation of subjective experience and the means through which it is understood. In other words, through the presupposition and practice of empathy within a specific context, subjective experience is transformed into reliable, trustworthy, and concrete knowledge.

When empathy is defined in this way, its seemingly mysterious nature becomes clearer, paving the way for a more realistic and profound approach: dialogue.

III. The Intervention of Dialogue and Its Effectiveness

The assumption of universal empathy as a fundamental aspect of human nature serves as the cornerstone of humanistic psychology. This universal appeal ultimately led Rogers to embrace a path of faith. As Brian Thorne observes, "In the final period of his life, however, it was in the therapeutic relationship itself that Rogers rediscovered the dimension which at a conscious level he had shut out when he abandoned Christianity"[36]. Upon his return to faith, Rogers began to perceive life through a mystical lens, recognizing that human experience is often marked by supernatural phenomena and events that defy conventional explanation. He not only acknowledged that his earlier dismissal of spirituality was a mistake but also became convinced of the existence of a profound and mysterious soul within the world [37]. Consequently, Rogers integrated this spiritual dimension into the core conditions of his therapeutic framework. As Thorne notes, "There can be no doubt that he viewed this 'characteristic' as in some way of comparable significance to the qualities of congruence, acceptance and empathy" [38].

Rogers' approach traces its intellectual lineage to the pioneering humanistic psychology of Søren Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard posited that human existence is fundamentally marked by despair—a state wherein the self becomes enmeshed in environmental constraints, thereby inevitably losing its authentic identity. While despair constitutes an inescapable dimension of the human condition, Kierkegaard maintained that transcendence remains possible. He asserted that absolute liberation from despair could only be achieved through divine faith: " In fact, the greater the conception of God, the more self there is; the more self, the greater the conception of

[36] Brian Thorne: Carl Rogers, p. 22
[37] cf. Carl Rogers: Client-Centered/Person-Centered Approach to Therapy, in I. L. Kutash and A. Wolf (eds.), Psychotherapist's Casebook, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1986, pp. 197-200
[38] Brian Thorne: Carl Rogers, 2003, p. 40

God. Not until a self as this specific single individual is conscious of existing before God, not until then is it the infinite self" [39]. However, theological faith need not be interpreted as the exclusive or primary resolution to existential crises within Kierkegaardian philosophy. As Luo and Chen (2017) observe, "If one rejects Kierkegaard's religious solution, an alternative approach grounded in pure spiritual activity or philosophical wisdom emerges as a viable alternative" [40]. This conceptual shift proves critical: Kierkegaardian faith essentially represents a dialogic encounter between finite human consciousness and divine infinity. Ultimately, the mechanism of resolution resides not in faith per se but in the dialogic process itself. The transformative potential lies in any form of profound spiritual communion—whether divine or interpersonal. When individuals engage in authentic intersubjective dialogue, the infinite self actualizes through this relational dynamic. Consequently, rejecting Kierkegaard's theological framework necessitates a parallel rejection of Rogers' analogous faith-based propositions. Both may be productively supplanted by a paradigm prioritizing genuine human-to-human existential dialogue.

Dialogue represents a foundational principle of ancient philosophy, as articulated by the Greek philosopher Socrates. To underscore its significance, Socrates developed the "Socratic method," a dialogical approach that he likened to the art of midwifery. He elaborated on this analogy: "My art of midwifery is just like theirs in most respects. The difference is that I attend men and not women, and that I watch over the labor of their souls, not of their bodies. And the most important thing about my art is the ability to apply all possible tests to the offspring, to determine whether the young mind is being delivered of a phantom, that is, an error, or a fertile truth."[41]. Thus, Socratic midwifery operates on two levels: first, as a form of spiritual midwifery or the art of soulful dialogue, it centers on the cultivation of the human soul or spirit; second, it embodies a philosophical imperative to address the ailments of the soul, encapsulating what has been termed a filosofia como terapia—Socrates' ingenious innovation[42].

Applying the Socratic method to elucidate Rogers' humanistic psychology and its therapeutic framework is both apt and illuminating. Rogers places empathy at the heart of his therapeutic practice, which gives rise to three transformative dimensions, three core conditions, and three therapeutic goals. This framework even extends to the identification of a fourth core condition. However, such complexity is neither necessary nor inherently superior. At its core, interpersonal dialogue remains the fundamental essence of human communication. The distinctions between counselor and client, the process of self-actualization, and the phenomenon of transference—which Rogers did

[39] Søren Kierkegaard: The sickness unto death, edited and translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980, p.80

[40] Luo Longxiang, Chen Xiaoming: Kierkegaard's View of Desperate Existence and Its Practical Value, Jianghai Academic Journal, No. 6,2017, p.73

[41] Plato: Plato Complete Works, Edited by John M. Cooper, Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997, p.167

[42] Nicolas Grimaldi, Sócrates, o feiticeiro, Tradução Nicalás Nyimi Campanário, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2004, p.20

not explicitly emphasize—are all ultimately propelled by the dialogical dynamic that underpins them.

In fact, Socrates' method—or midwifery, as encapsulated in the Socratic method—was not originally designed to formulate universal knowledge but rather to address "the human soul." It embodies a philosophical imperative to confront and resolve the ailments of the soul. In other words, the intrinsic purpose of the Socratic method is to "engage directly with the human soul and facilitate its perfection"[43]. This aligns closely with both the methodological foundations and ultimate objectives of humanistic psychology. Socrates' foundational premise of "knowing that we do not know" serves as a catalyst for employing the Socratic method to achieve the Delphic maxim of "know thyself." By returning philosophical counseling to its roots in the human soul, Socrates sought to resolve existential and spiritual dilemmas, ultimately guiding individuals toward "the self-perfection of the soul."

IV. Philosophical Counseling as Dialogue and Its Practical Effectiveness

As early as the 1920s, the German philosopher Leonard Nelson explicitly identified Socratic dialogue as a philosophical method aimed at the "self-perfection of the soul." On the one hand, Nelson argued that "This art of forcing minds to freedom constitutes the first secret of the Socratic method" [44]. In other words, the efficacy of Socratic philosophical dialogue lies in its ability to return to the human soul and restore its inherent freedom.

On the other hand, Nelson emphasized that the effectiveness of philosophical dialogue extends beyond this initial step. Regaining freedom is only the "first mystery" of philosophical dialogue, as the return to the soul's free nature is not a fixed outcome but an ongoing process. Philosophical dialogue, therefore, serves as the fundamental source that continually sustains the vitality of the soul's free nature. Its essence lies in facilitating the "self-perfection of the soul."

Thus, philosophy, guided by the soul's independent freedom, transcends being merely a method for addressing the soul's ailments or promoting personality development. It becomes an activity of the soul itself, with dialogue as its substantive core. As Nelson emphasized, Socratic dialogue embodies the activity of "philosophizing": "The Socratic method, then, is the art of teaching not philosophy but philosophizing, the art not of teaching about philosophers but of making philosophers of the students" [45]. In fact, since Nelson, the return to Socrates and the emphasis on dialogue as the essential activity of philosophy has become the fundamental principle and internal thread of the philosophical practice movement. Therefore, by examining philosophical counseling—which serves as a representative form of philosophical practice—through the lens of

[43] Luo Longxiang: The Socratic "Maieutic" and Its Application in Philosophical Education, Journal of Educational Studies, No. 5, 2016, p. 25

[44] Leonard Nelson: Socratic Method and Critical Philosophy: Selected Essays, translated by Thomas K. Brown III, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949, p. 15

[45] Ibid., p. 1

the Socratic method, we are able to transcend the conventional understanding of psychological counseling. This not only allows for a deeper comprehension of the logical orientation inherent in Rogers's humanistic psychology as previously outlined, but also enables a more profound grasp of the practical efficacy of philosophical counseling.

This return to the Socratic method and the emphasis on dialogue as the essence of philosophical activity define the philosophical counseling movement. Consequently, the core idea of philosophical counseling is the Socratic method, which permeates its entire process and is key to understanding its practical effectiveness.

American philosopher Lou Marinoff, a prominent advocate of the philosophical counseling movement, further developed this concept by framing such dialogue as the "Nelsonian Socratic method." He emphasized that its purpose is "to explicitize the implicit in the soul" [46]. In other words, "This is the basis of Nelson's Socratic Dialogue: a reliable process that guides you to define explicitly what you already know implicitly "[47].

This suggests that dialogue functions as a profound means of understanding the inner soul and an effective tool for countering external forces that erode the soul's inherent freedom. The philosophical counseling movement, which seeks to transcend academic philosophy and apply philosophical insights to real-world challenges, is fundamentally oriented toward the "self-perfection of the soul. " Consequently, the Socratic method—or philosophical dialogue—advocated by this movement is not only an essential philosophical activity but also a method for fostering the soul's perfection. Indeed, it is, in itself, the very process of the soul's perfection.

On the surface, philosophical counseling focuses on two primary dimensions: (1) employing analytical rigor to clarify lived experiences, and (2) facilitating self-understanding or the soul's self-perfection. For instance, Pan Tianqun describes this process as "helping individuals clarify their thoughts through logical analysis, correct their beliefs, and thereby alleviate suffering" [48]. Francis Macdonald Cornford, who shares a similar perspective, posited that the Socratic method constitutes a form of philosophical therapy, its essence lying in the mind's self-healing—what he termed "self-rule." He elaborates:

"Self-rule is the rule of the true self over those other elements—an absolute autocracy of the soul. […] Socrates held that this desire of the enlightened soul is so strong that it cannot fail to overpower all the other desires whose objects the true self sees to be illusory" [49].

---

[46] Lou Marinoff: Philosophical Practice, New York: Academic Press, 2001, pp. 125-128

[47] Lou Marinoff: Plato, Not Prozac!: Applying Eternal Wisdom to Everyday Problems, New York: HarperCollins, 2014, p. 344

[48] Pan Tianqun: The Analytical Philosophy Path of Philosophical Practice, The Journal of Jiangsu Administration Institute, No. 3, 2013, p. 15

[49] Francis Macdonald Cornford: Before and After Socrates, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966, p.51

Evidently, the philosophical counseling movement's emphasis on reviving the Socratic method aligns fundamentally with the objectives of humanistic psychology. Both frameworks prioritize the liberation of the individual's authentic self through introspective and dialogical processes, positioning self-realization as both a therapeutic and existential imperative.

But should we then consider "soul autonomy" or "self-perfection" as the ultimate practical effect of philosophical counseling? If we base our answer on a logical analysis of philosophical counseling, the response is no. From a logical perspective, the practical effects of philosophical counseling operate on three distinct levels.

First, at the direct level, there exists a relatively stable and predetermined goal. Addressing mental disorders and achieving personality perfection represent fixed objectives, providing a standard for mental health and personal fulfillment. Once this standard is met, both psychological therapy and philosophical counseling can be deemed complete.

Second, there is a dynamic and forward-looking goal. Soul autonomy or the self-perfection of the soul belongs to this level. It addresses the temporary practical dilemmas that arise when new problems emerge in new environments, fulfilling the higher requirement of cultivating an independent and resilient personality. However, this still does not represent the final logical destination of philosophical counseling.

Logically, we must still ask: What is soul autonomy or self-perfection? For this question, both Kierkegaard—a pioneer of humanistic psychology—and Rogers—its foremost representative—trace the answer back to faith, positing an external, omnipotent goal for the soul. Yet, this approach faces inherent logical dilemmas that are difficult to resolve.

In contrast, philosophical counseling rooted in the Socratic method does not rely on external validation. Instead, it logically returns to the soul itself, manifesting as dialogue between individuals—or philosophical dialogue. This internal focus distinguishes it from approaches that seek answers outside the self.

First, the Socratic method predates the formalization of logical rules. When Socrates developed the elenchus as the primary form of his dialogue, he did not view dialogue itself as the ultimate aim of philosophy but rather as a foundational means to achieve the soul's self-perfection. This instrumental view of dialogue inadvertently contributed to the later development of logic as a tool.

However, the elenctic dialogue, characterized by its individuality and randomness, lacked a set of universally applicable rules for both participants. For instance, the reasons for contradictions between discourses, their identity, or their inherent necessity were not governed by a consistent framework. This limitation of the Socratic elenchus was one of the key motivations for Aristotle's establishment of formal logic.

While the Socratic elenchus primarily aimed to reveal conflicts or contradictions within dialogue, Aristotle's logic formalized the relationships between discourses or propositions—such as identity, implication, and exclusion—based on logical necessity. This marked a significant advancement, as logic became a tool for both knowledge acquisition and the soul's self-perfection. From the Socratic elenchus to Aristotelian

logic, there was undeniable progress in enhancing the clarity, precision, and effectiveness of dialogue.

Yet, dialogue and logic are not parallel constructs. As Luo Longxiang and Tang Zihan argue, "Logical rules are not predetermined or absolutely fixed, and there is no eternal logical rule that must always be followed in dialogue; instead, logical rules themselves are formed within the dialogue. Dialogue is always primary, and logical rules must obey the needs of the dialogue" [50].

In essence, the Socratic method forms the premise of logic. This perspective underscores that dialogue is both the foundation for the vitality of logic and its ultimate purpose.

Second, the soul autonomy or self-perfection pursued by philosophy is fundamentally rooted in interpersonal dialogue. Philosophical counseling centers on addressing mental illness or existential suffering. Superficially, such suffering may stem from cognitive conflicts, but at its core, it arises from the soul's inadequacy in navigating daily life—particularly interpersonal dynamics. Traditional psychoanalytic approaches often rely on psychological interviews or "heart-to-heart conversations" to address these issues. However, from the perspective of philosophical therapy, if such methods aim merely to suppress or eliminate symptoms through prescriptive solutions, they remain superficial and even self-deceptive. The inherent tension between the soul's yearning for freedom and the constraints of reality cannot be resolved through suppression; true healing emerges through the exploration and questioning driven by this tension.

Philosophical therapy does not dismiss psychological methods but recontextualizes them as specialized forms of soul dialogue. As Marinoff emphasizes in discussing his approach: "I have no methodology. I believe each client is different, so I try to understand what kind of philosopher each client is deep inside, rather than forcing my clients into any particular mold"[51].

Thus, the concept of dialogue advocated by philosophical counseling evolves into a synthesis of instrumental, teleological, and humanistic dimensions:

1. The essence of the soul's self-perfection lies in soul-to-soul dialogue between individuals.
2. The progression of this interpersonal dialogue constitutes the soul's self-perfection.
3. The ability to engage in effective dialogue in real life—and thereby advance the soul's self-perfection—embodies the state of soul autonomy.

In summary, dialogue and soul autonomy are intrinsically aligned. This coherence is not only logically consistent but also resonates with our daily intuitions:

---

[50] Luo Longxiang, Tang Zihan: The Logical Way of Dialogic Philosophy Teaching and Its Therapeutic Effect, Science Economy Society, No. 2, 2022, p. 65

[51] Ding Xiaojun, Lou Marinoff: Philosophical Practice: Philosophy from Theory to Practice, from Academy to Life—Interview with Professor Marinoff, Journal of Anhui University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition), No. 2, 2021, pp. 17-24

Statically, so-called “normal” individuals are those capable of successful dialogue and communication.
Dynamically, sustaining meaningful dialogue requires continuous self-improvement to adapt to evolving conversational and life contexts.

This dual static-dynamic interplay underscores the practical significance of philosophical counseling and its advocacy for a return to the Socratic method. By positioning dialogue as both the means and the end of soul autonomy, philosophical practice transcends mere therapeutic intervention, offering a framework for existential flourishing.

The Concept and Practical Efficacy of Philosophical Counseling from the Perspective of Rogers' Humanistic Psychology

Tang Zihan 2025.7

Research Background

Philosophical counseling is a therapeutic approach that emphasizes resolving psychological and existential issues through philosophical dialogue, which shares a similar goal with psychological counseling but is often marginalized.

Research Objective

By studying the essence and issues of Rogers' humanistic psychology, it becomes possible to logically derive philosophical counseling from the practical effects of psychological treatment, thereby giving philosophical counseling a place in the therapeutic field.

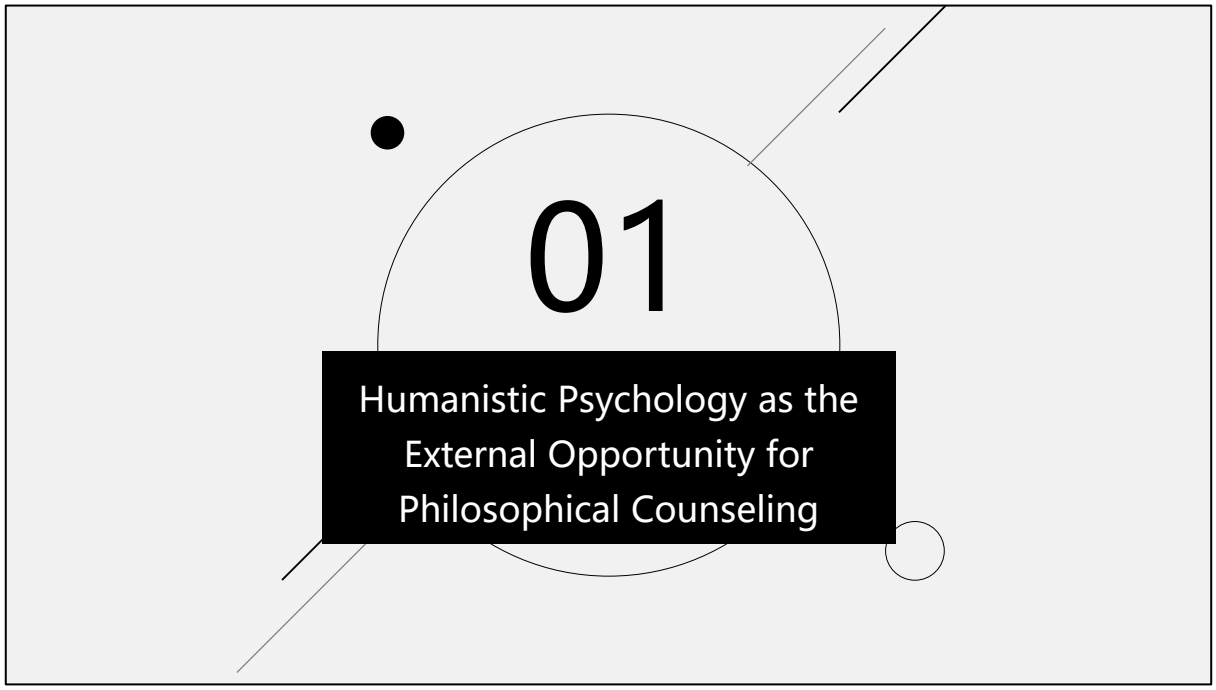
Contents

01 Humanistic Psychology as the External Opportunity for Philosophical Counseling

02 The Essence and Issues of Humanistic Psychology's Therapeutic Method

03 The Intervention of Dialogue and Its Effectiveness

04 Philosophical Counseling as Dialogue and Its Practical Effectiveness



Limitations of Psychological Therapy

Equating Disorders with Diseases

Traditional psychology often equates mental disorders with diseases, leading to a narrow focus on pathology. This approach overlooks the complexity of human experiences and the potential for self- healing.

Inadequacy of Therapeutic Methods

Many therapeutic methods for mental illnesses are inadequate and lack thoroughness. This has led to the diversification of psychological therapies, including the emergence of humanistic psychology.

Rogers' Core Theory

Person-Centered Therapy

Rogers' person- centered therapy emphasizes the subjective experience and inner potential of individuals. The success of therapy depends on the client's understanding of their personal experience.

Practical Application

This theory is highly operational, focusing on practical application rather than theoretical discussion. It provides a solid foundation for therapeutic practice.

Philosophical Value of Personal Experience Theory

01 Authenticity of Subjective Experience

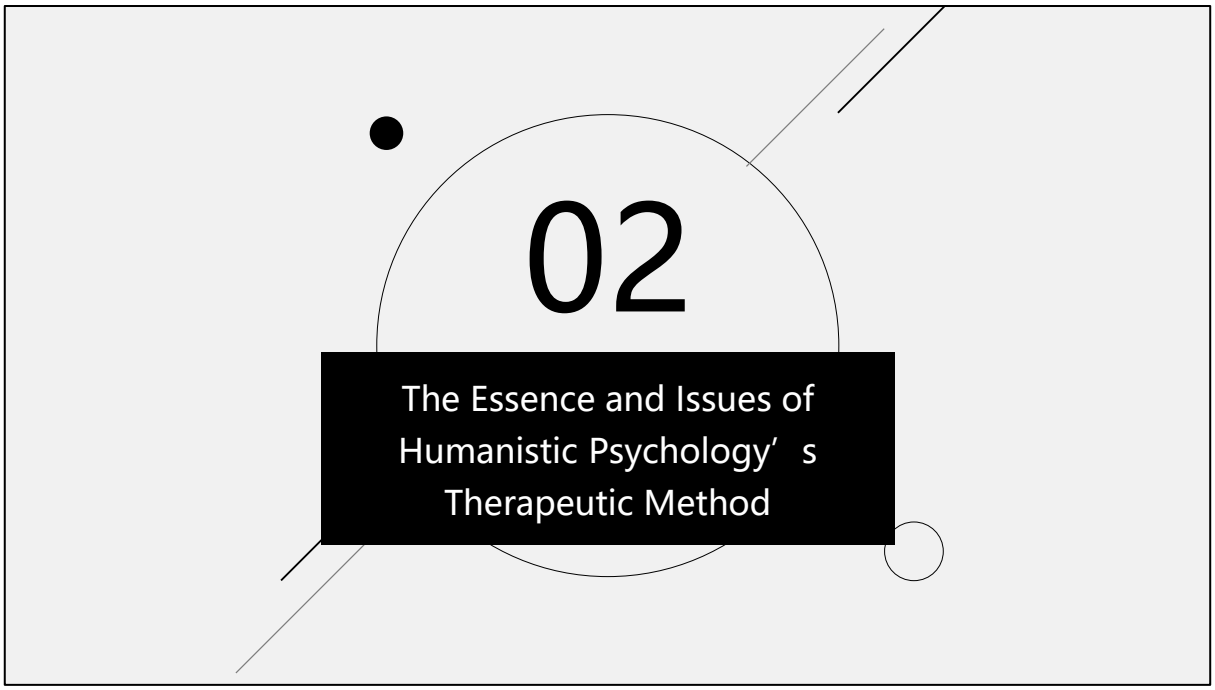
Rogers argues that every individual's subjective experience is authentic and reliable. This theory rejects the simplification of human psychological states through experimental or analytical methods.

02 Phenomenological Influence

Rogers' theory is influenced by phenomenological philosophy, which emphasizes the reliability of subjective experience. This philosophical foundation provides profound support for his therapeutic approach.

The Boundary and Intersection of Philosophy and Psychology

This section further explores the relationship between philosophy and psychology, proposing that the development of humanistic psychology breaks the cognitive limitation that philosophy must rely on psychology to treat mental illness. Humanistic psychology's therapeutic theory provides significant theoretical support for philosophical counseling, especially as psychological therapy gradually surpasses traditional limitations. The intervention of philosophy becomes especially important, and humanistic psychology demonstrates that the psychological approach to preventing philosophy from entering the therapeutic field is futile.



Three Transformations in Therapeutic Practice

01

Transformation of the Therapeutic Relationship

Rogers proposed a "client-therapist" relationship, emphasizing the client's self-responsibility. This shift views clients as active seekers of help rather than passive patients.

02

Transformation of the Focus of Therapy

The focus of therapy is shifted to the client's inner world. Clients are encouraged to identify their psychological issues and understand the causes of their inner wounds.

03

Transformation of the Therapist's Function

The therapist's role is to sensitively perceive the client's inner world, rather than imposing solutions. This approach respects the client's autonomy and self-understanding.

Three Core Conditions for Therapy

Genuineness

Genuineness refers to the therapist's consistency in actions, awareness, and expression. It involves transparently understanding and expressing inner thoughts and feelings.

Acceptance

Acceptance means unconditional positive regard for the client, regardless of their behavior or state. This creates a supportive and non- judgmental therapeutic environment.

Empathy

Empathy is the therapist's ability to deeply understand the client's feelings and inner world. It is a crucial component of the therapeutic relationship and promotes healing.

Three Therapeutic Goals

Relieving Intolerable Pain

The immediate goal is to alleviate severe psychological pain and restore basic mental health. This provides relief and stability for the client.

Enhancing Potential

Therapy aims to help clients tap into their unexpressed potential, leading to higher levels of self- development and personal growth.

Achieving Self-Harmony

The ultimate goal is to achieve internal and external harmony, resulting in a mature and complete personality.

Empathy and the Fundamental Nature of the Therapeutic Method

Empathy, as a logical extension of genuineness and acceptance, is not only a core therapeutic condition but also a practical method for mutual transformation of subjective experience between therapist and client.

Unlike traditional psychological therapy, which relies on the concept of "transference," Rogers replaced it with empathy, giving it deeper philosophical implications. Empathy not only performs the function of transference but also acts as a bond in human relationships, promoting personality maturation and psychological health recovery.

The Deep Significance of Empathy and Its Philosophical Connection

Through a deep analysis of empathy, the chapter indicates that empathy serves as a bridge between philosophy and psychological therapy. Empathy is not only the core method of psychological therapy but also the foundation for understanding subjective experience.

The core of empathy lies in transforming subjective experience into reliable knowledge through special circumstances and practices, thus helping individuals understand and cope with emotional distress in everyday life.

This understanding of empathy aligns closely with the concept of dialogue.



Rogers' Belief Transformation and the Alternative Path—Dialogue

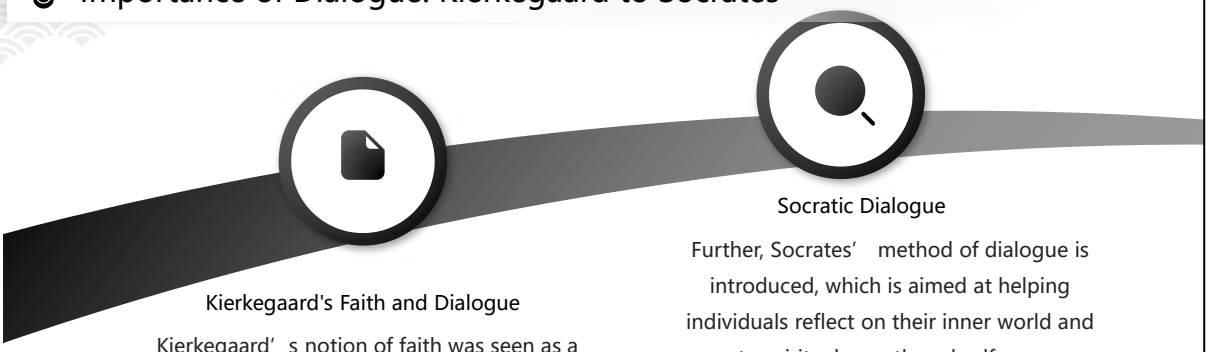
Rogers' Belief Transformation

In his later years, Rogers returned to faith.The establishment of a universal empathy as the common foundation of human nature is the starting point of humanistic psychology, and it is precisely this pursuit of universality that ultimately led Rogers down the path of faith. He believed that the human soul is filled with mysterious phenomena that cannot be explained by common sense, and his return to faith made him believe in the "mysterious soul's existence." This transformation led him to incorporate faith into psychotherapy, asserting that faith, like core conditions such as genuineness, acceptance, and empathy, is essential.Rogers' approach traces its intellectual lineage to the pioneering humanistic psychology of Søren Kierkegaard.

Alternative Path—Dialogue

"If one rejects Kierkegaard's religious solution, an alternative approach grounded in pure spiritual activity or philosophical wisdom emerges as a viable alternative"

Importance of Dialogue: Kierkegaard to Socrates



Kierkegaard's Faith and Dialogue

Kierkegaard's notion of faith was seen as a dialogue between the finite human spirit and the infinite God. Therefore, spiritual dialogue between individuals, or soul-to-soul dialogue, becomes the core to solving problems. Kierkegaard's faith concept was replaced by soul-to-soul dialogue, emphasizing dialogue as the key to self-realization and spiritual liberation.

Socratic Dialogue

Further, Socrates' method of dialogue is introduced, which is aimed at helping individuals reflect on their inner world and promote spiritual growth and self-awareness. This method aligns with humanistic psychology's goal of promoting self-realization through empathy, acceptance, and genuineness.

Socratic Dialogue and Its Fit with Humanistic Psychology

Socrates' method is not merely about seeking universal knowledge but about focusing on the human soul. His method facilitates spiritual perfection through dialogue, which corresponds with humanistic psychology's core belief. Rogers' humanistic psychology emphasizes promoting self-understanding and self-growth through empathy and genuine communication, while Socratic dialogue helps individuals reflect and understand themselves, achieving spiritual perfection.

This suggests that Rogers' method can essentially be interpreted through the philosophical foundation of "dialogue" rather than mystifying or over-theorizing it.

Dialogue as the Core Method of Psychological Therapy

Thus, dialogue holds a central position in Rogers' humanistic psychology, where dialogue is not just the basic communication between people during therapy but also the substantive method of therapy. Socrates' "know thyself" principle provides insight into the dialogue form in psychological therapy, aiming at self-perfection. Rogers' therapeutic method advances inner exploration and self-actualization through dialogue, and the traditional psychological concept of "transference" is replaced by empathy, resulting in a more interpersonal and flexible therapeutic approach.



The Effectiveness of Philosophical Dialogue: Nielsen's Socratic Method

As early as the 1920s, German philosopher Leonard Nelson explicitly proposed that the Socratic method of dialogue is a philosophical approach to the self-perfection of the soul. He identified its first "secret" as the compulsion of thought to attain freedom—that is, guiding individuals through dialogue to return to their soul's innate freedom. At the same time, "regaining freedom" is not the end goal of dialogue, but rather a continuous process that sustains the vitality of the soul. Therefore, the process of philosophical dialogue itself constitutes the self-perfection of the soul. Dialogue is not merely a tool for "therapy" or "personality development," but an authentic act of philosophizing. The idea that dialogue is the very essence of philosophy gradually became the central tenet of the philosophical practice movement.

The Effectiveness of Philosophical Dialogue: Nielsen's Socratic Method

American philosopher Lou Marinoff inherited and further developed Nelson’ s ideas, referring to this as the “Nelsonian Socratic method.” He emphasized that the core of dialogue lies in “clarifying the factors implicit in the soul” —in other words, helping individuals articulate what they have already tacitly understood. Philosophical dialogue thus becomes a practical path toward self-understanding and inner freedom.

Practical Effectiveness of Philosophical Counseling

01 employing analysis to clarify lived experience

02 achieving self-understanding or self-perfection of the soul

What exactly is soul autonomy or self-perfection?

To this question, both Kierkegaard—the forerunner of humanistic psychology—and Carl Rogers—its representative figure—ultimately traced the answer back to faith, that is, they posited an omnipotent external goal for the soul. However, this move inevitably leads to an internal contradiction that is difficult to resolve.

In contrast, the Socratic method of philosophical counseling seeks no such external anchor. Instead, it logically returns to the soul itself—through soul-to-soul dialogue, or philosophical dialogue between individuals.

Why do we say this

First, the Socratic method precedes formal logic. Unbound by rigid logical rules, Socratic elenchus initially did not establish universal norms; rather, it focused on the self-perfection of the individual soul and thus laid the groundwork for logic. As Aristotle’ s formal logic system was later developed, the individual and spontaneous nature of elenchus was gradually replaced by the necessity of logical structures. Nevertheless, while logic plays an important role in dialogue, dialogue itself always takes precedence. Logical rules should serve the needs of dialogue. The Socratic method is thus the foundation of logic: dialogue is both the source of logic’ s vitality and its ultimate purpose.

Why do we say this

Second, dialogue and soul autonomy are fundamentally aligned. The dialogical ideal upheld in philosophical practice achieves a unity of instrumental, purposive, and humanistic dimensions: When people are able to engage effectively in dialogue in real life and thereby foster the self-perfection of the soul, they realize a state of soul autonomy.**There is no need to reach any external goal in order to attain fulfillment.**

Conclusion

By tracing the developmental trajectory of Rogers' humanistic psychology, we observe that psychological therapy ultimately confronts the "meta-medical problem," which refers to its metaphysical or philosophical presuppositions. When Rogers addresses this problem through a mystical belief, it not only creates a divide between psychological therapy and philosophical issues but also deviates from psychology's original aim of pursuing therapeutic certainty. By revitalizing the Socratic method, philosophical counseling adopts it as a central framework for addressing the soul's afflictions. This approach not only bridges the gap between psychological therapy and philosophical issues but also avoids the mystical dilemma, thereby achieving the goal of therapeutic certainty.


Thank you for listening!
Tang Zihan
2025.7

Zehai Sun (Xi'an Jiaotong University)
"Analysis of the Dimension of Philosophical Healing of the Excellent Traditional Chinese Culture from the Perspective of Philosophical Practice"

Analysis of the Dimension of Philosophical Healing of the Excellent Traditional Chinese Culture from the Perspective of Philosophical Practice

Xidian University
SUN Ze- hai
July 2025

Abstract

Philosophical practice,also known as "philosophical counseling and therapy", refers to the application of philosophical principles, concepts and methods in daily life to help people form critical thinking, further enhance their insight, so as to cope with and solve the complex problems encountered in personal development and practice, and achieve therapeutic effects.



Abstract

In the journey of personal development and practical endeavors, individuals often encounter a multitude of complex problems.

These may range from existential dilemmas, such as grappling with questions of purpose and meaning, to more immediate challenges like making difficult life choices, managing relationships, or dealing with stress and anxiety.

Philosophical practice serves as a guiding light in these situations. By drawing on the rich wisdom of philosophical traditions, it offers alternative ways of thinking about problems, helping individuals reframe their experiences and consider new solutions.



Abstract

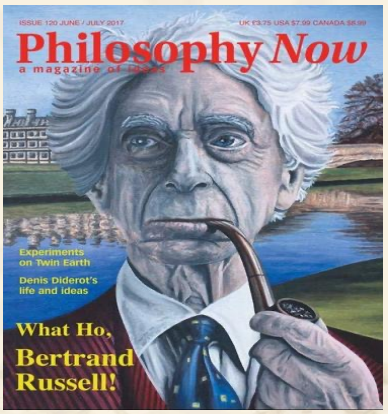
In recent years, Chinese scholars have played a pivotal and multi - faceted role in the field of philosophical practice research. They have meticulously engaged in the translation of a vast array of Western literature on the theory of philosophical practice, painstakingly decoding complex terminologies and concepts that were previously unfamiliar within the Chinese academic context. This translation work is not a mere linguistic conversion but a profound intellectual endeavor that involves grasping the subtle nuances of Western philosophical thought systems, ensuring that the essence of these theories is accurately conveyed to Chinese - speaking audiences.

Abstract

Confucian therapeutics prompts people to care deeply about the meaning of life. In a modern society often characterized by materialism, rapid - paced living, and spiritual emptiness, Confucian therapeutics offers a guiding principle that helps people find purpose and significance beyond the pursuit of material wealth and immediate pleasures. It encourages individuals to strive for harmonious relationships, moral integrity, and the realization of their full human potential, thereby promoting overall well - being and a more fulfilling life.



Philosophy is not merely an academic discipline confined to the halls of universities or the pages of ancient texts; it is, **at its core, a way of life**. This timeless pursuit of wisdom permeates the fabric of our existence, whispering profound insights into the mundane decisions we make each day!



This profound assertion is grounded in multiple dimensions. philosophy undertakes a **systematic pursuit of wisdom** through various forms of intellectual training.

These training methods encompass rigorous logical reasoning exercises, in-depth textual analysis of philosophical classics, and engaging in philosophical dialogues.



The origins of philosophical practice can be traced back to the ancient **Greek civilization**, a wellspring of philosophical thought. The ancient philosophical traditions were deeply intertwined with the historical, social, and cultural contexts of the time.



Although Western philosophy indeed demonstrates its therapeutic dimension, the ancient wisdom of Chinese philosophy is a treasure trove brimming with equally potent therapeutic effects, especially in the realms of physical and mental cultivation, **as well as relieving worries and dispelling depression**.



In the Hellenistic era, in particular, the collapse and dispersion of the city-state system brought about significant social unrest and cultural integration.

The once-stable political and social structures crumbled, leaving people adrift in a sea of uncertainty.

Amidst the chaos of frequent wars, economic upheaval, and cultural clashes, individuals yearned for a sense of harmony and stability.



In this turbulent environment, people turned inward, devoting themselves to the pursuit of personal happiness and liberation. Various philosophical schools emerged, each offering its own path to achieving these goals.

The Epicureans advocated for a life of simple pleasures, friendship, and the pursuit of knowledge, believing that true happiness could be found in the absence of pain and fear.



The Cynics, on the other hand, rejected societal norms and material possessions, emphasizing self-sufficiency and living in accordance with nature as the keys to freedom. These philosophical movements were not just abstract theories; **they were practical guides for living, providing people with the means to cope with the hardships of their time** and find meaning in a chaotic world.



As time has passed, philosophical practice has continued to evolve and adapt to the changing needs of different eras.

In the modern age, despite the remarkable advancements in science and technology, people still grapple with profound existential, ethical, and social issues.

The rapid pace of life, the pressure to succeed, and the moral dilemmas posed by technological progress all contribute to a sense of anxiety and confusion.



The cultivation method of traditional cultural therapeutics, which emphasizes the

connection between the body and the mind, focuses on the harmo nious unity between the internal and external aspects, as well as between human beings and nature.

Its healing effects can be summarized from three aspects: peace o f mind, inner freedom and cosmic consciousness.



Peace of mind is achieved through practices that quiet the constant chatter of the mind. In a modern society filled with information overload, stress, and distractions, finding peace of mind has become a precious commodity.



- Traditional cultural therapeutics offers various techniques, such as meditation and mindfulness, which are deeply rooted in Chinese philosophical traditions. Buddhist meditation practices, which were assimilated and adapted in Chinese culture, teach individuals to observe their thoughts and emotions without judgment.



- By sitting in stillness, focusing on the breath, and acknowledging the passing thoughts, people can gradually detach from the mental turmoil and find a state of inner calm. This peace of mind not only reduces anxiety and stress but also enhances one's ability to think clearly and make rational decisions.



- Inner freedom is another significant healing effect. In traditional Chinese philosophy, true freedom is not the absence of constraints but the ability to master one's own desires, emotions, and thoughts. Confucianism, for instance, emphasizes self - cultivation as a means to achieve moral and spiritual freedom.



- By adhering to ethical principles, such as benevolence, righteousness, and propriety, individuals can overcome their base instincts and cultivate noble qualities. This self - discipline and self - awareness lead to a sense of inner freedom, where one is no longer enslaved by external pressures or internal impulses.



- For example, a person who has cultivated inner freedom through Confucian teachings will not be swayed by material temptations or social expectations but will act in accordance with their moral compass, living a life of integrity and authenticity.



- Cosmic consciousness represents the highest level of healing, where individuals develop a profound sense of connection with the universe. Taoism, with its concept of the Tao as the all - encompassing force that permeates everything, encourages people to expand their awareness beyond the individual self.



- They come to realize that their lives are part of a larger cosmic tapestry, and their actions have far - reaching implications.

- This cosmic consciousness brings a sense of awe, humility, and purpose. It allows individuals to transcend the limitations of their personal concerns and embrace a more expansive view of life, finding meaning and fulfillment in their role within the universe.



The cultivation method of traditional cultural therapeutics, deeply rooted in the wisdom of ancient civilizations, is a profound and time-honored practice.

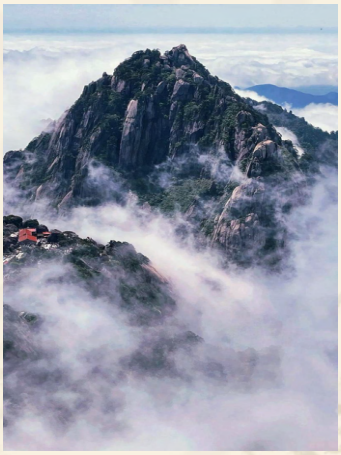
It emphasizes the intricate body - mind connection and harmonious unity, recognizing that the physical and mental aspects of an individual are inseparable and mutually influential.



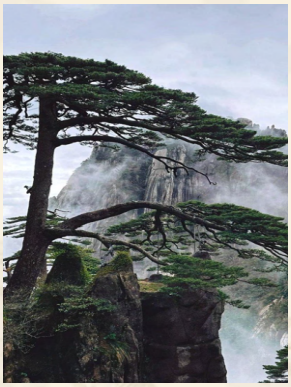
In conclusion, the cultivation method of traditional cultural therapeutics, with its emphasis on the body - mind connection and harmonious unity, offers a holistic approach to healing.



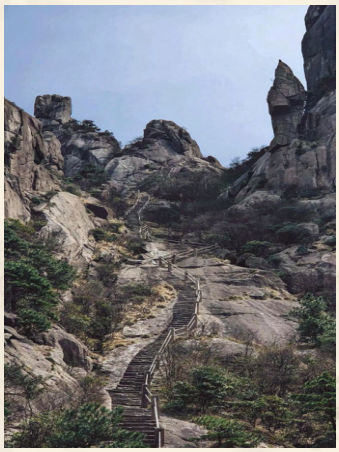
The cultivation method of traditional cultural therapeutics reveals its profound efficacy through its three - fold healing effects of peace of mind, inner freedom, and cosmic consciousness, which together provide a comprehensive framework for individuals to achieve physical, mental, and spiritual well - being.



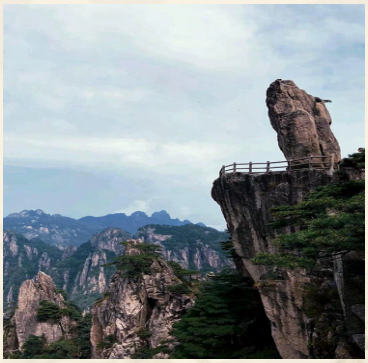
In conclusion, the cultivation method of traditional cultural therapeutics, with its emphasis on the body - mind connection and harmonious unity, offers a holistic approach to healing.



In an era where modern medicine often focuses on treating symptoms rather than addressing the root causes of illness, traditional cultural therapeutics offers a valuable alternative, inviting us to look back to our ancient wisdom and embrace a more integrated and harmonious way of living.



Firstly, peace of mind. In the context of traditiona l culture, peace of mind is manifested through co ncepts such as "tranquility", "sincerity and respec t", "mindfulness" and "absence of desire". This id ea is inherited from Mencius' concept of "unshak able mind". If the mind is not swayed, the heart c an be at peace and the kidneys can be nourished.

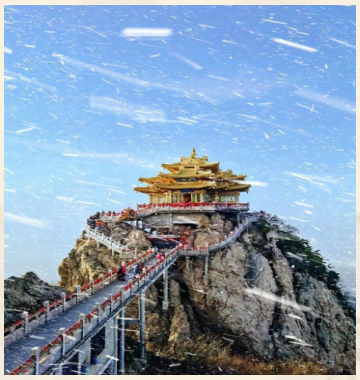


By maintaining a tranquil mind for a long time, t he body system will naturally adjust to its opti mal state. This practice of "stillness" serves as a spiritual exercise for balance and peace.

Through long-term cultivation, one can ultimately reach the true state of "a settled mind".



It pursues the state of "being at ease in and out", a timeless and profound quest that lies at the very h eart of traditional cultural therapeutics. This state is not merely a fleeting moment of comfort but a deeply ingrained way of being, a harmonious equi librium where the inner essence of an individual s eamlessly intertwines with the external world.



Thirdly, cosmic consciousness. "Cosmic consciousness" is Pierre Hadot's summary of the cosmogonic doctrines of the Epicurean and Stoic schools, referring to individual consciousness. Compared with the emphasis on the abstract and transcendent world in the Western tradition, Confucianism advocates the life path of "becoming sage in the ordinary".



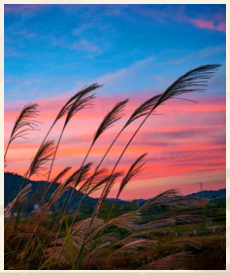
- The relationship between human beings and all things in heaven and earth constitutes an indispensable practical context for the Confucian cultivation of the body and mind .In a word,Confucianism advocates the unity of man and nature, aiming to confirm the morality of "man" from a metaphysical perspective.



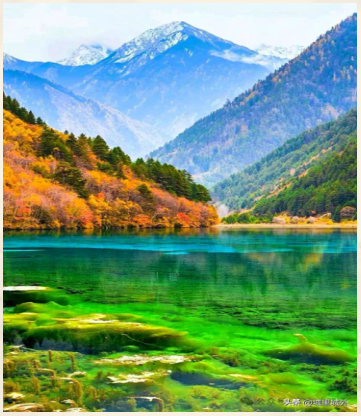
Philosophical therapy, a transformative development in the intersection of philosophy and practical life, represents a purposeful and application-oriented shift of philosophical principles from the abstract realm of academia into the concrete experiences of everyday existence.



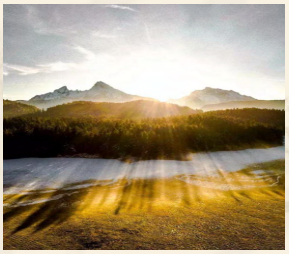
Its ideological sources are inseparable from life, and it precisely reveals the daily routines and the feelings and responses of the heart in life. It may seem like a variation of the traditional "theory of cultivation", but in fact, it is an auxiliary means applied in a non-medical approach. It will be more closely integrated with modern medicine, psychology, sociology and other aspects.



"Healing Confucianism" is founded on the reflecti on and experience of everyone's daily life. It is a f ree and open dialogue, and it is a theory and practi ce that conforms to the cultural and psychological structure of the Chinese nation and resonates with Chinese culture.



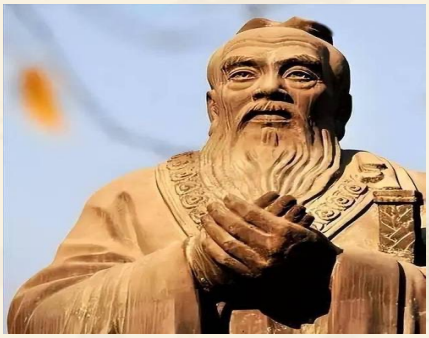
In short, both Chinese and Western philosophies are about the re al feelings of existence, the awareness of being, and the pursuit of a good life. Their respective wisdom practices have shown us the broad road on how we should live, and have become the source of inspiration guiding our specific lives and daily experiences.



In the complex and diverse real world, people often face various confu sions and bewilderment regarding the meaning of existence, as well as emotional and psychological pain and struggles. The traditional cultur e contains profound healing energy. Its philosophical healing is a pers onal expression of principles in specific situations.



In essence, traditional culture's philosophical healing serves as a guiding light in the darknes s of confusion and despair. It empowers individuals to confront their inner demons, transfor m their negative emotions into sources of strength, and discover a deeper sense of meaning and purpose in life.



For example, in the Confucian tradition, the concept of "ren" (benevolence) and "li" (rituals) pro vides a framework for cultivating harmonious relationships, moral integrity, and a sense of socia l responsibility. By embodying these principles in their daily lives, individuals can learn to treat others with kindness, respect, and compassion, while also developing a greater sense of self - aw areness and personal growth.By embracing these principles, individuals can learn to let go of the ir attachments, expectations, and struggles, and instead, trust in the natural unfolding of life.



Thank you very much for your attention, distinguished scholars.



A3

Alex Gooch (Durham University)
"When Philosophy is the Problem"

A few years ago I was certified as a philosophical counsellor. I remember telling a friend about this and explaining to him what philosophical counselling is; he responded in a typically British way, by asking, "how much would you charge to tell me the meaning of life?". Of course, he was making a sarcastic joke, but I think this joke illustrates something important about people's expectations of philosophical practice. I'm an academic teacher of philosophy as well as a philosophical counsellor, and in both these roles I have been sought out by people who are very seriously and urgently engaged in the search for the meaning of life. They see the meaning of life as the proper concern of philosophers, just as my joking friend did, and so they hope that I as a 'philosophical professional' might be able to help them find it.

In this paper I would like to present one approach which I have sometimes found helpful when trying to assist people who come to philosophy seeking the meaning of life. This is an approach called Constructive Living, propounded by an American writer and educator called David K. Reynolds, which has its roots in East Asian Buddhism. Constructive Living has almost completely vanished from view in the English-speaking world, and by speaking about it today I hope to raise awareness of it among my philosophical colleagues. First, though, I should say a little more about the kinds of situations in which I have found Constructive Living to be a useful approach, and I should justify my title, 'When Philosophy is the Problem'. Like any good philosopher, I'd like to start by making some distinctions.

I mentioned that I am referring to situations in which clients and interlocutors are struggling with issues relating to 'the meaning of life'. Of course, lack of meaning as a pervasive affliction has been noted by numerous commentators in the field (e.g. Jung 1966, Yalom 1980, Frankl 2004). With this in mind, the first distinction I would like to make is between on one hand the rather depressive, despondent state in which a person has no sense of meaning and feels little hope of achieving meaning, and on the other hand the more active, sometimes frenetic state in which a person feels themselves to lack meaning and is actively seeking it. I am talking here about the latter state, that of the person who we might say is on a quest for the meaning of life.

My second distinction is between the meaning of my life in particular (or yours, or any one individual's), and the meaning of life in general. Rather than the sense of meaning which an individual might receive from his or her particular relationships, projects, and so on, I'm talking here about the search for the meaning of life on the grand scale. My friend's joke seemed to imply that I as a philosophical counsellor would be saying to my clients something like, "The Aristotelians are right, the meaning of life is the pursuit

of eudaimonia, that'll be a hundred pounds please." Again, the joke points towards the reality of the situation, as those who come to me often do seem to take the view that there are various world-views out there (such as Aristotelianism, or Marxism, or Buddhism), that they themselves stand outside all of these world-views, and that if they could only stand inside one of them and confidently say 'I am an Aristotelian' (or a Marxist, or a Buddhist), then the meaningful life would be achieved, or at least it would become possible. Experience tells me that this kind of 'meaning' is often understood to be a specific concern of philosophy, and that at least some people come to philosophy hoping that it will be able to help them to find their way 'inside' one or other of these 'grand narratives'. Indeed, as the political philosopher Leo Strauss put it, "The philosopher's dominating passion is the desire for truth, i.e. for knowledge of the eternal order" (Strauss, 1988: 117.) The object of the Straussian philosopher's quest, 'knowledge of the eternal order', sounds very much like the knowledge that the 'grand narratives' claim to possess.

As Strauss indicates, the questing philosopher is driven by a passion, and this passion is unrequited. It hardly needs pointing out that unrequited passion is inherently a painful experience. The 'questing philosopher' may also be failing to do the practical things which are necessary to build and sustain a life in the world, as he or she may be deferring life in the world until the grand question of the meaning of it all has been resolved. It might be reasonable for someone to live with the heartache and the practical problems associated with the philosophical quest, if the goal of achieving satisfactory 'entry' in one or other metanarrative were actually achievable. However, it may be that the quest for a meaning-conferring 'knowledge of the eternal order' is one which can never be completed. This has been suggested by many thinkers in many ways, and it is beyond the scope of the present paper to survey them; I will confine myself to a quotation from the psychotherapist Wolfgang Giegerich, who says, "Meaning is not an entity that could be had, not a creed, a doctrine, a world view, also not something like the fairytale treasure hard to attain." (Giegerich, 2004: 2).

If the quest for meaning is bound to fail, then I as a 'philosophical professional' would be serving my clients poorly if I collaborated with them in this quest. In fact, in my experience some of these philosophical seekers are acutely conscious that the quest for meaning is an impossible task, and yet they are still gripped by the 'philosophical passion'. It is for these people above all others that philosophy, understood in this particular sense, is the problem.

Some commentators, such as D.T. Suzuki (1960), have suggested that the 'philosophical quest' I am describing is not a universal phenomenon but a distinctively Western one. I note this in passing; to make a judgement on this is beyond my competence, and certainly beyond the scope of the present paper. However, it does seem that as Westerners in recent decades have looked to Buddhism, and particularly to Chan/Zen, some have seen in it the promise of liberation from philosophy-as-quest-for-meaning. This can be observed in some well-known English translations of the classic Tang Dynasty Chan Buddhist texts. For instance, the text commonly known in

the English-speaking world as the *Shodoka*, as translated by the American Zen teacher and writer Robert Aitken, begins:

> There is the leisurely one,
> Walking the Tao, beyond philosophy. (Yongjia, attrib., n.d.)

Similarly, there is a translation of the text known to English-speaking Zen practitioners as the *Xinxinming*, including the lines:

> Do not seek truth,
> Only cease to cherish opinions. (Sengcan, attrib., n.d.)

These texts, or at least these translations of these texts, seem to point towards the idea that the philosophical quest for 'big truth' and final certainty is unwise, that it is something from which we might be liberated, and that Zen might offer the means for this liberation. In this context, I will now introduce Reynolds' 'Constructive Living' approach, and in the process I will try to indicate how this approach is particularly relevant to situations in which philosophy is the problem. Constructive Living is explicitly a Western, English-language presentation of ideas derived from two Japanese thinkers and practitioners, Morita Shoma and Yoshimoto Ishin, whose works arise out of Japanese Buddhist traditions. I will begin by introducing the relevant elements of Morita's and Yoshimoto's teachings, albeit briefly, before moving on to Reynolds.

Morita Shoma (1874 – 1938) was a psychotherapist, who instituted the form of therapy which bears his name, and which is practised (primarily in Japan) to this day. Morita was interested in the treatment of particular character-types or behaviours which he dubbed shinkeishitsu, generally translated into English as 'neurotic'. Shinkeishitsu individuals are "tense, nervous, worried, introspective, and self-critical" (Reynolds, 2013: 24); their focus tends to be inward, on themselves, and especially on their difficulties and their negative feelings, rather than on the world around them and the practical dimensions of their lives. From the 'Moritist' point of view, this habit of focusing on negative feelings exacerbates these feelings; furthermore, the directing of attention away from the practicalities of life itself tends to lead to problems and breakdowns in practical life, which in turn cause more negative feelings for the shinkeishitsu to dwell on, thus setting up a vicious circle (Reynolds, 1976).

Morita developed a method for treating shinkeishitsu which was very much inspired by Zen; indeed, he referred to this method as "field fox Zen" (Reynolds, n.d.), apparently meaning something like an unsophisticated, 'backwoods' form of Zen. Morita therapy in its classic, in-patient form begins with a period of isolation and complete bed-rest, during which the patient is not permitted any distractions whatsoever. After this first period has been completed, the patient is gradually allowed to participate more and more in the daily life of the institution in which he or she is being treated, doing chores, socialising a little, and so on. Morita patients are also encouraged to keep diaries at

this stage, but in these diaries they are asked to focus on concrete events, rather than on their feelings. After several stages of re-integration into society in this way, the course of therapy is complete (Reynolds, 1976).

The second major influence on Reynolds is Yoshimoto Ishin (1916-1988), a businessman and a priest in the Jodo Shinshu school of Pure Land Buddhism, who developed a form of structured introspection called naikan. Naikan is typically practised in the context of intensive retreats; it involves calling to mind a particular individual in one's life (often one's mother), and reflecting on three questions: 'what have I received from this person?', 'what have I given to this person?', and 'what difficulties and troubles have I caused this person?'. Naikan, like Morita therapy, maintains a presence in Japan, and occasionally in other countries (Reynolds, 1984).

Reynolds regards his Constructive Living approach as a presentation of Morita and naikan therapies, with some adaptations to make them more accessible to contemporary audiences and to the West. He has fleshed out his ideas in many books, from Constructive Living in 1984 to Water, Snow, Water in 2013.

Reynolds adopts the shinkeishitsu concept from Morita. Shinkeishitsu, he suggests, is caused by misguided beliefs about the feelings and emotions, primarily the erroneous beliefs that to live well is to experience only positive feelings and no negative ones, and that feeling sufficiently good is a necessary precondition for taking effective action in the world. The reality, Reynolds suggests, is that for any individual, both positive and negative feelings come and go, and they are as completely outside our immediate conscious control as the weather. Deliberate attempts to generate positive feelings and dispel negative feelings by sheer inner effort are futile and misguided. Feelings should be observed and recognised but not interfered with; the wise attitude to feelings is to accept them as they are. Here the Zen heritage of Constructive Living is particularly apparent; for comparison, I might quote the succinct advice of a medieval Chinese Chan monastic poet: "sit, let the mind be." (Shishin-Goshin, in Stryk and Ikemoto, 1981).

We cannot control our feelings, Reynolds reasons, but we can control our actions, and this is true no matter how we are feeling. Therefore, rather than orienting our lives around our feelings and aiming to feel good all the time, we would be wiser to orient our lives around the aim of acting purposefully. Constructive Living, if it is practised successfully, will turn one away from questions like, 'how am I feeling?', and towards questions like, 'am I doing something useful?'. In fact, purposeful, useful behaviour will tend to make one feel better in the long term; however, this increased positivity of affect is to be regarded as a side-effect, and not as the goal of Constructive Living. The goal is to decrease the emphasis which one places on affect, of any kind.

Unlike Morita therapy, Constructive Living is not practised in an in-patient setting; rather, the student meets with a 'trainer' at regular intervals, normally over a period of several months, during which the trainer will seek to guide the student towards the necessary reorientation by means of a combination of dialogue and various exercises, which are also often set as 'homework' between sessions. Reynolds offers numerous examples of these exercises in his published work; many of these are very close to

Zen meditation or naikan practice; others (such as keeping a diary) derive from Morita therapy, and still others (e.g. picking up litter in one's neighbourhood) appear to be Reynolds' original contributions.

As mentioned above, Reynolds suggests that we should orient ourselves towards purposeful action. In response to this we are likely to ask, what are the purposes which our actions should serve? How does one know which purposes one should be serving? At this point, we begin to see how Constructive Living is directly relevant to philosophy-as-problem and to those who suffer from philosophy-as-problem. I have spoken about 'philosophical seekers', who are on a quest to find a grand, overarching 'metanarrative' in which they can believe wholeheartedly. This metanarrative will, they hope, establish for them the purposes which they should be pursuing. However, they have not yet found the goal of their quest, and it may be impossible for them ever to do so.

From the Constructive Living point of view, however, "one need not (and, ordinarily, does not) first create some life purposes through reflection or introspection and then act to achieve them. In the actions themselves we construct our life purposes." (Reynolds, 1989: 458). Reynolds expands on this point as follows:

> Neurotically sensitive persons may want to see some grand meaning in a task before undertaking it… If they cannot find some deep meaning, the task is beneath them, there must be something more important for them to be doing at the time. But they have no concrete alternative task at the moment, so they do nothing but sit and ponder what they should be doing. (Reynolds, 1987: 86-7)

This could be a direct description of the troubled philosophical seeker.

The 'purposeful action' which Reynolds has in mind is much more mundane than the grand meaning which the philosophical seeker pursues; it is often nothing more elevated than washing the dishes or ironing one's clothes. Purposeful activity is simply 'the next thing that needs to be done', and Reynolds insists that we are always capable of seeing what needs to be done next.

While Constructive Living takes no specific position regarding the question of which purposes are good to pursue and which are bad, it does have an ethical dimension. The shinkeishitsu orientation, which Constructive Living is designed to treat, is underpinned by an excessive concern with one's own subjective states. Overcoming this self-centredness is an important part of overcoming shinkeishitsu itself, and therefore Constructive Living regards service to others as a more desirable purpose than merely tending to one's own life (although it will often be appropriate for the shinkeishitsu sufferer to concentrate first on washing his or her own dishes, before moving on to helping others by washing their dishes, or whatever the equivalent may be). In order to undermine self-centredness and to develop this service orientation, Reynolds sometimes asks the Constructive Living student to reflect on the ways in which the actions of countless other people enable him or her to go about daily life.

This Naikan-style reflection, Reynolds tell us, will help to orient one away from self-centred purposes and towards service.

Before finishing, I would like to make brief mention of three particular ways in which Constructive Living is, in my view, interesting and valuable. Firstly, it de-centres the feelings, which seems to me a refreshing counterpoint to the focus on feelings which seems to characterize much contemporary discourse, at least in the English-speaking world. Secondly, and more relevantly for this paper, it de-centres meaning, and radically rejects the need to seek it. Thirdly, while de-centring meaning, it nevertheless has solid philosophical credentials. This final point will require a little further explanation. In my experience, when clients come to a philosophical counsellor, or students or other interlocutors to a philosophy teacher, they reasonably expect to get something which they can recognize as philosophy. As I have suggested, 'philosophy' in situations like this is often understood to involve the search for meaning. If I as a philosophical counsellor tried to induce my client to abandon the search for meaning and concentrate on useful but mundane tasks like picking up litter, this is likely to strike the client as un-philosophical, or even anti-philosophical, and the client is therefore less likely to engage. However, the roots of Constructive Living in Zen and Pure Land Buddhism do place it firmly within 'philosophy' more broadly understood – or at least, this has been the reaction of some of my clients in philosophical practice. Introducing some of the more identifiably Buddhist practices has made the Constructive Living approach more palatable to those who are suffering from philosophy-as-problem, but who want their treatment, if treatment is the right term, to have a philosophical character.

Of course, I would regard Constructive Living as only one tool among many in the philosophical practitioner's toolkit. I would not draw on it in every situation in which I was confronted with an interlocutor on a quest for the meaning of life. However, in situations where the 'questing' behaviour is chronically persistent, and/or where it is causing acute suffering, I think the Constructive Living approach can be helpful. As I have said, these are the situations in which I have found it useful; philosophical practitioners may also find it useful in other contexts. I commend it to your attention.

References:

Frankl, V. (2004) Man's Search for Meaning, London: Rider.

Giegerich, W. (2004) 'The End of Meaning and the Birth of Man', Journal of Jungian Therapy and Practice 6(1).

Jung, C.G. (1966) Collected Works: The practice of psychotherapy, vol. XVI, New York, NY: Pantheon, Bollingen Series.

Reynolds, D.K. (1976) Morita Psychotherapy, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Reynolds, D.K. (1984) Constructive Living, Honolulu HI: University of Hawaii Press.

Reynolds, D.K. (1985) *Playing Ball on Running Water*, London: Sheldon Press.

Reynolds, D.K. (1987) Water Bears no Scars, New York NY: William Morrow.

Reynolds, D.K. (1989) 'Meaningful life therapy', Culture Medicine and Psychiatry 13, 457-463.

Reynolds, D.K. (2013) Water, Snow, Water, Honolulu HI: University of Hawaii Press.

Reynolds, D.K. (n.d.) *Situation and Self*. Amazon.

Sengcan, J. (attrib.); trans. Putkonen, E. (n.d.) *Xinxinming*. Available at https://terebess.hu/english/hsin.html (Accessed: 11 May 2025).

Stryk, L., and Ikemoto, T., ed. and trans. (1981) *The Penguin Book of Zen Poetry*, London: Penguin.

Suzuki, D.T. (1960) 'East and West', in Fromm, E., Suzuki, D.T., & De Martino, R. (1960), *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis*, London: Novello, pp. 1-9.

Strauss, L. (1988) 'Restatement on Xenophon's Hiero', in Strauss, L., What is Political Philosophy? And Other Studies, Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, pp.95-133.

Yalom, I. (1980) *Existential Psychotherapy*. New York NY: Basic Books.

Yongjia, X. (attrib.); trans. **Aitken, R.** (n.d.) ***Zhengdaoge / Shodoka***. Available at: http://www.ciolek.com/WWWVLPages/ZenPages/Daily-Zen-Sutras.html#SHODO (Accessed: 11 May 2025).

When Philosophy is the Problem

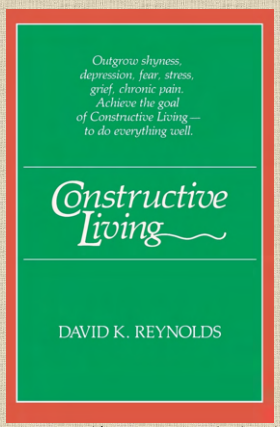
Alex Gooch
Durham University, UK

"How much would you charge to tell me the meaning of life?"

- Clients seeking the meaning of life
- The meaning of life as the concern of 'philosophical professionals'

In my talk today:

- An approach which I've found helpful
- Situations in which I've found this approach helpful
- Justification of my title



https://www.amazon.co.uk/Constructive-Living-Kolowalu-Books-Paperback/dp/0824808711

Lack of meaning as a pervasive affliction.

- (e.g. Jung 1966, Yalom 1980, Frankl 2004)

Distinction between:

- The depressive state of having given up on meaning
- The quest to find meaning

I'm talking about the latter.

Distinction between:

- The meaning of *my* life (or your life, or any one individual's)
- The meaning of life in general

I'm talking about the latter.

"The Aristotelians are right, the meaning of life is the pursuit of *eudaimonia*… that'll be a hundred pounds please."

Clients (and students) tell me:

- "There are various world-views out there."
- "My problem is, I stand outside all of them."
- "I need to stand inside one of them."
- "Philosophy can put me inside one of them, can't it?"

"The philosopher's dominating passion is the desire for truth, i.e. for knowledge of the eternal order."

(Strauss, 1988: 117)



Leo Strauss, German-American political philosopher, 1899-1973

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leo_Strauss#/media/File:LeoStrauss.jpg

The philosophical quest is not a happy situation:

- This passion is unrequited.
- The questing philosopher sometimes leaves more mundane aspects of life untended.

It might be worth enduring these down-sides, if the goal was attainable.

However, some say the goal is not attainable.

"Meaning is not an entity that could be had, not a creed, a doctrine, a world view, also not something like the fairytale treasure hard to attain."

(Giegerich, 2004: 2)



Wolfgang Giegerich, German Jungian psychotherapist, b. 1942

https://www.gaede.cat/2021/11/quien-es-wolfgang-giegerich.html

A client wants me to support them in the philosophical quest.

This may not be the right thing to do.

Sometimes it seems the client needs to be *liberated from* the philosophical quest.

Some (e.g. Sukuzi, 1960) suggest the 'quest for meaning' is a Western phenomenon.

Westerners have seen in Chan / Zen the possibility of liberation from the philosophical quest.

From Robert Aitken's translation of the *Shodoka*:

> There is the leisurely one,
>
> Walking the Tao, beyond philosophy. (Yongjia, attrib., n.d.)

From a widely-read translation of the *Xinxinming*:

> Do not seek truth,
>
> Only cease to cherish opinions. (Sengcan, attrib., n.d.)

David K. Reynolds and Constructive Living

- Based on the ideas of Morita Shoma and Yoshimoto Ishin
- Roots in Japanese Buddhist traditions

Morita Shoma (1874 – 1938)

- Psychotherapist
- Originator of 'Morita therapy'
- Zen influence



Morita Shoma

https://moritatherapy.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Screen-Shot-2018-03-08-at-3.45.44-PM.png

Shinkeishitsu

- "tense, nervous, worried, introspective, and self-critical" (Reynolds, 2013: 24)
- Focus inward, on feelings
- This exacerbates negative feelings & causes problems in practical life

Morita's treatment for *shinkeishitsu*:

- A period of complete isolation and bed-rest
- Then the patient is allowed to do some simple chores, socialize a little, etc.
- Patients keep diaries, focusing on practicalities not feelings.
- After gradual reintegration into society, therapy is complete.

Yoshimoto Ishin (1916-1988)

- Businessman, Jodo Shinshu priest.

Naikan:

- Typically practised on intensive retreats
- One calls to mind a particular individual and asks:
  - 'what have I received from this person?'
  - 'what have I given to this person?'
  - 'what difficulties and troubles have I caused this person?'



Yoshimoto Ishin

https://ramakrishna.de/japan/naikan.php

David K. Reynolds (born 1940)

- American
- Trained in Japan
- 'Constructive Living' is a presentation of Morita therapy and *naikan*
- Many books, most recently *Water, Snow, Water* (2013)



David K. Reynolds

https://www.oneyoufeed.net/constructive-living/

Shinkeishitsu involves two basic wrong beliefs:

- To live well is to experience only positive feelings.
- Feeling sufficiently good is a necessary precondition for taking effective action.

In fact:

- Emotions are outside our direct conscious control.
- They should be accepted as they are, not interfered with.

Here the Chan/Zen heritage of Constructive Living is clear.

- "Sit, let the mind be." (Shishin-Goshin, in Stryk and Ikemoto, 1981)

Don't aim to achieve more positive feelings.

Aim to act purposefully.

Purposeful action also creates the conditions for more positive feeling-states.

However, positive feeling-states are a side-effect of Constructive Living, not the primary aim.

The practice of Constructive Living:

- Regular meetings with a 'trainer'
- Dialogue plus exercises
- Homework
- Exercises:
  - Some similar to mindfulness meditation
  - Some similar to *naikan*
  - Some derive from Morita practice (e.g. keeping a diary)
  - Some seem to be Reynolds' original contributions (e.g. picking up litter)

So, we should be aiming to act purposefully.

But what are the purposes which our actions should serve?

'Philosophical seekers' looking for a 'grand narrative'.

They hope this narrative will establish purposes for them.

However, they have not yet found the goal of their quest.

It may be impossible for them to find the goal.

However:

"One need not (and, ordinarily, does not) first create some life purposes through reflection or introspection and then act to achieve them. In the actions themselves we construct our life purposes." (Reynolds, 1989: 458).

"Neurotically sensitive persons may want to see some grand meaning in a task before undertaking it… If they cannot find some deep meaning, the task is beneath them, there must be something more important for them to be doing at the time. But they have no concrete alternative task at the moment, so they do nothing but sit and ponder what they should be doing." (Reynolds, 1987: 86-7)

Purposeful action tends to be mundane.

'The next thing that needs to be done'.

We can always identify the next thing that needs to be done.

The ethical dimension:

- *Shinkeishitsu* involves excessive concern with one's own subjective states.
- This self-centredness needs to be overcome.
- Therefore, service to others is a better aim than merely tending to one's own life.
- Reynolds recommends reflecting on the ways in which the actions of countless other people enable him or her to go about daily life.

Three ways Constructive Living is interesting and valuable, in my opinion:

(1) It decentres feelings.

(2) It decentres meaning, especially abstract meaning.

(3) Although is decentres meaning, it has solid philosophical credentials.

- Clients want something recognizably 'philosophical'.
- This includes clients who are suffering from 'philosophy-as-problem'.
- "Give up your search for meaning" – this could sound anti-philosophical.
- Constructive Living's roots in Japanese Buddhism give it 'philosophical face-value'.

Constructive Living:

- One tool among many for the philosophical practitioner.
- Sometimes useful when the philosophical quest has become clearly pathological.
- Perhaps useful in other philosophical practice situations too.

References:

Frankl, V. (2004) *Man's Search for Meaning,* London: Rider

Giegerich, W. (2004) *'The End of Meaning and the Birth of Man',* Journal of Jungian Therapy and Practice 6(1)

Jung, C.G. (1966) *Collected Works: The practice of psychotherapy, vol. XVI,* New York, NY: Pantheon, Bollingen Series

Reynolds, D.K. (1976) *Morita Psychotherapy,* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press

Reynolds, D.K. (1984) *Constructive Living,* Honolulu HI: University of Hawaii Press

Reynolds, D.K. (1985) *Playing Ball on Running Water,* London: Sheldon Press

Reynolds, D.K. (1987) *Water Bears no Scars,* New York NY: William Morrow

Reynolds, D.K. (1989) *'Meaningful life therapy',* Culture Medicine and Psychiatry 13, 457-463

Reynolds, D.K. (2013) *Water, Snow, Water,* Honolulu HI: University of Hawaii Press

Reynolds, D.K. (n.d.) *Situation and Self.* Amazon.

Sengcan, J. (attrib.); trans. Putkonen, E. (n.d.) *Xinxinming.* Available at https://terebess.hu/english/hsin.html (Accessed: 11 May 2025).

Stryk, L., and Ikemoto, T., ed. and trans. (1981) *The Penguin Book of Zen Poetry,* London: Penguin

Suzuki, D.T. (1960) 'East and West', in Fromm, E., Suzuki, D.T., & De Martino, R. (1960), *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis,* London: Novello, pp. 1-9

Strauss, L. (1988) 'Restatement on Xenophon's *Hiero*', in Strauss, L., *What is Political Philosophy? And Other Studies,* Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, pp.95-133

Yalom, I. (1980) *Existential Psychotherapy.* New York NY: Basic Books

Yongjia, X. (attrib.); trans. Aitken, R. (n.d.) *Shodoka.* Available at: http://www.ciolek.com/WWWVLPages/ZenPages/Daily-Zen-Sutras.html#SHODO (Accessed: 11 May 2025)

Alex Fong (Hong Kong University)
"Oneness as a Philosophical Practice to Address Contemporary Issues"

Introduction

In an increasingly complex and interconnected world, the exploration of fundamental questions regarding existence, ethics, and the interdependence of all beings has become paramount. Philosophical practitioners engage in these inquiries, applying philosophical principles in practical contexts that guide individuals and organizations toward a profound understanding of their purpose and impact.

During the 18th International Conference in Philosophical Practice held in Zagreb from June 12 to 14, 2025, a distinguished panel comprising Lydia Amir, Lou Marinoff, Jose Barrientos-Rastrojo, and Rick Repetti emphasized the necessity for philosophy to transition toward Transformative Philosophy. This shift aims to better support the work of philosophical practitioners. The overarching theme for discussion highlighted concerns that philosophy, as currently taught in universities, may overemphasize abstractions and hyper-individualism to the detriment of experiential understanding and practical application. A renewed focus under the umbrella of Transformative Philosophy to experientialism, consciousness, and the integration of Eastern philosophical wisdom could enhance the practical application of philosophical practice. The concept of oneness, while universally significant, manifests distinctly across Eastern and Western philosophical traditions. This paper aims to explore these differing perspectives, illuminating their implications for individual identity, ethical behaviour, and our understanding of existence, possibly serving as a bridge to support the evolution of Transformative Philosophy.

Western and Eastern Perspectives on Oneness

Presocratic Greek philosophers were cosmologists focused on the cosmos rather than the self. They sought answers to the problem of the one and the many, positing that unity underlies diversity. The ultimate inquiry revolved around the composition of the cosmos. While Sophists shifted attention from the cosmos to humanity (Anthropos), Parmenides emphasized the concept of the One, which later became central to idealism. Anaxagoras's Nous and the atomism of Leucippus and Democritus contributed significantly to the mechanistic materialism of later thought.

Western philosophical traditions, particularly those influenced by Parmenides and Plotinus, approach oneness through the lens of existence and the relationship between the individual and the absolute. Parmenides equates oneness with being, positing that true reality is immutable and eternal. Plotinus expands upon these ideas, proposing that the One transcends mere being, representing the ultimate source of existence and the eternal potentiality that gives rise to all forms of life. His dynamic process of differentiation and return highlights the importance of unity within the unfolding of existence.

In contrast, Eastern philosophies emphasize the dissolution of the self, positing that individual identities are illusions within a greater reality. This relational framework of oneness, rooted in the works of Confucians and Daoists, presents complementary alternatives within Chinese culture.
Lobel 2018 elucidates Confucian thought centres on relational ethics, defining the self through relationships with family, society, and the cosmos, while Daoism emphasizes spontaneity and individuality, advocating a return to nature.

Interconnectedness as Foundation for Oneness

The concept of “self “varies significantly across cultures, influenced by factors such as religion, philosophy, anthropology, psychology, and sociology. In the Global North, characterized by an "I"-centred culture labelled as WEIRD (Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic), individualism prevails. Conversely, the Global South embodies a "we"-centred culture, described as non-WEIRD, where societal needs take precedence over individual desires.
R. Shweder (1991) elucidates why the concept of self diverges across cultures, emphasizing the societal imperative to balance individual and collective needs. This notion resonates with Ivanhoe's proposition that East Asian traditions, including Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism, advocate for various interpretations of the oneness hypothesis. Ivanhoe (2017) suggests that recognizing our interconnectedness with others promotes a compassionate and ethical society, essential for navigating modern complexities.

Oneness as a Philosophical Practice to Address Contemporary Issues

The synthesis of Eastern and Western philosophical traditions reveals a rich tapestry of thought capable of addressing contemporary challenges. This comparative exploration underscores the potential for a philosophical practice based on interconnectedness to foster deeper connections and understanding among individuals. Such a philosophy is crucial in confronting pressing issues like economic inequality, ecological crises and social fragmentation, urging us to acknowledge our responsibilities toward one another and the environment.
The insights gained from this exploration can inform practical approaches to cultivating compassion and empathy in daily life. For instance, the "Oneness in Business" (OIB) framework, I presented at the 18th International Conference in Philosophical Practice, exemplifies how oneness can address contemporary enterprise governance challenges facing enterprises. By embracing interconnectedness in environmental and social challenges, we can strive toward a more just and sustainable world.
Oneness can serve as a bridge to support the evolution of Transformative Philosophy, enhancing the relevance and practicality of philosophical practice.

References

Amir, L. (2020). Transformative Philosophy: The Role of Dialogue in Philosophical Practice. Philosophical Practice Journal, 15(2), 123-138.

Copleston, F. (1993). A History of Philosophy, Volume 1: Greece and Rome. Continuum

Ivanhoe, P. J. (2017). The Oneness Hypothesis: A Philosophical Approach to Interconnectedness. New York: Academic Press.

Ivanhoe, P. J., et al. (2018). Beyond the Boundary of Self: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Interconnectedness. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kraut, R. (Ed.). (2008). The Cambridge Companion to Greek Philosophy. Cambridge University Press.

Lobel, S. (2018). Yin-Yang Thinking and the Dichotomy of Confucianism and Daoism. Beijing: Peking University Press.

Shweder, R. A. (1991). Thinking Through Cultures: Expeditions in Cultural Psychology. Harvard University Press.

Dialogue between east and west: oneness as a philosophical practice to address contemporary issues

DR. ALEX FONG

FOR EASPP

JULY 2025

Entrepreneur (Business owner)

- GRE Manufacturing
- GRE Alpha Electronics

Intrapreneur (Executive)

- Director HKSAR Government
- CEO Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce

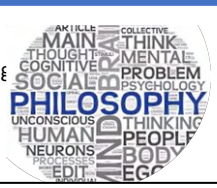
Board of Director (Independent Non Executive Director

- Hutchison Port Holdings
- Hong Kong Electric Investment
- Tom Group International

Scholar/Mentor/Coach

- Hong Kong University
- Chinese University of Hong Kong
- City University of Hong Kong







Professor Alex Fong

•During the 18th International Conference in Philosophical Practice held in Zagreb from June 12 to 14, 2025, a distinguished panel comprising Lydia Amir, Lou Marinoff, Jose Barrientos-Rastrojo, and Rick Repetti emphasized the necessity for philosophy to transition toward Transformative Philosophy. This shift aims to better support the work of philosophical practitioners.

•The overarching theme for discussion highlighted concerns that philosophy, as currently taught in universities, may overemphasize abstractions and hyper-individualism to the detriment of experiential understanding and practical application.

•A renewed focus under the umbrella of Transformative Philosophy to experientialism, consciousness, and the integration of Eastern philosophical wisdom could enhance the practical application of philosophical practice.



Western perspectives on Oneness (1)

- Presocratic Greek philosophers are **cosmologist**, focuses on the world, the cosmos, not the self. They seek answers to the problem of the **one and the many**. There must be **unity underlying diversity**. The ultimate question is what is the cosmos composed of ?
- Sophists turns away from the cosmos to **Anthropos**. Parmenidean One – the gem of later **idealism.** Nous of Anaxagoras – the gem of **theism**. Atomism of Leucippus and Democritus – the gem of later mechanistic **materialism**
- Conceptual turn **from object to subject**, **from cosmos to way of life**. From **deductive** methods (top down) to **inductive** methods (bottom up).
- There is **denial of the absolute**. Every opinion is true(Protagoras). Every opinion is false (Gorgias). They favoured the conception of **natural law** over religion and morality.



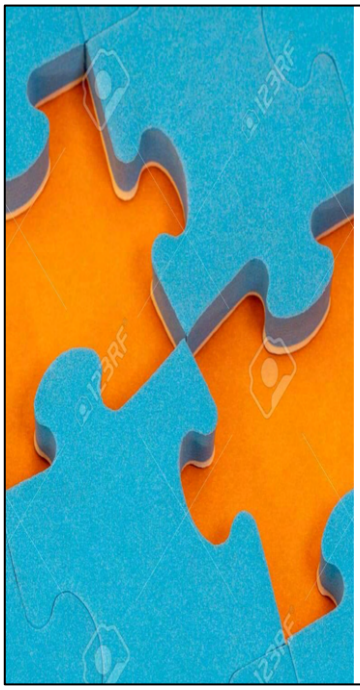
Western Perspectives on Oneness (2)

- Western philosophical traditions, particularly those influenced by figures like Parmenides and Plotinus, approach oneness through the lens of existence and the relationship between the individual and the absolute.
- Parmenides famously equated oneness with being, positing that true reality is singular, immutable, and eternal. This philosophical foundation raises profound questions about the nature of existence and the essence of reality.
- Plotinus, a pivotal figure in Neoplatonism, expands upon Parmenidean ideas by proposing that the One transcends mere being. For Plotinus, the One is not only the ultimate source of existence but also the eternal potentiality that gives rise to all forms of life. He introduces a dynamic process of differentiation and return, where the Ideas within the Mind, although distinct, are ultimately aimed at returning to unity.
- This journey of differentiation reflects a continuous cycle of creation and re-creation, emphasizing the importance of unity in the unfolding of existence.

Western perspective on oneness : Differentiation

- Plotinus's concept of oneness derived from Plato and Parmenides, where oneness is a key property of being. To Parmenides, oneness is being. To Plotinus, oneness is beyond being.
- Plotinus identifies **the One** with the Platonic idea of the Good. But it is not the first cause. It is **the source of all existents**. The one is not a source or a cause, but rather the eternally present possibility of all existence.
- We may best understand his concept of **Being** by saying that it **differentiates the Ideas belonging to the Mind**, only in order to **return these divided or differentiated ideas to sameness or unity**. The process of returning the divided and differentiated ideas to their original place in the chain of emancipation constitutes Life or temporal existence.





Eastern perspective on oneness: Integration

- Ivanhoe's oneness hypothesis draws upon resources in modern Western philosophy, religion, psychology, evolutionary theory, cognitive neuroscience, as well as traditional East Asian philosophy to develop and press its core claims
- It offers a thesis about the world, the self, and the relationship between the two.
- Challenges dominant hyper-individualist conceptions of the self
- Argues that a more relationship-oriented conception of the self is not only consistent with our best science but presents a range of good consequences for both the self and other people, creatures, and things

Interconnectedness as foundation of oneness

The oneness hypothesis contributes to the discussion on what constitute the good life for the individual

As a philosophical perspective and resource, the oneness hypothesis is about the interconnectedness of the self with other people and things in this world or with other people and things in the transcendental world.

Oneness gives us a framework to understand the interconnectedness of the world around us from different vantage points

The connections the oneness hypothesis advocates are those interconnectedness that are conducive to the health, benefit and improvement of both individuals and the larger wholes of which they are a part.
Oneness espouses a relational conception of the self as having greater potential to lead to happiness and well-being for both the individual and the larger wholes of which they are a part.

(Ivanhoe, 2017)b



WEIRD and non-weird notion of the self

(Shweder,1991

Under the WEIRD notion of the self, individualistic centricity is the order in the society, where individuals are placed at the centre and society is made a servant of the individual.

In Non-WEIRD sociocentric societies, the needs of groups and institutions are placed at the centre and individuals' needs are subordinate to the needs of the groups and institutions.

9

Oneness as a Philosophical Practice to address contemporary issues

- The blending of these philosophical traditions reveals a rich tapestry of thought that can address contemporary challenges. This comparative exploration highlights the potential for a oneness philosophical practice based on interconnectedness as foundation can foster deeper connections and understanding among individuals.
- The implications of this exploration extend to pressing contemporary issues, such as economic disparity, ecological crises and social fragmentation. A philosophy grounded in oneness encourages us to recognize our responsibilities towards one another and the environment, both human and physical which supports our existence. By fostering a interdependent understanding of existence, we can address the ethical dilemmas posed by individualism, consumerism, and environmental degradation.
- The insights gained from this comparative exploration can inform practical approaches to cultivating compassion and empathy in our daily lives.
- By embracing the principle of interconnectedness, we can work towards creating a more just and sustainable world

Shengyi Jia (**X'ian Jiaotong university)**

"Symbolic Consumption, Instant Gratification, and Mindful Liberation: Embodied Practice Pathways within Consumer Culture"

1. introduction

In contemporary society, consumer culture serves as the primary mechanism shaping values and well-being. Lavish storefronts, targeted online ads, prime-time endorsements, and influencer "planting grass" trends collectively affirm that possession equals happiness and that consumption is the direct route thereto (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2002). Commodities thus transcend utility to become markers of status and identity, entangling individuals in endless cycles of comparison and anxiety, and severing awareness of genuine needs (Baudrillard, 1994).

Postmodern and Marxist critiques expose the structures that manufacture this ethos. Baudrillard's "simulacra" reveal how, in the "hyperreal," commodity-signs circulate desire detached from material referents, fueling an endless signification loop (Baudrillard, 1994). Adorno and Horkheimer's culture-industry thesis demonstrates how standardized productions generate "false needs," rendering individuals passive consumers for capital's sake (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2002). Yet these macroscopic analyses do not prescribe everyday practices of resistance.

Mindfulness—rooted in Buddhist moment-to-moment awareness and systematized in Western psychology—offers a micro-practice countermeasure. It cultivates non-judgmental attention to breath, sensations, and thought streams, interrupting automatic reactivity (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Brown & Ryan, 2003). Empirical findings indicate that mindfulness enhances meta-cognitive awareness, enabling recognition of impulses—whether physiological, affective, or discursively induced—and inserting a "pause–observe–choose" interval between impulse and action (Brown & Kasser, 2005; Vago & Silbersweig, 2012).

Crucially, mindfulness subverts the future-oriented narrative equating acquisition with fulfillment. Consumer discourse promises that purchasing a new car or luxury apartment will instantly confer happiness (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2002). Mindfulness redirects to present-moment integrity: through deep observation of breath and embodied states, happiness is realized not in future gains but in the immediate, lived experience of awareness (Kabat-Zinn, 1990).

Nonetheless, mindfulness itself faces commodification. Apps such as Insight Timer and Headspace fragment practice into subscription modules and gamified check-ins, privileging monetization over compassion (karuṇā) and liberation (nirvāṇa) (Purser, 2019; Van Gordon, Shonin, & Griffiths, 2016). Celebrity-led retreats and influencer courses recast mindfulness as a status symbol, reproducing culture-industry logic (Carrette & King, 2005).

Three research imperatives emerge: (1) to elucidate how advertising discourse, social-media comparison, and symbolic desire sculpt conceptions of happiness and value; (2) to articulate mindfulness's internal logic—attentional regulation, de-centering, and meta-cognitive restructuring—and its capacity to restore sensitivity to intrinsic needs

and foster autonomous choice; (3) to critically examine the risk of mindfulness's "re-commodification" amidst commercialization and instrumentalization. Bridging critical discourse analysis with empirical inquiry can illuminate pathways for transcending the "consumption as happiness" paradigm and reclaiming authentic inner fulfillment.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Foundations

2.1 Construction of Consumer Culture and Conceptions of Happiness

Consumer culture hinges not only on the production and circulation of goods but on the exchange of symbolic meanings. In ***Simulacra and Simulation***, Baudrillard argues that "simulacra" have supplanted reality, transforming commodities into carriers of social significance and generating a "hyperreal" realm where symbolic exchange, rather than genuine need fulfillment, constitutes happiness (Baudrillard 1994). Adorno and Horkheimer locate the genesis of false needs in the culture industry: standardized cultural products manufacture a collective longing equating happiness with acquisition, thereby reducing individuals to passive consumers and attenuating critical thought (Adorno & Horkheimer 2002).

Globalization and digitization intensify these dynamics. Bauman's "liquid modernity" describes how consumption sustains identity in an ever-changing world (Bauman 2000). Platforms like Instagram and TikTok amplify the "experience economy," converting transient pleasures into quantifiable metrics of happiness. Under such conditions, consumption becomes a surrogate for authentic well-being, promising escape from anxiety even as it fosters deeper emptiness (Brown & Kasser 2005; Wells et al. 2021). Empirical research corroborates these insights: high materialism correlates with reduced life satisfaction and poorer relationships (Kasser 2002; Dittmar 2007), confirming that when happiness is pre-defined by symbolic ownership, genuine fulfillment and social connectedness recede.

2.2 Mindfulness Theory and Practice

Mindfulness, systematized by Kabat-Zinn in the MBSR program, promotes "nonjudgmental awareness" of present-moment experience—attending to breath, sensations, emotions, and thoughts with openness (Kabat-Zinn 1990). Psychologically, mindfulness operates through attentional regulation—anchoring awareness to sensory phenomena and interrupting habitual thought patterns—de-centering—viewing mental events as transient rather than self-defining—and meta-cognition—enabling conscious choice in response to impulses (Brown & Ryan 2003; Vago & Silbersweig 2012).

Empirical studies demonstrate its benefits: eight-week MBSR programs enhance life satisfaction and reduce anxiety and depression (Carmody & Baer 2008), while meta-analyses confirm broad psychological gains (Keng et al. 2011). Crucially, dispositional mindfulness inversely correlates with materialism: mindful individuals rely less on material symbols and derive greater intrinsic satisfaction (Brown & Kasser 2005;

Levesque & Brown 2007). Yet most research involves short-term interventions with motivated or clinical cohorts, leaving questions about long-term efficacy and cross-cultural applicability amid omnipresent consumer messaging.

Together, these frameworks reveal that consumer culture constructs a "consumption = happiness" paradigm through symbolic and industrial mechanisms that erode subjectivity, whereas mindfulness offers a viable micro-level strategy—via attentional regulation, de-centering, and meta-cognitive reflection—to disrupt automatic consumption impulses and restore authentic inner well-being.

3. Theoretical Intervention of Mindfulness within Consumer Culture

3.1 Mindfulness Against "Externally Symbolized Happiness": Theoretical Logic

Consumer culture magnifies symbolic value over function: a designer handbag signals status, a luxury watch denotes economic prowess (Baudrillard 1994). Such "symbolic desire" blurs authentic need and discursive coercion. Mindfulness cultivates non-judgmental awareness of present impulses—breath awareness and body scans anchor attention in immediate experience, enabling discerning whether cravings stem from genuine physiological or emotional needs or from marketing and influencer cues (Brown & Ryan 2003; Vago & Silbersweig 2012).

Consumer rhetoric often promises future happiness—"just buy this car, home, or vacation"—collapsing life's complexity into a crude "purchase = well-being" equation (Baudrillard 1994). Mindfulness subverts this by recentering attention on embodied awareness: breathing rhythms, bodily sensations, affective fluctuations, and thought streams become the locus of fulfillment, rather than unattained goods (Kabat-Zinn 1990).

Reconstructing agency requires a renewed conception of choice. Under consumer hegemony, buying is portrayed as the sole means of self-expression, reducing subjects to "commodity carriers" (Adorno & Horkheimer 2002). Mindfulness invites reflexive interrogation: "Does this desire spring from inner lack or external discourse?" This "pause–awareness–choice" triad re-anchors consumption in autonomous deliberation, resisting unthinking symbolic pursuit (Brown & Kasser 2005).

3.2 Practical Pathways for Mindfulness in the Consumption Arena

In everyday purchasing contexts, the "Pause & Breathe" technique offers a tractable mindfulness intervention. Prior to launching an e-commerce app or entering a shopping mall, a three- to five-minute breath awareness exercise stabilizes attention on body and breath, allowing emergent purchasing impulses to surface into consciousness and be met with non-judgmental observation rather than unconscious reflex (Carmody & Baer, 2008).

"Slow Action" extends awareness into the act of shopping itself. Instead of relying on one-click ordering, this method invites sensory exploration—touching the texture of a garment, observing its color and form, even inhaling its scent—while engaging in an inner dialogue: "Does this object truly serve a bodily or emotional need, or merely align

with social symbolism?" The fusion of sensory and reflective awareness transforms shopping from a reactive impulse into a deliberate, embodied experience (Keng, Smoski & Robins, 2011).

Post-purchase reflection is buttressed by a "gratitude mindset." Rather than immediately seeking the next acquisition, attention is redirected to the present satisfaction derived from the purchased item and its contribution to quality of life. Gratitude thus amplifies present-moment contentment and diminishes fixation on subsequent material goals.

Mindful practice within social media contexts is equally critical. When scrolling through feeds, envy, comparison, and vanity often surge upon viewing others' postings of new gadgets, bags, or cars. A mindfulness-trained individual can register the heartbeat and emotional shifts before reflexively scrolling, inquire into the origin of these affective states, and then choose whether to continue—thereby curtailing passive comparison and carving out an inner refuge of calm (Brown & Ryan, 2003). In face-to-face gatherings, "listening-presence" may supplant competitive boasting, privileging shared experiences and emotional authenticity to forge deeper social bonds.

At the organizational level, structured programs and community initiatives demonstrate the scalability of mindfulness interventions. Jon Kabat-Zinn's eight-week MBSR curriculum, widely implemented in medical centers and universities, progressively inculcates awareness skills and applies them to the regulation of consumption impulses (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Carmody & Baer, 2008). Likewise, non-profit workshops that merge mindfulness with sustainable consumption and minimalism principles enable participants to experientially realize the "less is more" ethos. Group meditation sessions, reflective sharing, and commitments to value-aligned action amplify mindfulness's potential to resist consumerist alienation, underscoring the vital role of community support in sustaining long-term practice (Purser, 2019).

Ultimately, mindfulness not only articulates a theoretical framework for opposing consumer culture through intrapsychic and metacognitive mechanisms but also embodies a suite of practicable techniques—from "Pause & Breathe" to "Slow Action," from gratitude cultivation to digital mindful engagement—that reclaim agency within consumption practices. Through structured curricula and community infrastructures, these pathways can be disseminated widely, offering contemporary individuals a viable means to disentangle from the narrative of "consumption = happiness" and recover genuine inner fulfillment.

4. Empirical Review

Over the past five years (2020–2025), empirical investigations into the role of mindfulness in consumer behavior have coalesced around three principal themes: the relationship between mindfulness and materialism, the effects of mindfulness interventions on impulse buying, and the capacity of mindfulness to foster sustainable consumption and minimalist lifestyles.

4.1 Mindfulness and Materialism

Materialism defines one's identity and happiness in terms of material possessions. Mindfulness, by disrupting automatic value judgments and clarifying intrinsic priorities, undermines this linkage. Giacomantonio et al. (2020), employing the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS), demonstrated that higher dispositional mindfulness robustly predicts lower materialistic values—even when controlling for cognitive restraint and life satisfaction. Wang et al. (2023) further showed that interventions enhancing self-compassion and mindful awareness led to significant reductions in impulse purchases, with diminished materialism mediating this effect via strengthened self-regulatory capacity.

4.2 Mindfulness Interventions and Impulse Buying

Randomized controlled trials attest to mindfulness training's efficacy in curbing impulsive consumption. Pan and Li (2021) found among urban Chinese professionals that an eight-week mindfulness program increased frugal purchasing behaviors, with materialism reduction serving as the mediating mechanism. In advertising exposure experiments, participants randomized to a mindfulness induction exhibited significantly lower purchase intentions compared to controls when presented with persuasive marketing stimuli (Fujita et al., 2020). Wang and colleagues (2023) similarly observed that self-compassion training, by attenuating materialistic tendencies and bolstering self-control, yielded sustained decreases in impulse buying.

4.3 Mindfulness, Sustainable Consumption, and Minimalism

A growing body of research indicates that mindfulness disrupts habitual consumer patterns and heightens ecological and self-awareness. Wiltermuth and Sedikides (2022) reviewed experimental and survey studies, concluding that mindfulness practice reduces automatic choice biases and promotes consistency between personal values and purchasing actions. An online survey of 546 U.S. adults revealed positive correlations between dispositional mindfulness, environmental concern, and pro-environmental consumption behaviors, with materialism again operating as a mediator. Qualitative inquiries within Swedish minimalism communities have found that mindfulness cultivates the capacity to discern inner craving triggers, thereby encouraging a "less is more" ethos.

4.4 Synthesis and Future Directions

Collectively, these findings corroborate that mindfulness is inversely related to materialistic values, effectively mitigates impulsive purchasing, and supports more sustainable or minimalist consumer orientations. Nevertheless, limitations persist: many studies rely on laboratory or short-term interventions; samples are often drawn from university students, white-collar workers, or self-selected practitioners, thus limiting generalizability; and reliance on self-report measures constrains inferences about real-world behavior. Future research would benefit from longitudinal, cross-

cultural designs that assess the long-term efficacy of mindfulness-based mobile applications and community-supported programs in everyday contexts. The integration of neuroscientific metrics (e.g., functional imaging, heart-rate variability) or actual transaction data would further strengthen empirical validity and external relevance.

By illuminating how mindfulness operates at the intersection of individual psychology and cultural structures, these studies position mindfulness not merely as a personal wellness practice but as a potent mechanism for countering consumerist ideology and promoting sustainable consumption.

5. Reflection and Critique: The Ambivalent Fate of Mindfulness

5.1 Commercialization and Its Perils

The rise of “check-in” mindfulness—through apps like Insight Timer, Headspace, and Calm—repackages meditation into modular, gamified content driven by daily sign-ins, badge systems, and paid upgrades (Purser 2019; Van Gordon, Shonin & Griffiths 2016). Such formats strip mindfulness of its foundational components—sustained self-reflection and compassion—in favor of quick fixes for stress relief or workplace focus. Moreover, celebrity-endorsed retreats and influencer-led coaching commodify mindfulness as a status symbol: credentials and elite experiences become new forms of symbolic capital (Carrette & King 2005). Without grounding in philosophical and ethical roots, mindfulness risks reinforcing consumerist patterns rather than subverting them.

Mindfulness commodified replicates the cultural-industrial logic it purports to resist, generating new “false needs”—premium courses, influencer streaks, and exclusive communities—that serve as markers of spiritual identity and social ranking (Purser 2019; Van Gordon et al. 2016; Turner 2018). Hence, unmasking the power dynamics and value appropriation within its commodification is essential to prevent mindfulness from becoming indistinguishable from the consumer culture it aims to critique.

5.2 Cultural Transplantation and Localization

Mindfulness’s journey from Eastern monastic practice to Western clinical application has entailed a large-scale “de-spiritualization” and “de-ethicalization.” Its core functions have been excised into mere “attention training” and “emotion regulation,” disparately distant from its Buddhist roots characterized by compassion (karuṇā) and liberation (nirvāṇa) (Shonin, Van Gordon, & Griffiths 2015). In Western clinical and corporate settings, mindfulness is often repackaged as a toolkit for enhancing focus, boosting performance, and mitigating workplace stress, thus sidelining its original commitment to “beyond-self transcendence” and communal care (Vago & Silbersweig 2012). Whether such a tool-based version of mindfulness truly liberates individuals from consumerist discourses, or simply equips them to better manage the pressures of a high-pressure consumer society, remains contestable.

Within Sinophone contexts, scholars and practitioners have sought to infuse mindfulness with Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist notions—introducing the concept of "sui yuan" (accepting conditions) to underscore "acceptance of the present" and drawing upon Daoist wu wei (non-action) to emphasize natural flow over coercion (Liu & Li 2021). Yet for young urbanites craving novelty, classical retreat practices may seem antiquated or arduous, lacking alignment with contemporary media habits and social norms. Merely grafting philosophical terminology onto mindfulness will not suffice; forms of practice must resonate with digital natives—for example, leveraging short-form video platforms to convey traditional imagery, or hosting seasonal, culturally attuned guided meditations within online communities to foster identification and sustained engagement (Wang 2022).

A further challenge lies in whether "spiritual fast-food" mindfulness courses can deliver enduring value. Empirical studies indicate that while brief mindfulness interventions yield immediate calm and enhanced self-efficacy, without systematic training and communal reinforcement, participants often revert to pre-existing consumer anxieties once the novelty fades (Garland et al. 2015). To avert this "here-today-gone-tomorrow" phenomenon, localized models must integrate community practices with digital platforms—such as forming peer support groups at urban meditation centers or embedding mindfulness-based public initiatives within neighborhood events—to cultivate sustainable practice ecosystems (Chiesa & Malinowski 2011).

In sum, mindfulness, though a potent antidote to consumerist alienation, confronts dual threats of commercialization and instrumentalization; its cultural transplantation introduces further localization hurdles. Vigilance regarding the ideological underpinnings of mindfulness products and services—and a concerted commitment to philosophical and ethical depth—are essential to ensure mindfulness realizes its emancipatory promise, offering a lived practice that transcends consumerist discourse to restore agency and genuine well-being.

Symbolic articulation, instantaneous gratification, and social comparison together enable contemporary consumer culture to shape fragile notions of well-being. Assigning identity and meaning to commodities outsources happiness to symbolic capital, fueling an illusory quest for social validation (Baudrillard 1994; Adorno & Horkheimer 2002). Meanwhile, the logic of "the next purchase is better" or "discounts equal savings" reinforces reliance on transient pleasures, transforming consumption into a quick fix for anxiety that ultimately breeds deeper emptiness (Brown & Kasser 2005). Visual displays on social platforms invite effortless comparison, positioning consumption as central to happiness (Wells et al. 2021), undermining autonomy and sensitivity to intrinsic needs.

Mindfulness practice—through its "awareness–acceptance–transcendence" sequence—offers a crucial rupture in this cycle. Awareness enables a non-judgmental examination of desire's origin, delineating between genuine physiological or emotional needs and culturally induced cravings. Acceptance invites presence with anxiety and impulse, resisting denial. Transcendence, achieved via meta-cognitive restructuring, enables the autonomous reconstruction of value and meaning from within (Kabat-Zinn

1990; Vago & Silbersweig 2012). Extended engagement in mindfulness training has proven effective in reducing compulsive consumption and materialistic tendencies (Brown & Kasser 2005; Fujita et al. 2020), and in fostering sustainable and minimalistic consumer decisions grounded in ethical and ecological awareness (Wiltermuth & Sedikides 2022).

Nevertheless, the capacity of mindfulness to de-commodify experience is far from guaranteed. With its transformation into a subscribable "well-being product," layered with pay-per-use modules and gamified progress bars, mindfulness risks losing its foundational ethos of compassion (karuṇā) and liberation (nirvāṇa) (Purser 2019; Chiesa & Malinowski 2011). Celebrity retreats and influencer-led courses further reposition it as a status symbol of conspicuous consumption (Carrette & King 2005). Without critical engagement with the capitalist structures underpinning the mindfulness industry, the practice may simply re-enter the cycle it seeks to disrupt—as yet another commodity.

Current analyses depend heavily on literature reviews and small-scale case studies, lacking large-scale, cross-cultural, longitudinal data. Moreover, critiques of commercialization remain largely ideological, without tracing the industry's capital flows and power structures. Without such scrutiny, the emancipatory potential of mindfulness cannot effectively confront consumer society's core mechanisms.

Future research should pursue three strategies:

1. **Cross-cultural longitudinal studies** to assess enduring effects of mindfulness on consumer attitudes across age, class, and cultural boundaries, using mixed methods (self-report scales, behavioral observation, interviews).
2. **"Mindfulness + community support" models**, implemented digitally via apps or social media, testing whether peer interaction and sustained engagement enhance outcomes through randomized trials.
3. **Systematic examination of mindfulness' capital networks**, utilizing ethnography, financial tracing, and stakeholder interviews to distinguish between "mindfulness as commodity" and "mindfulness as spiritual praxis."

Philosophically, mindfulness must be reframed not as a mere psychological tool but as an ethical praxis rooted in cultural critique. Whether in online or localized contexts, mindfulness must reaffirm its commitment to compassion and liberation, transforming societal structures and values through reflective awareness. Only such an integrated praxis can unleash mindfulness' potential to dismantle alienation, restore agency, and nurture authentic well-being.

References

Adorno, T. W., & Horkheimer, M. (2002). *Dialectic of enlightenment* (G. S. Noerr, Ed.; E. Jephcott, Trans.). Stanford University Press.

Baudrillard, J. (1994). *Simulacra and simulation* (S. F. Glaser, Trans.). University of Michigan Press.

Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid modernity*. Polity Press.

Brown, K. W., & Kasser, T. (2005). Are psychological and ecological well-being compatible? The role of values, mindfulness, and lifestyle. *Social Indicators Research, 74*(2), 349–368. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-004-8207-8

Brown, K. W., & Ryan, R. M. (2003). The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 84*(4), 822–848. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.84.4.822

Carmody, J., & Baer, R. A. (2008). Relationships between mindfulness practice and levels of mindfulness, medical and psychological symptoms, and well-being in a mindfulness-based stress reduction program. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine, 31*(1), 23–33. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10865-007-9130-7

Carrette, J., & King, R. (2005). *Selling spirituality: The silent takeover of religion*. Routledge.

Chiesa, A., & Malinowski, P. (2011). Mindfulness-based approaches: Are they all the same? *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 67*(4), 404–424. https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.20776

Dittmar, H. (2007). *Consumer culture, identity and well-being: The search for the "good life" and the "body perfect"*. Psychology Press.

Fujita, K., Trope, Y., & Liberman, N. (2020). Consuming mindfully: How mindfulness reduces the appeal of consumer culture. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, 149*(5), 901–916. https://doi.org/10.1037/xge0000690

Garland, E. L., Farb, N. A., Goldin, P. R., & Fredrickson, B. L. (2015). Mindfulness broadens awareness and builds eudaimonic meaning: Evidence from ERPs and fMRI. *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience, 10*(1), 45–58. https://doi.org/10.1093/scan/nsu113

Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. Dell Publishing.

Kasser, T. (2002). *The high price of materialism*. MIT Press.

Keng, S.-L., Smoski, M. J., & Robins, C. J. (2011). Effects of mindfulness on psychological health: A review of empirical studies. *Clinical Psychology Review, 31*(6), 1041–1056. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2011.04.006

Levesque, L. L., & Brown, K. W. (2007). Mindfulness as a moderator of the relation between materialism and well-being. *Personality and Individual Differences, 43*(6), 1609–1620. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2007.04.009

Lin, Y., & Huang, M. (2023). Mindful minimalism: Qualitative insights from consumer culture. *Journal of Consumer Culture*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1177/14695405231162420

Liu, Y., & Li, S. (2021). 禅宗随缘与正念实践的相互启示 [Mutual insights between Zen philosophy and mindfulness practice]. *禅研究 (Chan Studies), 12*(3), 58–67.

Purser, R. E. (2019). *McMindfulness: How mindfulness became the new capitalist spirituality*. Repeater Books.

Shonin, E., Van Gordon, W., & Griffiths, M. D. (2015). Does mindfulness training enhance positive affect? A systematic review. *Mindfulness, 6*(3), 705–722. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-014-0320-0

Van Gordon, W., Shonin, E., & Griffiths, M. D. (2016). There is only here and now: A case for poetic interpretation of mindfulness meditation. *Mindfulness, 7*(1), 4–12. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-015-0432-4

Vago, D. R., & Silbersweig, D. A. (2012). Self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-transcendence (S-ART): A framework for understanding the neurobiological mechanisms of mindfulness. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience, 6*, 296. https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2012.00296

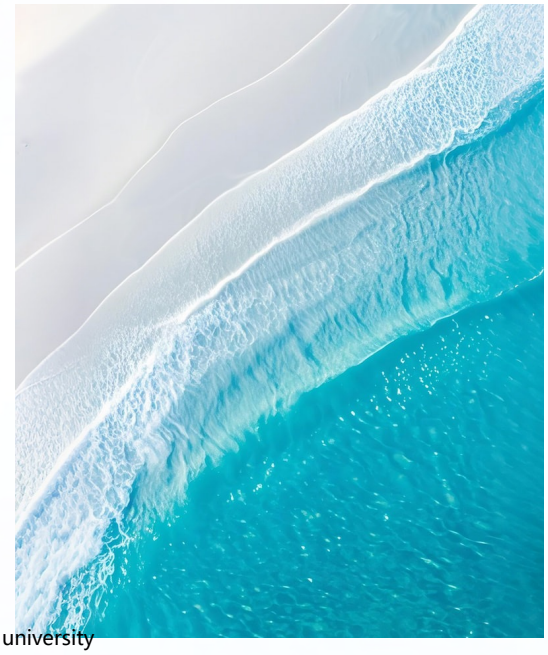
Wang, X. (2022). 数字化禅修：社交媒体时代的正念本土化实践 [Digital Zen Practice: Localization of Mindfulness in the Age of Social Media]. *文化研究 (Cultural Studies), 8*(2), 112–125.

Wells, T., Chou, Y. C., & Zhao, Q. (2021). Mindfulness reduces social comparison and impulsive buying: Evidence from East Asian college students. *International Journal of Psychology, 56*(4), 533–544. https://doi.org/10.1002/ijop.12738

Wiltermuth, S. S., & Sedikides, C. (2022). Practicing mindfulness increases sustainable consumer behavior. *Journal of Environmental Psychology, 79*, 101721. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2021.101721

BRAND LOGO

Symbolic Consumption, Instant Gratification, and Mindful Liberation: Embodied Practice Pathways within Consumer Culture



Shengyi Jia
Xian Jiaotong university

TABLE OF CONTENTS

01 Research Background and Problem
02 Literature Review and Theoretical Foundations
03 Empirical Review
04 Theoretical Intervention of Mindfulness in Consumer Culture
05 Commercialization and Critical Reflection
06 Future Research Directions
07 Conclusion and Outlook

Part. 01

Research Background and Problem

CHAPTER 1

The Dilemma of Contemporary Consumer Culture

Dominant Values of Consumer Culture

Contemporary consumer culture, through advertisements and social media, symbolizes commodities and constructs the narrative that "consumption equals happiness." Baudrillard (1994) argues that commodities become symbols of status and identity, trapping individuals in endless comparison and anxiety.

Potential of Mindfulness Practice

Mindfulness practice offers a pathway of "awareness–acceptance–transcendence" to break this cycle. Kabat-Zinn (1990) defines mindfulness as nonjudgmental awareness of present-moment experience, helping individuals escape consumer culture's constraints.

Research Questions

This study explores how mindfulness combats the symbolization and instant gratification of consumer culture and its mechanisms in consumption practices.

「LOGO」

Part. 02

Literature Review and Theoretical Foundations

CHAPTER 2

Construction of Consumer Culture

1 **Symbolic Consumption**

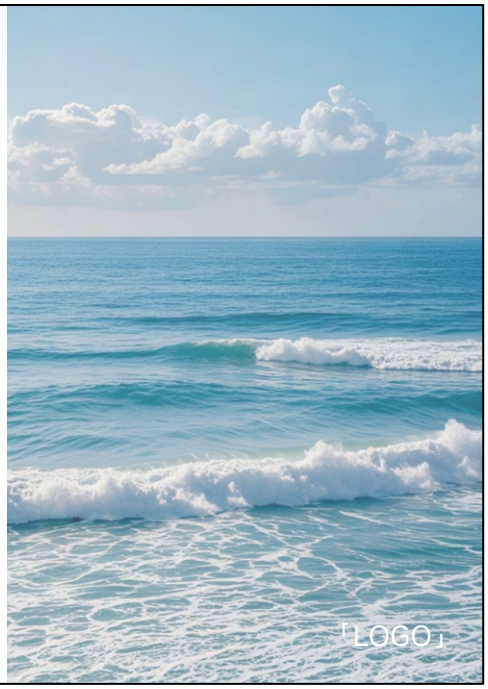
Baudrillard (1994) claims that commodities are not just functional but symbols of social status. This symbolization shifts the focus from genuine needs to external validation, fueling consumerism.

2 **Culture Industry**

Adorno and Horkheimer (2002) describe how the culture industry creates "false needs," reducing individuals to passive consumers and diminishing critical thinking.

3 **Mindfulness Theory**

Kabat-Zinn (1990) defines mindfulness as nonjudgmental awareness of the present moment. Brown and Ryan (2003) explain its psychological mechanisms: attentional regulation, decentering, and metacognitive restructuring, which counteract consumer culture's influence.



Part. 03

Theoretical Intervention of Mindfulness in Consumer Culture

CHAPTER 3

Combating Symbolized Happiness

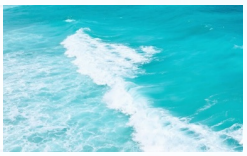


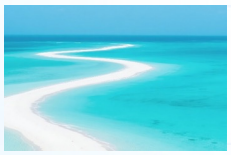
Awareness of Impulses

Mindfulness helps individuals distinguish between genuine needs and desires induced by consumer culture. Brown and Ryan (2003) suggest that mindfulness can identify the origins of cravings.

Redefining Happiness

Mindfulness shifts the focus from future consumption to present-moment experiences. Kabat-Zinn (1990) emphasizes that true fulfillment lies in immediate awareness, not in future acquisitions.





Practical Pathways

Techniques like "Pause & Breathe," "Slow Action," and "Gratitude Mindset" help individuals make conscious consumption choices and reduce impulsive buying.

Part. 04

Empirical Review

CHAPTER 4

Mindfulness and Materialism

Moving on to the next point

High Mindfulness, Low Materialism

Giacomantonio et al. (2020) show that higher dispositional mindfulness predicts lower materialistic values. Wang et al. (2023) find that mindfulness interventions reduce impulse buying by enhancing self-regulation.



Effects of Mindfulness Interventions

Pan and Li (2021) demonstrate that an eight-week mindfulness program increases frugal purchasing behaviors. Fujita et al. (2020) show that mindfulness reduces purchase intentions in advertising contexts.

Mindfulness and Sustainable Consumption

01 Consistency between Values and Behavior

Wiltermuth and Sedikides (2022) conclude that mindfulness reduces automatic choice biases and aligns purchasing actions with personal values. Lin and Huang (2023) find a positive correlation between mindfulness and pro-environmental behaviors.

02 Promoting Sustainable Consumption

Mindfulness practices encourage sustainable and minimalist lifestyles by reducing dependence on material possessions.



Part. 05

Commercialization and Critical Reflection

CHAPTER 5

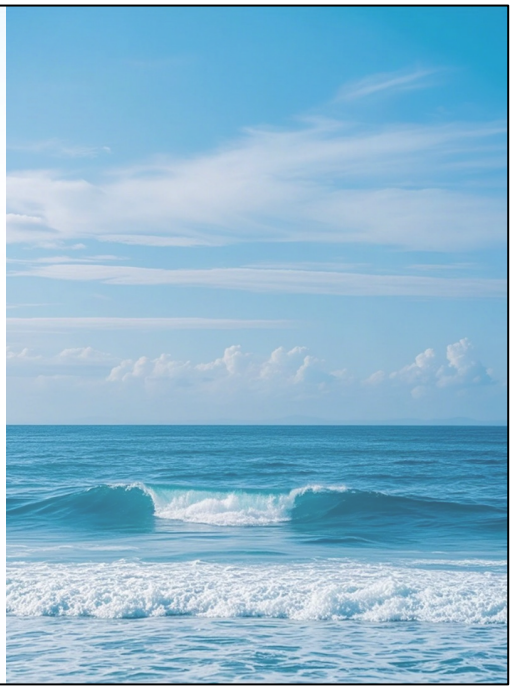
Risks of Commercialization

Gamification and Subscription Models

Mindfulness is packaged into subscription-based apps like Insight Timer and Headspace, which dilute its spiritual essence. Purser (2019) criticizes this trend for prioritizing monetization over mindfulness's ethical roots.

Consumption Symbolism

Celebrity-led mindfulness courses turn the practice into a status symbol, replicating consumer culture's logic. Carrette and King (2005) warn against this commodification.



Cultural Transplantation and Localization Challenges

01 Despiritualization and De-ethicalization

In the West, mindfulness is reduced to attention training, losing its Buddhist roots of compassion and liberation (Shonin et al., 2015).

02 Localization Attempts

In Sinophone contexts, efforts to integrate mindfulness with Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist philosophies face challenges of engaging younger generations (Liu & Li, 2021).





Critical Suggestions

Ideological Examination

It is essential to scrutinize the ideological foundations of mindfulness products to prevent them from becoming tools of consumer culture.

Emphasizing Ethical Dimensions

Restoring the ethical dimensions of mindfulness, such as compassion and liberation, is crucial for its authentic practice.

Part. 06

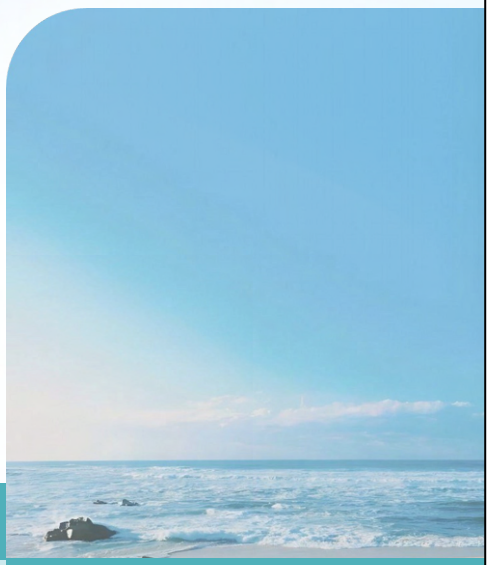
Future Research Directions

CHAPTER 6

Cross-Cultural Longitudinal Studies

Long-Term Impact

Research should examine the long-term effects of mindfulness on consumer attitudes across different ages, classes, and cultures using mixed methods.



Moving on to the next point



Mindfulness + Community Support Models

Digital Platform Practice

Combining mindfulness practice with community interaction on digital platforms can enhance outcomes, as shown by randomized trials.

Moving on to the next point

Value Chain Analysis of the Mindfulness Industry

Industry Dissection

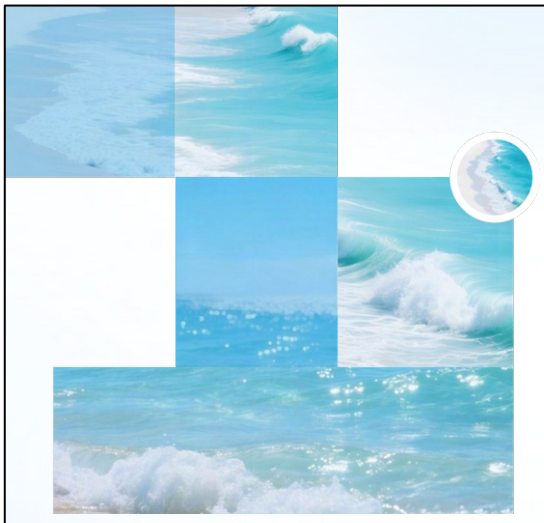
Ethnographic studies, financial tracing, and stakeholder interviews can distinguish between "mindfulness as a commodity" and "mindfulness as spiritual practice."



Part. 07

Conclusion and Outlook

CHAPTER 7



Liberation Potential of Mindfulness

Effective Tool

Mindfulness is an effective tool to break the symbolization and instant gratification of consumer culture, restoring individual autonomy and inner fulfillment.

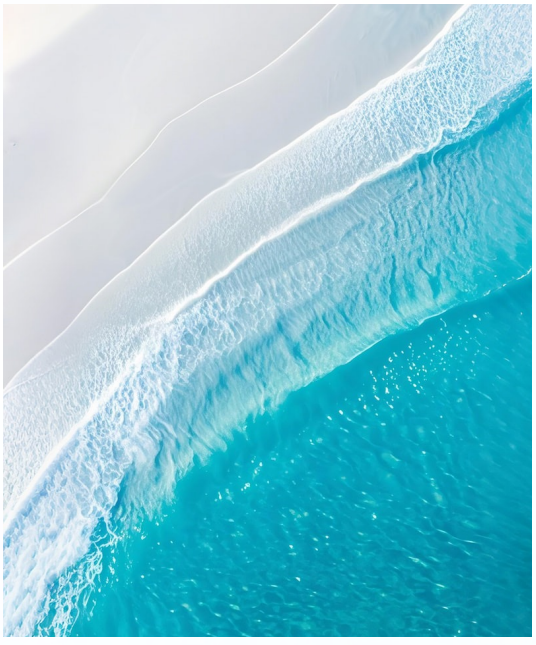
Challenges of Commercialization

Commercialization and cultural transplantation pose significant challenges to the integrity of mindfulness practice.

Future Research

Future studies should focus on the long-term effects of mindfulness, community support, and ethical dimensions to promote its healthy development.

Thank you for listening



A4

Minqiang Xu · Xiaojun Ding · Caifeng Xie (Xi'an Jiaotong University)

"Beyond Value Neutrality: Reconstructing Ethical Engagement in Philosophical Counseling Through Aristotelian Virtue Ethics"

1. Introduction

Philosophical counseling, which emerged as a practical movement in Europe during the 1980s, is fundamentally based on the Socratic dialogue. Its primary goal is to awaken an individual's "inner philosopher" in order to stimulate rational reflection on existential, ethical, and value-laden dilemmas. Unlike psychotherapy that largely adopts a pathological framework, philosophical counseling emphasizes the application of a broad spectrum of philosophical wisdom—from the Stoic ideal of temperance to Confucian ethics and Buddhist insights—to shift philosophy from abstract metaphysical speculation toward the meaningful reconstruction of everyday life.

However, the principle of value neutrality that traditionally guides philosophical counseling is facing serious challenges in practice. A rigid avoidance of value judgments may leave the counselor unable to provide necessary interventions when confronted with extreme cases—such as situations where patients suffering from health anxiety narrow their conception of life's value solely to the monitoring of bodily functions—and may even inadvertently legitimize behaviors that stray from fundamental human values. Conversely, if a counselor intervenes too forcefully, the process risks devolving into ethical controversy over the imposition of values (Ding, 2016; Ding et al., 2024; Raabe, 2013).

Aristotelian virtue ethics offers a promising theoretical pathway to surmount these challenges. Its teleological framework sets the "activity of the soul in accordance with virtue" (1098a16–17) as the ultimate benchmark of value. This approach not only avoids the pitfalls of abstract value imposition but also provides a normative standard for diagnosing value deviations. Moreover, virtue ethics closely aligns with philosophical counseling in that both emphasize the cultivation of practical wisdom (phronesis) and advocate for engaging dialectical dialogue to help individuals discover the mean—or middle way—in specific contexts rather than relying solely on universal rules (Pan, 2013). By reconstructing the principle of value neutrality, this paper aims to strike a balance between maintaining ethical normativity in counseling and respecting individual autonomy. Such an endeavor not only fosters a methodological innovation within counseling practice but also underlines the practical potential of philosophical interventions in addressing real-life issues.

Building upon this foundation, it is important to consider how these theoretical insights extend to the contemporary challenge of health anxiety. Health anxiety, characterized by an excessive preoccupation with bodily functions and a tendency to catastrophize

minor physical symptoms, has spurred a variety of intervention approaches. Traditionally, cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) has been employed to help patients reframe their irrational health beliefs and reduce undue worry (Abramowitz & Braddock, 2008; Furer et al., 2007; Salkovskis & Warwick, 1986; Salkovskis et al., 2003; Sirri et al., 2008; Warwick, 1989). Nonetheless, pure cognitive or behavioral interventions may neglect the deeper existential and value-related components underlying such anxiety.

In response, the integrated approach of Logic-Based Therapy & Counseling (LBT&C) has been developed. This method combines Aristotelian philosophy with structured dialectical techniques to deconstruct irrational health beliefs and rebuild a "dynamic balanced health perspective." Specifically, the intervention focuses on three core areas:

(1) **Identification and correction of irrational beliefs;**
(2) **Restructuring of cognitive-behavioral patterns;**
(3) **Establishment of sustainable self-regulation mechanisms**.

Empirical findings confirm that this integrated intervention successfully guides individuals to dismantle health perfectionism and probability distortions. Through philosophical inquiry and reasoned dialogue, patients learn to replace catastrophic thinking with realistic appraisals, thereby transforming anxiety into rational behavior and establishing enduring self-management capabilities. These outcomes underscore the practical value of Aristotelian virtue ethics in promoting a moderately value-neutral yet ethically engaged model of philosophical counseling.

2. Practical Paradoxes: The Challenges of Upholding Value Neutrality in Philosophical Counseling

Traditional philosophical counseling upholds value neutrality as its ethical guiding principle, advising that counselors should refrain from directly intervening in clients' value systems (Marinoff & Kapklein, 1999; Pan, 2013, 2014). However, extreme cases have revealed significant ethical shortcomings inherent in a rigid application of neutrality. When a client's value system markedly deviates from fundamental human functions—for instance, those related to the preservation of life or the facilitation of social cooperation—the principle of value neutrality can become nothing more than a formalistic guideline that, in practice, risks morphing into moral indifference. For example, while the manipulation of others (such as coercing sexual relations through threats) is universally accepted as morally reprehensible, a counselor solely emphasizing the client's right to autonomous value expression might inadvertently overlook how such behavior infringes upon the autonomy and rights of others, thereby indirectly endorsing unethical actions (Cohen, 2025).

Aristotle, in *The Nicomachean Ethics*, explicitly states that the essential function of human beings—as rational beings—is "the activity of the soul in accordance with virtue"

(1098a16–17). He further asserts, “We are by nature capable of receiving virtue, and this capacity is perfected by habit” (1103a25–26). In light of these insights, when counselors adopt neutrality as a cover for avoiding value guidance, they risk a dereliction of their ethical responsibilities. Furthermore, while rigorous logical reasoning can construct an impressive intellectual edifice, it is insufficient to resolve deep-seated misalignments in value orientations; hence, a normative framework must be introduced to bridge this gap (Ding et al., 2022). In this context, a framework of common morality, as articulated by Gert (2004), offers crucial everyday ethical criteria that can effectively ground and guide counseling practices.

At the practical level, the principle of value neutrality is confronted with structural tensions. Philosophical counseling implicitly aspires toward a “good life” (eudaimonia), yet its methodological tools often strive to eliminate explicit value judgments. This inherent contradiction stems from the nature of counseling itself: logical analysis presupposes the precedence of values, and the very act of concept clarification carries with it normative implications. In deconstructing a client’s cognitive dilemmas, the reasoning framework employed invariably assumes implicit value commitments. This split between instrumental rationality and value-based objectives exposes a deeper crisis: in its attempt to secure objectivity by suspending values, philosophical counseling often ends up reconstructing the normative underpinnings of ethical practice at an operational level.

Aristotelian ethics, with its enduring emphasis on virtue and practical wisdom (phronesis), provides a compelling normative basis for overcoming these dilemmas. For example, Logic-Based Therapy & Counseling (LBT&C) employs a virtue-oriented “transcendental philosophy” (Cohen, 2013) to re-establish ones value coordinates, thereby resonating with Aristotle’s teleological vision of eudaimonia. The method’s mapping between fallacies and virtues—for instance, linking manipulation with a failure to respect autonomy—fundamentally establishes a non-neutral ethical framework (Cohen, 2025). Moreover, several mainstream models of philosophical counseling incorporate explicit value-reconstruction phases. Examples include:

(1) **The PEACE Model:** Its final stage, “Equilibrium,” aims at achieving ataraxia (a Stoic ideal of inner tranquility) (Marinoff & Kapklein, 1999; Marinoff, 2001).
(2) **The IDEA Method:** Its fourth step, “Accept the Rest,” directs clients toward Epicurean temperance as a virtue (Ferraiolo, 2010).
(3) **The C.I.S.A. Model:** Its “Ascend” phase calls for transcending current limitations and elevating one’s value system (Li, 2007, 2015).

Each of these approaches is consonant with Aristotle’s insistence on the cultivation of practical wisdom. Furthermore, Pierre Hadot’s concept of “spiritual exercises” reaffirms that the essence of philosophical counseling lies in nurturing virtue through a tripartite focus on truth, wisdom, and virtue (Ding et al., 2022; Hadot, 1995). In this context, counselors are envisioned as “co-facilitators of virtue” who, through dialectical dialogue, encourage clients to engage in rational self-reflection and to pursue a

fulfilling life (eudaimonia). This integrative approach transcends the superficial application of value neutrality and ultimately aspires to align the soul with virtue.
To further contextualize these dilemmas, it is instructive to consider the broader discourse on ethical normativity in therapeutic practices. As argued by MacIntyre (1981) in his seminal work, *After Virtue*, the explicit incorporation of normative ethical principles is crucial for both individual moral development and the integrity of professional practice. MacIntyre's work (1981) challenges the modern tendency toward detached, value-free analysis and argues for a return to principled ethical frameworks—a perspective that strongly supports the integration of Aristotelian virtue ethics into contemporary philosophical counseling

3. Aristotelian Virtue Ethics: The Theoretical Pillar of Transformative Counseling

Philosophical counseling grapples with a core dilemma: the tension between ethical normativity and value neutrality. Aristotle's virtue ethics—with its three pillars of teleology (telos), the doctrine of the mean, and practical wisdom (phronesis)—provides a robust theoretical foundation for overcoming the superficial application of value neutrality. This framework constructs a dynamic, balanced evaluative system through the following three interrelated components:

(1) The Doctrine of the Mean: Emphasizes that the virtuous state of emotions and actions is one of moderation—neither excess nor deficiency.
(2) Telos: Establishes eudaimonia (happiness or the "good life") as the ultimate end or purpose.
(3) Phronesis: Employs context-specific rational judgment to translate universal principles into concrete, practical action.

Together, these elements form a flexible yet normative basis for value intervention in philosophical counseling.

3.1 The Mean: Achieving Virtue Through Moderation

Aristotle asserts that ethical virtue is "a quality of choice, then, that lies in a mean relative to us" (1107a). At its essence, virtue embodies a balanced state in both emotions and actions, carefully avoiding the extremes of excess and deficiency. Importantly, the mean is not a mere compromise; its determination depends on practical judgment that accounts for an individual's capacities, the characteristics of the object, and the specific circumstances at hand. For instance, bravery is understood as the mean between recklessness and cowardice, and generosity as the mean between prodigality and stinginess.
A fundamental characteristic of the mean is its situational dependency. As Aristotle explains, ethical virtue "is concerned with feelings and actions, in which excess is a form of failure, and so is defect, while the intermediate is praised and is a form of success" (1106b15–16). Consequently, achieving the mean must be grounded in

concrete practice. For example, the appropriate expression of anger varies with context: a minor inadvertence by a friend might merit tolerance, whereas unjust actions require rightful condemnation. Attaining such moderation demands that the agent develop a keen perceptual sensitivity to contextual nuances—a capacity refined through individual experience and disciplined rational reflection (Mao & Chen, 2006). Aristotle even illustrates the relativity of the mean by comparing dietary needs: “Six pounds of food is a great deal for an athlete who is inexperienced, but it is too little for Milo of Croton” (1106a30–b5).

Moreover, the realization of the mean depends on the long-term cultivation of virtuous character. Aristotle stresses that the development of virtue must be rooted in the ethical traditions of the polis, with laws and customs instilling a “love of what is noble” (1179b30–31). For example, the virtue of justice is honed in public life by engaging in activities such as allocating resources or adjudicating disputes, which externalize virtue into a stable character trait. As further emphasized, “we are by nature capable of receiving virtue, and this capacity is perfected by habit” (1103a15–16). Practical cultivation requires repeated calibration of one’s emotional and behavioral responses. A person practicing temperance, for instance, is not born with an innate suppression of desire, but gradually develops self-control through cultivating the proper attitude toward both pleasure and pain (1119a12–15). Thus, the mean serves not only as an evaluative criterion for individual acts but also as a manifestation of enduring character.

3.2 Telos: Eudaimonia as the Ultimate Life Goal

At the very outset of *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle proclaims, “Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good” (1094a1–2), thereby establishing a hierarchical teleological framework (Deng, 2011). He argues that activities ranging from the healing arts to martial strategies ultimately converge on one supreme end—happiness (eudaimonia) (Kraut, 1989). This highest good is “pursued for its own sake” (1094a18–20) rather than merely as an instrumental objective. Ethics, according to Aristotle, should begin from “what is known to us” (1095b4–5)—that is, rooted in everyday experience rather than in abstract speculation (Deng, 2011; Tang, 2005). This pragmatic grounding suggests that happiness is not a transcendent metaphysical entity but the very realization of human nature’s fundamental function.

Aristotle defines eudaimonia as “the activity of the soul in accordance with virtue” (1098a16–17). This concept encompasses three dimensions: First, while external goods such as wealth and friendship help support virtuous activity, they are not themselves constitutive of happiness; rather, they provide a necessary material foundation (Li, 2021). Second, virtue must be actively practiced—a dormant virtuous potential does not suffice. For example, courage only becomes genuine when displayed in perilous situations. Third, eudaimonia is understood as something complete and self-sufficient (1097b15–16), reflecting its autarkic and holistic qualities, with its highest expression found in contemplative life.

Aristotle's teleological system, by organizing the good in a hierarchical fashion, establishes eudaimonia as the ultimate end and guiding coordinate of human life. He critiques hedonistic or "animalistic" life (1095b20), insisting that true happiness must be achieved through the proper exercise of rational faculties (Deng, 2011). Through the cultivation of virtuous character and the full exercise of reasoned capacities, individuals can steadily approach the highest good. In doing so, happiness is revealed not as an extrinsic target to be reached, but as the very expression of our inherent function realized in the practice of virtue (He, 2014).

3.3 Phronesis: Contextual Wisdom in Ethical Decision-Making

Aristotle defines practical wisdom (phronesis) as "a practical quality of the mind concerned with choice, lying in a mean relative to us" (1140b5–6). Its core function is to guide individuals in making the right decisions in particular situations (Meng & Yang, 2020). Unlike theoretical wisdom—which is oriented toward immutable, eternal truths—phronesis is focused on the variable conditions of everyday life. Its goal is not to secure universal knowledge but to determine how one ought to act to achieve the good. For example, a physician should adapt treatment strategies based on the patient's unique constitution rather than by rigidly applying standard protocols. In essence, phronesis is "the capacity to translate universal principles into specific actions," bridging the gap between abstract ethical virtues and their concrete realization in practice (Chen & Chen, 2024).

The effective exercise of phronesis depends on accumulated experience and heightened sensitivity to the particulars of each situation. Aristotle acknowledges that practical actions occur in diverse contexts that cannot be wholly codified by any single universal rule, necessitating a discerning and adaptable approach (Yu, 2003). For instance, the appropriate degree of generosity may differ based on the recipient's needs and the nature of the relationship; giving a coin to a destitute person might represent an act of generosity, while the same gesture toward a close friend could be deemed insufficient. This context-sensitive appraisal is not innate but is cultivated gradually over time through continuous practice and corrective feedback.

Furthermore, phronesis and ethical virtue engage in a reciprocal relationship. On the one hand, a well-cultivated virtue provides the direction for phronetic judgment—for example, a courageous person motivated by a love of honor is likely to gauge danger more judiciously. On the other hand, phronesis imbues ethical virtue with practical relevance; without the guidance of practical wisdom, a virtue like generosity might inadvertently encourage imprudent behavior (such as enabling greed) (Li, 2021). As succinctly expressed, "no virtue without phronesis is reliable; and phronesis divorced from virtue is empty" (Chen, 2021; Chen & Chen, 2024).

In summary, Table 1 succinctly outlines the three central components of Aristotle's virtue ethics—telos, the doctrine of the mean, and phronesis—while highlighting their practical application and significance in philosophical counseling.

Table 1. Aristotelian Virtue Ethics Framework

Core	Main Content and Definitions	Role in Philosophical Counseling
Telos	Regarding eudaimonia as the ultimate goal, Aristotle defines happiness (eudaimonia) as "the activity of the soul in accordance with virtue," emphasizing the teleological and hierarchical nature of human actions.	Provides the criterion for value judgment by guiding individuals toward rational self-examination and the pursuit of eudaimonia, thereby offering a solid normative direction for ethical living through concrete behavioral standards.
The Mean	Advocates a balanced state of emotions and conduct, positing that moderation is achieved through context-specific judgment that avoids both excess and deficiency.	Facilitates the identification of extremist behavioral tendencies using structured diagnostic frameworks, offering clients actionable guidelines to achieve moderation and equilibrium across diverse situational contexts.
Phronesis	Denotes the capacity to translate universal ethical principles into practical action rather than remaining in the realm of abstract theorizing.	Empowers counseling to convert abstract dilemmas into concrete virtue exploration and actionable strategies through dialectical engagement, thus achieving a seamless integration between theoretical reflection and real-world practice.

4. Beyond Neutrality: A Diagnostic Framework Rooted in Virtue Ethics

Philosophical counseling often finds itself caught in a dilemma. On the one hand, counselors are expected to remain objectively neutral; on the other, they are called upon to engage in ethical judgment that responds to the implicit commitment to a "good life" (eudaimonia). Traditional approaches in philosophical counseling employ logical analysis as a means to sidestep explicit value judgments. However, this strategy tends to address only surface issues without reaching the core of the matter. In contrast, Aristotle's virtue ethics introduces a threefold perspective:

(1) The **doctrine of the mean**—by diagnosing extreme tendencies, it identifies where deviations from moderation occur.
(2) **Telos**—by using the proper function of human nature as its reference point, it asserts that "living well" (eudaimonia) must transcend mere survival.
(3) **Phronesis**—by providing the capacity for context-sensitive judgment and adjustment, it enables one to calibrate responses to specific circumstances.

This integrative framework not only averts the ethical vacuum that may result from excessive neutrality but also mitigates the risk of imposing values. In doing so, it establishes a normative and compassionate model of value intervention—a model that reshapes philosophical counseling from a purely cognitive correction process into one that reconstructs meaning.

4.1 Rigid Neutrality and the Ethical Vacuum: Uncovering Contradictions in Traditional Paradigms

Traditional solutions in philosophical counseling emphasize the principle of value neutrality. Counselors are often required to eschew direct inquiries into the notion of the "good" and its related normative ideals, relying on meticulous logical analysis and conceptual clarification to avoid engaging with these issues directly (Ding, 2016; Pan, 2013, 2014). The core task of philosophical counseling is to analyze the processes of thought through logical structures, thereby alleviating cognitive dilemmas; it is not primarily about advocating a particular value stance.

Yet the cognitive dilemmas encountered in practice are frequently rooted in conflicts embedded within a client's value system. Consequently, the analyst must suspend any a priori value assumptions—neither ranking specific values as inherently obligatory nor dismissing alternative values as mere subjective errors. Ironically, it is precisely this value-neutral posture that underpins the fundamental stance of philosophical counseling. By stripping away explicit value content, the process is rendered a return to primitive conceptual clarity, distinguishing itself from the practices of theology and political discourse (Pan, 2013).

This mechanism, however, provokes deeper questions. The very process of counseling is implicitly imbued with an assumption concerning the pursuit of eudaimonia. Philosophy, conceived as a way of life, has as its ethical goal "the pursuit of truth, wisdom, and virtue" (Ding et al., 2022). When clients seek counseling, their requests are inherently undergirded by a search for a well-ordered life. They require philosophical therapy to contend with modern existential and psychological challenges—and in some cases, a training in virtue takes the place of medication (Cohen, 2013). Although counselors might claim that their interventions involve only logical analysis of values rather than normative evaluation, the processes of conceptualization, decision-making, and dialectical engagement are permeated by values.

First, at the conceptualization stage, when a counselor delineates core categories such as "reason" or "health," such definitions already carry the imprint of a particular cultural and historical value context.

Second, in the process of building arguments, the criteria for logical validity and empirical relevance are implicitly based on a hierarchy of values.

Finally, the problem-solving proposals formulated at the end of the counseling session inevitably fall within an established value system.

This systemic penetration of values transforms the purportedly "value-free" counseling process into a theoretical construct that, in reality, cannot escape normative influence. Even more troubling is that a rigid avoidance of the subject of eudaimonia effectively permits the unchallenged transmission of dominant cultural norms. On the cognitive level, deliberately suspending value judgments tacitly endorses the implicit disciplining of mainstream ideologies. Counselors, by uncritically employing pre-existing evaluative frameworks (e.g., utilitarian calculations), may unwittingly become collaborators in the perpetuation of dominant discourse. At the practical level, clients

find their own freedom of value choice reduced to a one-sided adaptation to existing societal orders. In effect, the counseling process may contribute to the reproduction of prevailing value systems, thereby robbing individuals of genuine autonomous values. This limitation is particularly glaring in extreme cases such as health anxiety, where a value-neutral approach treats an excessive focus on personal health as merely a cognitive bias. Such an approach neglects the collapse of a broader value system; when an individual's entire sense of life is anchored solely to physical survival, this narrow perspective is itself symptomatic of a profound value disorder. By deconstructing irrational beliefs solely through logical analysis, the traditional method fails to offer a reconstitution of values and deepens the client's predicaments. This paradox exposes the fundamental contradiction underlying the principle of value neutrality: in an effort to ensure objectivity by means of an indeterminate ethical stance, the counseling process may instead generate an ethical vacuum that ultimately undermines the humanistic care that is the hallmark of philosophical reflection.

4.2 Reconstructing Normativity: A Virtue Ethics Diagnostic Framework Anchored in Telos

Recent research in philosophical counseling reveals a marked interdisciplinary shift, with innovative methodological approaches drawing attention to the ethical dimensions of therapy. For instance, Pierre Hadot's work on practical philosophy deconstructs the dichotomy between abstract theorization and everyday practice. Hadot argues that ancient philosophy was essentially a form of spiritual training, emphasizing self-reflection and dialogical practice to awaken one's virtuous awareness (Hadot, 1995). Likewise, Lou Marinoff has reconfigured the therapeutic potential of philosophical dialogue, transcending the cognitive limitations inherent in traditional psychotherapy and proposing a new counseling paradigm centered on meaning construction. Marinoff advocates guiding individuals through Socratic dialectics that overcome the technical detachment of value neutrality (Marinoff & Kapklein, 1999). Building on these approaches, Massimo Pigliucci has systematically defended the contemporary applicability of Stoic ethics, demonstrating how classical training in virtue can alleviate existential anxiety and reconstruct a coherent value order—thus offering an operational framework for intervening in emotional crises (Pigliucci, 2017).

These three theoretical trajectories collectively form the foundation for value reconstruction. Hadot anchors the very roots of philosophical counseling in its historical tradition; Marinoff establishes the rational dimension of philosophical dialogue; and Pigliucci furnishes a pathway for the cultivation of virtue. By critically transcending the principle of value neutrality, these approaches lay the theoretical cornerstone for developing a counseling model that is both normatively robust and emotionally resonant. This model converts value guidance into a process of awakening virtue through cooperative dialectical inquiry. Ultimately, it fosters a transition in philosophical counseling—from mere cognitive correction toward the reconstruction of meaning.

In *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle clarifies the concept of virtue and constructs his view of happiness (eudaimonia), defining it as both the chief good and the ultimate realization of human excellence. This core proposition is reiterated throughout the text: eudaimonia is the activity of the soul in accordance with virtue. Within this framework, when a client pursues the value of a "good life," it is incumbent upon the counselor not to hide behind strict value neutrality. Instead, the counselor must undertake necessary normative interventions. Through dialectical analysis, the counselor demonstrates that although eudaimonia is a natural human aspiration, its sustainable realization must be rooted in virtue. This line of reasoning inevitably leads to an examination of the nature of virtue. By clarifying the essence of eudaimonia, it becomes apparent that the realization of ethical virtue is the fundamental criterion of behavioral value.

It is particularly important to note Aristotle's definition of virtue: "Virtue, then, is not a feeling nor a capacity, but a habit perfected by habit" (1103a15–16). This definition holds a dual normative significance in ethics. First, it asserts the unity between the practice of virtue and the formation of one's character: "We become just by doing just acts" (1105b5–9). Second, it underscores that isolated instances of correct behavior, if unmoored from a foundation of virtue, do not possess moral value. Accordingly, counselors must adopt "whether it promotes the realization of virtue" as the meta-ethical standard in their value judgments, rather than clinging to a rigidly neutral stance. In extreme cases, counselors should actively engage in value intervention—shifting the focus of counseling from superficial problem-solving to the deep cultivation of virtuous character. Such a practical turn not only embodies the central tenets of Aristotelian virtue ethics but also provides a solid ethical basis for philosophical counseling.

In summary, Figure 1 presents a philosophical practice framework rooted in teleology. It integrates the dynamic balancing mechanism of the doctrine of the mean with the ethical transformation provided by phronesis, thereby establishing a three-stage logical architecture: "value basis—situational diagnosis—action generation."

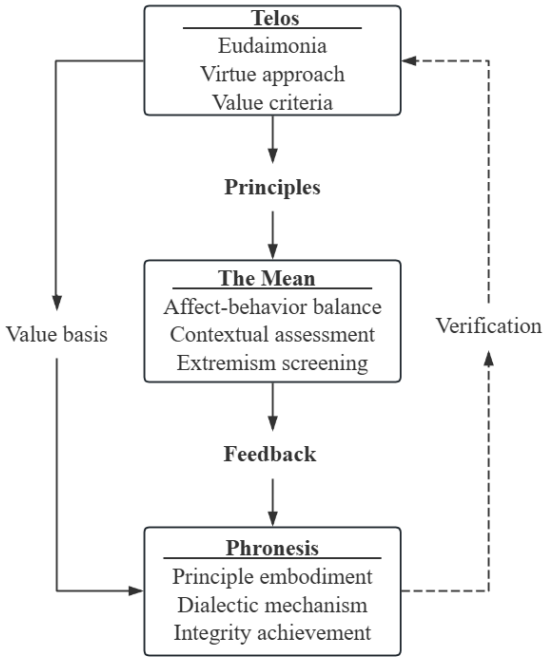


Figure 1. A Diagnostic Framework of Virtue Ethics

5. Methodological Integration: A Threefold Approach to Balanced Value Engagement

Aristotle's virtue ethics must be operationalized into practical principles to effectively address value conflicts within counseling. Drawing on three interrelated strategies—contextual diagnosis inspired by the doctrine of the mean, normative guidance derived from telos, and dialogical techniques informed by phronesis—this section proposes a three-dimensional methodology of "moderate value neutrality." In this framework:

(1) **Contextual Diagnosis** entails deconstructing extreme tendencies to pinpoint where value imbalances occur.
(2) **Telos Guidance** involves reconstructing the value coordinate system by referring to mankind's essential function.
(3) **Dialogue Practice** uses virtue cultivation to translate abstract value discussions into practical action.

Together, these three components create a dynamic equilibrium that avoids the pitfalls of rigid neutrality while also preventing overly coercive value imposition. In typical conflict cases—such as those involving health anxiety—the counselor can utilize this framework to reveal the underlying narrowing of the client's existential dimensions. In doing so, the abstract debate about values is transformed into an exploration of moderation, rendering the counseling process itself an arena for the awakening of virtue.

5.1 Contextual Diagnosis: Unmasking Extremes in Client Beliefs

Aristotle's systematic construction of the doctrine of the mean offers a powerful framework for contextual diagnosis in philosophical counseling. Virtue, defined as "the quality of the soul which has the power of choice," is essentially characterized by moderation—that is, the pursuit of a balance between excess and deficiency. For example, in decisions regarding the use of wealth, the extremes of prodigality and parsimony flank the moderate virtue of generosity. Such distinctions serve as a valuable guide for counselors. Consider the case of an Internet company programmer who, by "voluntarily" engaging in excessive overtime, succumbs to depression and physical breakdown. Here, work has been mistakenly equated with a competition, which alienates the individual and misaligns the value of labor (e.g., using overtime as a measure of personal worth).

As noted by Huang and Chang (2024), "modern moral dilemmas often stem from absolutizing singular value norms," whereas Aristotle's dynamic balance requires that "rational choices be attuned to contextual complexity" (Zhang & Liu, 2012). Moreover, Aristotle's taxonomy of fear offers an exemplar for diagnosis. Fear is defined as "a painful expectation of evil" (1115a10–15). In health anxiety, clients often transform potential risks into tangible threats. Just as the coward fears what one ought not to fear ("to fear what one ought not to fear," (1115b15)), so too do certain individuals treat benign health concerns as manifest dangers.

By posing questions such as, "To what degree can health vigilance truly benefit the integrity of the soul?" counselors can help clients recognize that their behaviors have deviated from the mean. This process is analogous to a physician diagnosing bodily imbalances by observing fluid proportions. Fundamentally, this diagnostic method is intended to reveal that the core of the value deviation lies in an excessive attachment to a singular good (e.g., health). Furthermore, extreme tendencies often arise from erroneous choices—that is, when rational judgment fails to properly weigh the various levels of "good" within a specific context. A critical part of diagnosis, then, is to analyze whether the client's loss of self-control stems from the overpowering influence of passion or from a cognitive misordering of values. This integrative approach—melding reason and emotion—is one of the unique strengths of Aristotle's ethics (Zhang & Liu, 2012).

5.2 Guidance Through Telos: Re-establishing Essential Human Norms

Aristotle's doctrine of human-specific functions provides the basis for transcending value conflicts. According to Aristotle, the human good lies in "the activity of the soul in accordance with virtue" (1098a16–17). When health-anxious individuals reduce the meaning of life solely to biological survival, they mistakenly confound "to live" with "to live well." The former is a function even plants can perform, whereas the latter is unique to "rational beings possessing Logos" (1098a3–4). Such normative concerns must be grounded in the full exercise of one's rational capacities.

Counselors can prompt clients by asking, "What kind of life allows you to fully realize your human potential?" This question encourages clients to appreciate that true

happiness (eudaimonia) necessarily entails “a complete life of virtue” (1098a16–18). Aristotle emphasizes that a good life is holistic and self-sufficient rather than a mere aggregation of singular goods; indeed, “Happiness, then, is something complete and self-sufficient, being the end of our activities” (1097b15–20). For instance, in a case involving a teenager excessively engaged in mobile gaming—where a 12-year-old spends eight hours daily online, leading to family conflict—a counselor should reorient the client toward developing rational thinking and social skills, thereby enabling the individual to become a responsible citizen. Simultaneously, the counselor must correct any distorted attitudes held by others—such as misinterpreting technology as inherently detrimental—and clarify the balance of rights and responsibilities. In this way, the counselor is redefined not as a value dictator or an indifferent observer, but as a facilitator who, through dialectical dialogue, awakens the client’s recognition of “an activity in accordance with complete virtue” and assists in the reconstitution of a coherent value system through rational re-examination.

5.3 Dialogue in Action: Cultivating Virtue Through Philosophical Exchange

Aristotle’s treatment of phronesis offers a methodological paradigm for philosophical counseling. Phronesis is defined as “a practical quality of the mind concerned with choice, lying in a mean relative to us, this being determined by reason and as the man of practical wisdom would determine it” (1140b5–6). Through systematic questioning that exposes underlying contradictions and employs inductive reasoning to distill universal principles, practical judgment is ultimately shaped by the specifics of each context.

For example, consider a case contrasting the “refined poor” and the “slacker” where a young professional earning 8,000 yuan per month falls into financial distress. In his attempt to maintain a sophisticated lifestyle, he accumulates a debt of 200,000 yuan on luxury goods while simultaneously experimenting with minimalism—and yet ends up hoarding discounted products due to anxiety. In such a case, counselors can pose questions such as, “If you were to lose your job tomorrow, would these luxury items help you get through the crisis?” or “Do the costs of consuming near-expiry food in a hospital exceed the amount you have saved?” These inquiries are designed to reveal the internal fractures in the client’s value system and the miscalibration in their judgment of real-life scenarios. Essentially, this reflects the failure of the non-rational part of the soul to be disciplined by rationality (Tian, 2016).

The counseling process itself becomes a practice in virtue cultivation in the Aristotelian sense. The excellence of the soul is forged through repeated actions; sustained reflective dialogue on values is key to reshaping one’s evaluative decision-making. In the consumption case mentioned above, repeated questions such as, “How does your current salary balance between basic survival needs and aesthetic aspirations?” help the client translate abstract virtues like temperance into concrete behavioral benchmarks. This dialectical mechanism exemplifies the dual character of phronesis: it requires the guidance of universal knowledge while simultaneously being adaptable to specific circumstances. Ultimately, the counselor activates the client’s practical

reason, enabling them to discover the balanced mean—precisely the objective that Aristotle envisions for making one a better person.

6. Case Validation: Empirical Insights from Health Anxiety Interventions

To verify the feasibility, initial effectiveness, and dynamic change process of integrating Aristotle's theoretical framework into the core LBT&C (Logic-Based Therapy & Counseling) method for addressing health anxiety, this chapter provides a comprehensive description of the case validation procedure and its results. This validation phase is designed through rigorously planned case studies that combine qualitative interviews with quantitative tracking to provide preliminary empirical evidence for the theory-driven intervention.

6.1 Research Methods

6.1.1 Research Subjects

This study recruited on-campus students exhibiting symptoms of health anxiety through in-person methods, aiming to explore the intervening effects of LBT&C on health anxiety in real-world settings. In order to ensure that the sample was both representative and consistent, the following inclusion criteria were established:

Participants must self-report behaviors associated with health anxiety (e.g., excessive concern for personal health, frequent medical visits, repeated online searches related to illnesses).

Participants must be 18 years old or above.

Participants must have no clinical history of psychiatric disorders.

After initial screening and interview confirmation, a total of three individuals meeting these criteria were enrolled and sequentially labeled as P1, P2, and P3. Their basic information is detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Client Information Form

Number	Occupation	Age	Consultation Time	Issue Description
P1	Student	20	44 min.	Frequently searches online for disease information, worrying that ordinary bodily reactions indicate serious illnesses.
P2	Student	20	28 min.	Repeatedly visits the campus clinic for examination of the same body part despite normal medical results.
P3	Student	21	31 min.	Often fixates on minor physical sensations (e.g., heartbeat, dizziness), with emotions heavily influenced by these experiences.

6.1.2 Research Process

This study employed the LBT&C method—an intervention that integrates logic-based therapy with philosophical counseling and is underpinned by Aristotle's philosophical framework—to explore its suitability and effect for intervening in health anxiety. The

central tenet of LBT&C is that an individual's emotions and behaviors are primarily driven by their belief system. When a person holds irrational beliefs (e.g., extreme perfectionism, catastrophic expectations, or unrealistic self-demands), negative emotions such as anxiety and depression are likely to emerge (Cohen, 2013). Through a process of logical reasoning and philosophical reflection, LBT&C aims to expose and correct the logical fallacies in these beliefs and to guide individuals to adopt more reasonable, adaptive alternative beliefs. These changes, in turn, optimize their cognitive structure and emotional response (Cohen, 2016).
According to Cohen (2019), the intervention process in LBT&C comprises the following six key steps:

(1) **Identification of Irrational Beliefs:** Assist the individual in recognizing core irrational beliefs that underlie negative emotions.
(2) **Logical Analysis:** Use philosophical logical reasoning to structurally analyze these beliefs and expose inherent logical fallacies and biases.
(3) **Emotional Exploration:** Guide the individual to gain a deeper understanding of their emotional experiences and trace their causal links to the belief system.
(4) **Construction of Alternative Beliefs:** Help the individual develop a more reasonable, realistic, and adaptive belief system to replace the irrational beliefs.
(5) **Behavioral Adjustment:** Encourage the individual to translate these new beliefs into concrete actions and validate the changes through practical experience.
(6) **Continuous Reflection and Adjustment:** Guide the individual to continuously evaluate and modify their belief system in everyday life to maintain cognitive and emotional stability.

For data collection, this study primarily used semi-structured interviews, complemented by pre- and post-intervention quantitative assessments to enhance data comparability and explanatory power. The overall research process was structured around five key time points:

(1) **T1:** Pre-test phase – administration of psychological scales prior to the intervention.
(2) **T2:** Intervention phase – one-on-one LBT&C interviews with each participant (each lasting approximately 30–60 minutes).
(3) **T3:** Immediate post-test phase – participants complete the psychological scales immediately after the interview.
(4) **T4:** Dynamic feedback phase – daily feedback records for a week following the intervention, wherein participants complete brief diaries.
(5) **T5:** Delayed post-test phase – a follow-up assessment conducted 7 days after the intervention to observe the sustainability of the intervention effects.

This research design, which balances qualitative depth with quantitative structure, facilitates a systematic evaluation of the applicability and psychological impact of the LBT&C method for health anxiety (Yin, 2018).

6.1.3 Research Instruments

The study adopted a multidimensional quantitative assessment approach integrated with a philosophy-oriented intervention strategy to systematically evaluate the LBT&C method's effectiveness on individuals with health anxiety.

In terms of measurement, a pre-test–intervention–post-test design was used. Multiple psychological scales were employed to measure various dimensions of the participants' mental state. Specifically, the following instruments were used: Short Health Anxiety Inventory (SHAI), Chinese version of the Metacognitions Questionnaire-Health Anxiety (CMCQ-HA), Depression Anxiety Stress Scales-21 (DASS-21), Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7), Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI), and Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS). For scoring, the SWLS used a 7-point scale (1–7), while the remaining scales used a 4-point scale (1–4). The final score for each scale was computed as the average score across items, providing an overall level for the corresponding psychological variable.

Table 2. Detailed Scale Summary

Scale Name	Measurement Dimensions	Brief Description	Main Source
Short Health Anxiety Inventory (SHAI)	**Health Anxiety** (including disease phobia, negative consequence anticipation)	Assesses excessive worry and anxiety about health, commonly used to identify groups with high health anxiety levels.	Zhang (2015)
Chinese Version of the Metacognitions Questionnaire-Health Anxiety (CMCQ-HA)	**Metacognitive Beliefs Related to Health Anxiety**	Evaluates the beliefs individuals hold when facing health anxiety (e.g., perceived control over thoughts, the danger of these beliefs).	Dai (2018)
Depression Anxiety Stress Scales-21 (DASS-21)	**Depression, Anxiety, and Stress**	Comprehensively measures current emotional states for screening psychological distress severity.	Lovibond & Lovibond (1995)
Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7)	**Generalized Anxiety**	Rapidly screens the core symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder, suitable for both clinical and research uses.	Spitzer et al. (2006)
Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI)	**Somatic and Cognitive Anxiety Symptoms**	Evaluates physical reactions (e.g., rapid heartbeat) and cognitive	Steer & Beck (1997)

Scale Name	Measurement Dimensions	Brief Description	Main Source
		symptoms (e.g., uncontrollable worry) associated with anxiety.	
Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS)	**Life Satisfaction**	Measures the subjective evaluation of overall life quality and fulfillment.	Diener et al. (1985)

6.2 Quantitative Analysis Results

Due to the small sample size (N = 3), the statistical conditions necessary for a paired-samples t-test could not be fulfilled. Therefore, this study employed descriptive statistical analyses to compare the results across three time points: the pre-intervention assessment (T1), the immediate post-intervention assessment (T3), and the delayed assessment 7 days after the intervention (T5). These comparisons provide preliminary insights into the effects of the LBT&C intervention on various psychological dimensions.

As shown in Figure 1, overall, the LBT&C intervention produced stable and enduring positive effects in alleviating anxiety symptoms. Specifically, scores on the Short Health Anxiety Inventory (SHAI), the Chinese version of the Metacognitions Questionnaire-Health Anxiety (CMCQ-HA), and the Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7) decreased significantly after the intervention and remained noticeably lower at the delayed post-test. This sustained improvement suggests that the intervention has lasting effects. It is also noteworthy that the Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI) showed relatively modest changes. This could be because the BAI is more focused on somatic anxiety symptoms, and—as Beaufont et al. (2017) have pointed out—somatization symptoms are generally less sensitive to short-term cognitive interventions compared to cognitive anxiety. Initial evidence from this study supports this observation.

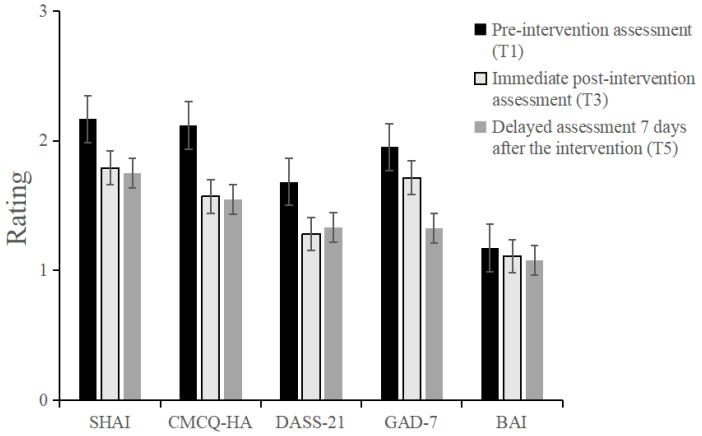


Figure 1. Multi-Stage Mean Value Change Chart of Anxiety and Emotional Dimensions

Regarding life satisfaction (see Figure 2), participants reported a significant increase in their scores in the short term following the intervention. This immediate improvement indicates that the activation of positive emotions and the introduction of behavior adjustment strategies had a pronounced beneficial effect on their subjective well-being. Although scores in the delayed assessment (T5) were slightly lower than the immediate post-test scores, they remained significantly higher than the baseline levels measured at T1. This suggests that the positive cognitive restructuring achieved through the LBT&C intervention has a durable impact on the participants' overall evaluation of their lives—reflecting a renewed understanding of life's meaning and an enhanced sense of purpose.

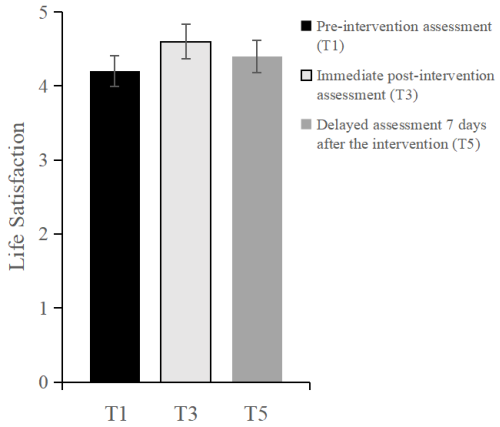


Figure 2. Three-Phase Trend Chart of Life Satisfaction

6.3 Qualitative Analysis Results

This section presents a detailed account of the data collection and analysis process for the study's core qualitative data. In order to ensure the reliability and richness of the findings, the overall strategy and specific procedures for gathering these in-depth data are described below.

6.3.1 Data Collection

This study utilized semi-structured interviews as the primary method for collecting qualitative data. Interviews were designed to explore participants' specific experiences of health anxiety events, their emotional responses, underlying cognitive beliefs, and observable behavioral patterns. Alongside interviews, dynamic tracking and follow-up interviews were used to gather more comprehensive, longitudinal data.
The data collection process was divided into three distinct stages:

(1) **Development and Refinement of the Interview Guide:**
The initial stage focused on verifying the suitability and practicability of the interview guide. The researchers drafted an initial interview outline based on existing literature and theoretical perspectives, and then conducted a pilot interview with an individual manifesting health anxiety. After the interview, feedback was solicited regarding the

overall interview experience, question comprehension, and language accuracy. This feedback was used to optimize the interview guide, which was further dynamically adjusted throughout subsequent interviews to ensure its effectiveness and sensitivity.

(2) **Formal Interviews:**
Formal interviews were conducted after participants completed the pre-intervention questionnaires. The interview process was structured around the six-step LBT&C framework, with Aristotle's logical philosophy serving as a "philosophical antidote" integrated into the dialogue. The aim was to thoroughly trace the participants' anxiety episodes and subjective experiences, investigate the underlying logic of their beliefs, and guide them toward reflective reconstruction from a philosophical standpoint. Interviews were conducted either face-to-face or via online video calls, and written informed consent was obtained from each participant. Every session was audio-recorded and later transcribed using professional speech-to-text software. The transcripts were meticulously reviewed and verified by the researchers to ensure accuracy and completeness.

(3) **Feedback and Follow-Up:**
During the initial phase of data organization, if there were ambiguous expressions, missing content, or interpretative discrepancies in the interview data, the research team proactively contacted the participants for supplementary interviews. Additionally, on the seventh day after the intervention, the research team conducted a delayed follow-up interview and re-assessment to capture sustained intervention effects and any external influencing factors. The delayed interview focused on key events that might have impacted the participants' emotional states or behavioral responses. A list of supplemental inquiry items is provided in Table 3.
To further enhance the dynamism and ecological validity of the qualitative data, participants were asked to keep a daily log for seven days following the intervention. They were provided with a brief diary template and encouraged to record the following:
① Whether they experienced any health-related worries or anxiety on that day (e.g., physical symptoms, exposure to disease-related information).
② Whether, when anxiety arose, they attempted to employ LBT&C methods (e.g., identifying beliefs, logically refuting them, or constructing alternative beliefs) to self-regulate.
③ Whether the self-regulation process was successful and whether any new insights or cognitive changes occurred.
④ Whether any external events (e.g., medical consultations, media reports, family interactions) had a significant impact on their emotions.

These daily logs served as important supplementary data for the delayed post-test, providing both a record of the intervention's natural progression and empirical evidence of the internalization and self-application of LBT&C strategies.

Table 3. Supplemental Items for Post-7-Day Delay Assessment

No.	Supplemental Inquiry Items
1	Have you undergone any physical examination or medical tests in the past week? If yes, please specify the items.
2	Did you experience any significant life events this week (e.g., job changes, family conflicts)?
3	Have you frequently searched for disease information or been exposed to medical-related content (e.g., news about illnesses)?
4	Was your anxiety triggered or intensified by specific events (e.g., disease-related media reports)?
5	Have you repeatedly checked your physical symptoms (e.g., touching lumps or monitoring your pulse)?
6	Did you avoid any necessary activities (e.g., exercise, medical visits) due to a fear of hospitals or diseases?
7	Have you tried to distract yourself (e.g., through exercise or socializing) to alleviate your worries? If so, how effective was it?

6.3.2 Interview Processing

This study undertook a qualitative analysis of case data by following a three-stage coding process: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. This coding process is informed by established grounded theory methodologies (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Charmaz, 2014; Patton, 2015).

(1) Open Coding

In the open coding phase, the research team systematically read through the interview transcripts line by line and extracted key concepts. The primary focus was on capturing participants' raw descriptions of their health anxiety trigger events, their emotional experiences, their cognitive interpretations, and the coping strategies they employed. In total, 141 raw statements were extracted. Each statement was initially labeled in accordance with the "in vivo" (original naming) principle to establish preliminary concepts. To ensure traceability and individual identification, each code was prefixed with a participant identifier (e.g., A1, B1, C1).

After this initial labeling, the researchers organized, summarized, and consolidated all raw codes by grouping labels with similar psychological connotations. This process resulted in the formation of 30 core concepts, which were then further grouped into 23 abstract categories. *Table 4* below displays partial examples of the open coding process.

Table 4. Partial Examples of Open Coding

Numbering	Sample Excerpts	Open Labeling	Conceptualization	Categorization
A2	Stares blankly at the mirror at night... persistently checking for new acne.	Nightly mirror checks for acne	Monitoring physical details (aa1)	Ritualized safety behaviors (S5)

Numbering	Sample Excerpts	Open Labeling	Conceptualization	Categorization
A3	Scrutinizes facial changes daily... immediately searches Xiaohongshu for solutions to redness/roughness.	Urgent solution-seeking for skin changes	Frequent health information seeking (aa2)	Information preoccupation (S6)
B3	The worst scenario is complete immunity loss (e.g., AIDS)—losing all self-control.	Extreme fear of immunity/autonomy loss	Fear of health autonomy loss (aa20)	Loss-of-control fear (S7)
C18	Trusts online negative cases over doctors... medical variations make me forget details.	Prefers online cases to medical authority	Distrust in medical system (aa5)	Medicalization tendency (S4)
C30	Accepts common causes for menstrual delay... but unconfirmed without tests.	Attributing menstrual delay to common causes	Gradual symptom reinterpretation (aa17)	Risk reappraisal (S10)
C31	Rejects sacrificing present happiness for low-probability risks... excessive anxiety may be unnecessary.	No sacrifice of present happiness for minor risks	Accepting health imperfections (aa29)	Acceptance capacity (S21)

(2) Axial Coding

In the axial coding stage, the researchers organized and classified the 23 categories derived from the open coding stage. They examined the evolution of these categories over time—specifically across the pre-intervention, mid-intervention, and post-intervention phases. By systematically comparing the logical relationships among various concepts, the team distilled the codes into 10 primary (or "main") categories (each prefixed with "F") and clearly delineated their dynamic characteristics across the different intervention phases. The resulting structure is presented in *Table 5* below.

Table 5. Main Categories and Corresponding Subcategories

Stage	Main Category	Subcategories
Pre-intervention	**F1: Cognitive Fallacies**	S1: Probability Perception Distortion
		S2: Amplification of Individual Specificity
		S3: Health Perfectionism
	F2: Behavioral Dysregulation	S4: Excessive Medicalization
		S5: Ritualization of Safety Behaviors
		S6: Information Preoccupation
	F3: Emotional Triggers	S7: Loss-of-Control Fear

Stage	Main Category	Subcategories
Mid-intervention	F4: Cognitive Adjustment	S8: Self-Blame Attribution
		S9: Realistic Health Compromise
		S10: Risk Reappraisal
		S11: Authority Trust Realignment
	F5: Behavioral Trial-and-Error	S12: Alternative Strategy Exploration
		S13: Paradoxical Acceptance
	F6: Resource Activation	S14: Experience-Rationality Integration
		S15: Emergence of Cognitive Flexibility
Post-intervention	F7: Fallacy Correction	S16: Probability Attribution Normalization
		S17: Health Definition Reconstruction
	F8: Behavioral Optimization	S18: Optimizing Medical Behaviors
		S19: Attention Reallocation
	F9: Emotional Regulation	S20: Anxiety Decoupling Mechanism
		S21: Acceptance Capacity Enhancement
	F10: Resilience Strategies	S22: Dynamic Monitoring System
		S23: Cognitive-Behavioral Synergy

(3) Selective Coding

Through an integrative analysis of the axial coding results, a core intervention pathway was constructed. Initially, individuals with health anxiety exhibit prominent cognitive fallacies (F1), behavioral dysregulation (F2), and emotional triggers (F3). During the LBT&C intervention, a pathway of “philosophical questioning–logical reflection–belief replacement” is followed, leading to gradual cognitive adjustment (F4) and behavioral trial-and-error (F5), while also activating internal resources (F6). As the intervention progresses, participants gradually correct their cognitive fallacies (F7) and optimize their behaviors (F8), ultimately achieving emotional regulation (F9) and developing resilience strategies (F10). The net result is the formation of a stable self-regulation ability and the construction of a healthy cognition–behavior system. This process illustrates the unique advantage of the LBT&C method in integrating individual rational resources with emotional momentum, while simultaneously demonstrating the practical value of Aristotelian virtue ethics in modern psychological interventions. The detailed intervention mechanism is presented in Figure 3

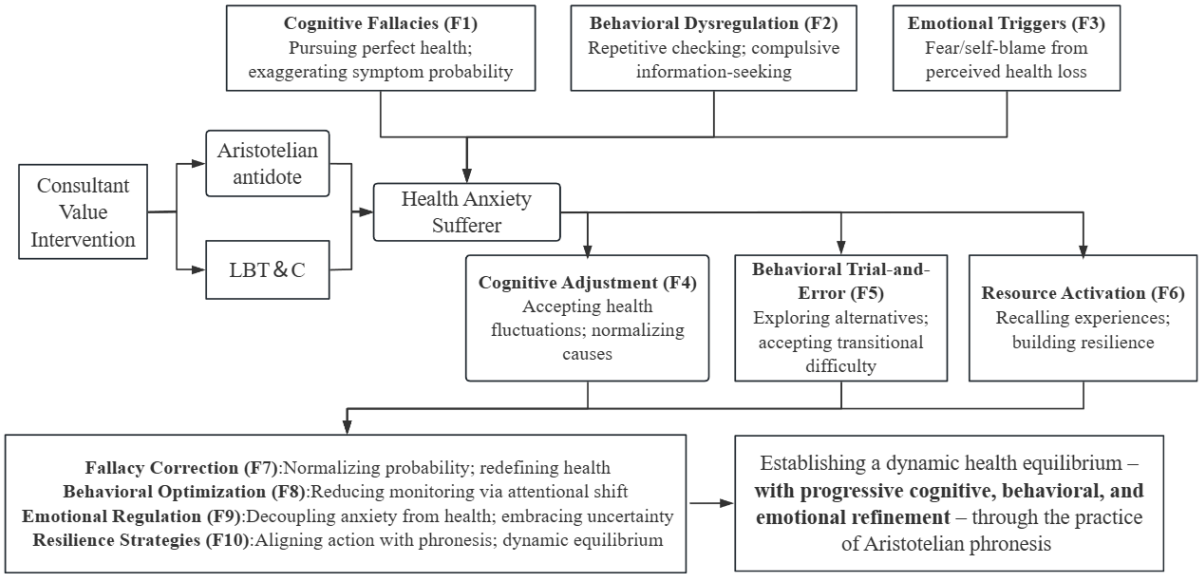


Figure 3. LBT&C Health Anxiety Intervention Model

During the process of summarizing and abstracting the 10 main categories, we further observed that in counseling practice, effectively avoiding both the imposition of values and the risk of value nihilism is achievable by organically integrating Aristotelian virtue ethics into philosophical counseling. This integration yields an intervention that is both integrative and practice-oriented.

To this end, the study proposes an "Operational Model of the Threefold Principle of Moderate Value Neutrality" as shown in Figure 4. This model is designed to provide a middle-path approach to value handling in philosophical psychological interventions, thereby preventing counselors from either excessively intervening in or completely avoiding value guidance.

The operational model consists of three interlocking components:

(1) **Contextual Diagnosis: Identifying Biases and Laying the Foundation**

The initial stage emphasizes the application of the doctrine of the mean in a specific counseling context. Counselors must neither permit extreme beliefs to remain unchecked nor hastily correct or criticize them. By carefully investigating the situational context through detailed questioning, counselors identify potential extreme value orientations, cognitive imbalances, or ethical distortions within the client's belief system. This phase is critical for providing a solid basis for subsequent value intervention.

(2) **Telos Guidance: Reconstructing the Coordinates and Clarifying Direction**

In the second phase, counselors follow Aristotle's teleological ethics to guide clients in understanding that "living well" (eudaimonia) is not merely about biological survival or functional existence but about a holistic life connected to the soul, virtue, and the realization of one's goals. Through this process, counselors help clients re-establish their value coordinate system, emphasizing that individual actions should be directed

toward the pursuit of inner goodness and the actualization of virtue. This clarifies the ethical direction for psychological adjustment and life choices.

(3) **Dialogue Practice: Grounding Virtue and Uniting Theory with Practice**
The final stage focuses on translating abstract values into concrete behaviors through interactive dialogue. Using a Socratic method of questioning combined with practical wisdom (phronesis), counselors employ logical questioning, situational examples, and empathetic resonance to help clients internalize abstract value concepts into executable behavioral norms. This process underscores the consistency between action and belief, ensuring that the intervention transcends mere theoretical discussion. These three stages do not proceed in a strictly linear fashion; rather, they form a dynamically upward, spiraling integration process. Through successive layers of situational identification, value clarification, and action transformation, the intervention ultimately enables clients to construct and sustain a "dynamically balanced health perspective" characterized by resilience and integration. This model effectively mitigates the alienation caused by rigid neutrality and avoids the resistance and discomfort linked to forced value imposition, embodying a gentle yet ethically resonant approach to philosophical psychological intervention.

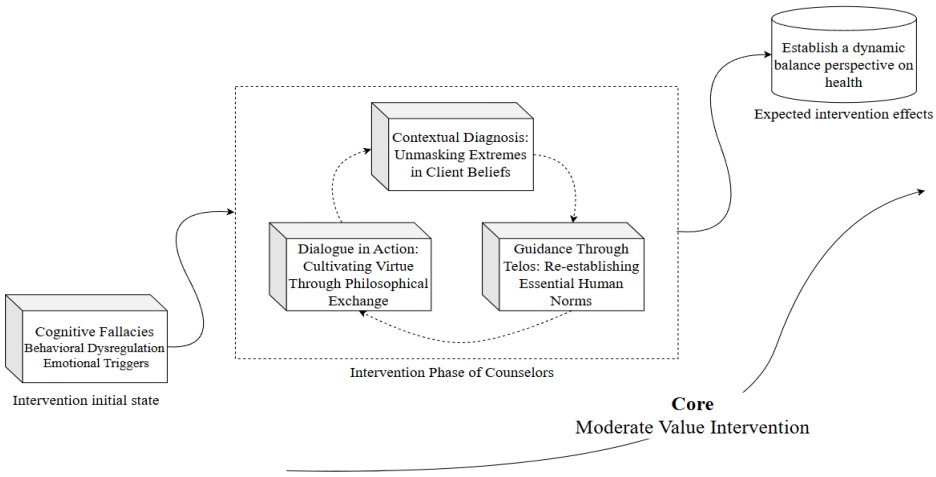


Figure 4. Tripartite Operational Principles Model of Moderate Value Neutrality

6.3.3 Interview Findings

In accordance with Cohen's standard steps for LBT&C (2019), our analysis of the interview data revealed that by using Aristotelian virtue ethics as the "philosophical antidote" within the LBT&C framework—with targeted philosophical questioning and logical dialogue—the intervention gradually produced a series of positive changes in the participants, ultimately enabling them to establish a dynamically balanced view of health.

(1) Identification of Irrational Beliefs

In the early stage of the intervention, counselors first assisted clients in identifying the irrational beliefs underlying their health anxiety. Textual analysis revealed that several participants exhibited typical patterns of catastrophic thinking and hypervigilance.

Participant A described their bodily sensations by noting, "*In daily life, many people actually experience minor discomforts (e.g., dizziness or chest tightness), but I tend to think of them in a much more serious light*" (A5). This statement reflects a tendency to catastrophize common symptoms. Even when medical tests had ruled out any real risk, **Participant A** maintained high levels of doubt: "*After swallowing a fish bone, and two months later when my tonsils became inflamed, I remained convinced that a fish bone was still lodged… so I had to undergo laryngoscopy twice*" (A7). Furthermore, **Participant A** exhibited clear compulsive tendencies regarding medical examinations: "*I insist on having blood drawn, X-rays taken, and any other tests until I see a normal report, only then do I feel at ease*" (A9).

Irrational beliefs also manifested in the form of unrealistic expectations for health and an exaggerated perception of risk. **Participant B** expressed an extreme fear of losing control over one's body, stating, "*If there were ever a situation where I lost all immunity, like contracting AIDS, I would completely lose control*" (B3); this indicates an extreme fear embedded in their belief system. **Participant C** overgeneralized low-probability events, remarking, "*Even though I know that people cannot reproduce without sex, I often start to wonder—could I be pregnant?*" (C14), a thought clearly divorced from realistic logic. Additionally, the attribution pattern observed among participants showed a tendency for self-blame. For example, **Participant C** stated, "*I always blame myself by wondering if my irregular schedule is the reason I get sick*" (C20), indicating an excessive internalization of responsibility for health issues.

(2) Logical Analysis

After the irrational beliefs were identified, the counselor proceeded to the stage of philosophical questioning and logical reconstruction, guiding the clients to clarify the underlying logic of their beliefs. Through philosophical challenges and realistic questioning of extreme beliefs, clients gradually developed a more adaptive and rational belief system.

Participant A began to challenge the obsession with "perfect health," stating, "*It is impossible to be 100% healthy… minor fluctuations are acceptable as long as they do not distract me*" (A18). This suggests an initial acceptance of the normality of health fluctuations. In explaining bodily discomfort, **Participant A** shifted from assuming the worst-case scenario to adopting a realistic evaluation: "*I first look for everyday explanations… if my appetite and weight are normal, then I don't worry about serious disease*" (A22). The significance of medical examinations was also reinterpreted by **Participant A**: "*Examinations cannot cover every risk… health largely depends on one's lifestyle*" (A24), reflecting a rational understanding of the relationship between medical tools and personal responsibility.

Confronting anxiety-inducing situations (e.g., delayed menstruation or exposure to online disease information), **Participant B** remarked, "*Watching a diabetes video or drinking a sugary drink gives me a slight shock, but I don't habitually check my symptoms repeatedly*" (B16), indicating a suppression and reflection on safety behaviors.

Under high-sensitivity conditions, **Participant C** maintained probabilistic reasoning: "*Ninety percent of delayed menstruation is due to irregular schedules; only if it continues for two months would I consider the possibility of a serious illness*" (C16).

Ultimately, this series of logical reconstructions led to a fundamental transformation in the clients' perception of health. **Participant C** clearly stated, "*I believe that accepting minor illnesses while maintaining vitality is a sufficiently good state of health—because absolute perfection in health just doesn't exist*" (C25). This declaration marks a successful departure from catastrophic and perfectionistic health ideals, as the client has constructed a more flexible, realistic, and sustainable understanding of health.

(3) Emotional Exploration

During the in-depth emotional exploration phase, counselors conducted systematic questioning around typical health anxiety scenarios, guiding clients to identify the underlying emotional responses, somatic experiences, and core fears.

For instance, when expressing worry, **Participant A** recalled, "*When I fear getting sick, I think: Will it hurt? Is there adequate treatment? What about my parents?*" (A25). This statement reveals that health anxiety is not only linked to perceived physical risks but is also deeply rooted in a fear of pain, a sense of loss of control, and anxiety about family responsibilities.

Furthermore, clients were able to reflect on the dual effects of anxiety and pinpoint its negative impact. **Participant A** noted, "*The downside of anxiety is that it creates persistent worry about health… early detection of disease is important, yet it also affects my concentration, energy, and behavior*" (A15), thereby admitting that anxiety interferes with attention, energy, and overall functioning.

In high-pressure situations, emotional responses became even more intense. **Participant B** explained, "*During exam week, the pressure makes me withdraw; I feel doomed and lose all motivation*" (B5), demonstrating typical signs of behavioral withdrawal, a loss of drive, and helplessness.

On a physical level, anxiety was expressed through excessive monitoring and self-blame. **Participant B** asked, "*Am I exercising too little? Is my excessive sugar intake causing obesity?*" (B4), illustrating how bodily changes are overly internalized, triggering ongoing control attempts and feelings of guilt.

Moreover, when discussing strategies for emotionally managing "fluctuating health," **Participant C** described a defensive de-sensitization approach: "*If my period is late, then so be it; it's not a big deal and won't kill me*" (C17). Although this language seems to deliberately downplay anxiety, its underlying function is to resist the erosion of long-term anxiety.

Overall, the emotional exploration phase produced a complex emotional map, showing that clients experienced a range of core emotions (such as fear, anxiety, helplessness, despair, shame, and alienation) when confronted with health issues. These emotions were tightly interwoven with their cognitive, behavioral, and physiological responses.

(4) Alternative Belief Construction

During the critical phase of cognitive restructuring, the counselor used Aristotle's threefold pillars—the doctrine of the mean, teleology, and phronesis—as a philosophical foundation to help clients actively discover, validate, and internalize alternative beliefs that are both realistic and functionally adaptive. For example, when symptoms such as dizziness occurred, one client began to break away from a catastrophic mindset by asking, "*For instance, when I feel dizzy… I start wondering if it might be due to some other reason?*" (A6). This response indicates that the client was beginning to employ multi-causal thinking rather than immediately defaulting to the worst-case scenario.

Under the counselor's guidance, clients also started to explore the positive aspects of anxiety. One client noted, "*One good thing about anxiety is that it makes me pay more attention to my diet and overall mental state… I now make it a point to eat breakfast and work on breaking unhealthy habits*" (A16). Here, the client's emotional energy is being redirected into proactive behavior change.

A key cognitive shift is evident in the establishment of a rational, evidence-based health evaluation system. For instance, one client stated, "*I first consider everyday causes… and if there are no warning signs of a serious illness—such as weight loss or jaundice—and if my appetite and weight are normal, I don't worry about major disease*" (A22). Such a belief provides a concrete, real-world anchor that helps the client break free from intense fear.

Moreover, the client's ability to accept natural fluctuations in health improved markedly: "*Minor bodily fluctuations need not be seen as terrifying … I simply adjust my mindset and maintain an optimistic view*" (A51). This demonstrates that the client has developed cognitive resilience, integrating normal physiological variations into a reasonable life framework.

In processing external health information, another client developed a mechanism for selective attention and psychological distancing: "*When it comes to news about severe illnesses, I tend to consider it as something that happens to others, while still remaining appropriately vigilant*" (B37). This mature information-processing strategy is complemented by a balanced lifestyle belief: "*The pleasure I get from a soft drink can offset some potential risks… yet, because of its downsides, I practice moderation*" (B38). Such statements indicate that the client has found practical wisdom in balancing enjoyment with self-discipline.

Perhaps the most breakthrough transformation is reflected in a core reflection on life philosophy: "*I still don't want to sacrifice my present happiness just to guard against a low-probability event; really, there's no need to overanxiously worry*" (C31). This remark indicates a transition from an anxiety-driven survival mode to a value-directed

lifestyle, marking the initial construction of a three-dimensional health-cognition framework based on resilience, rationality, and the pursuit of happiness.
Notably, this process of alternative belief construction is consistent with cognitive restructuring approaches as discussed in Beck's Cognitive Therapy (Beck, 1976) and Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (Ellis, 1994), but here it is enriched by integrating Aristotelian principles.

(5) Behavioral Adjustment

In the stage aimed at promoting joint changes in cognition and behavior, the counselor assisted clients in formulating and implementing specific, actionable behavioral adjustment strategies.
This process first emerged in the rationalization of health monitoring behaviors. One client explained, "*The main reason is that I don't have a lot of money, and secondly, I don't want to be treated like a lab rat… so Ive reduced my check-ups to just twice a year*" (A50). This reflects a reflective reconsideration of previously excessive safety behaviors (e.g., frequent medical examinations). More importantly, the client redefined the purpose of these check-ups: "*A normal check-up does not equate to having a normal lifestyle… it is only a tool*" (A53). Such a shift indicates that the client's focus has moved from a passive reliance on test results toward proactive daily health management.
When faced with anxiety, another client sought alternative behaviors for emotional relief: "*I generally like listening to music or taking walks (these work, but the effects are very short-lived; once I stop, I still feel agitated)*" (C32). Although such behaviors show initial signs of self-regulation, their transient impact suggests that further diversification and more persistent strategies may be needed.
In responding to specific physical discomforts such as stomach pain, one client developed a rapid, experience-based response mechanism guided by probabilistic reasoning: "*I usually accumulate experience and consider the most likely causes first… this allows me to resolve the issue efficiently and without pain*" (B39) and, "*I begin by ruling out common causes; only if everything is excluded would I consider a serious illness*" (B40). These responses indicate that the client's behavior is shifting toward an evidence-based, phased approach in managing symptoms—effectively replacing previous catastrophic thinking and impulsive help-seeking with reasoned, structured action.
Overall, clients gradually established a health management strategy based on "rational risk assessment combined with controlled behavioral execution." This approach has enhanced their tolerance of uncertainty and their ability to adapt to real-life situations, marking a crucial turning point in the cognitive-behavioral restructuring process.

(6) Sustained Reflection and Adjustment

In the later phase of the intervention, the counselor guided clients to build a sustainable mechanism for ongoing reflection and adjustment, ensuring that they could autonomously manage any recurring anxiety tendencies even after leaving the

counseling context. This phase achieved a transition from “passive awareness” to “active maintenance.”

For example, one client shared, “*Either I don’t go to the hospital at all, or if I do, I force myself to trust the doctor… otherwise, it becomes a vicious cycle*” (A52). This statement shows that the client has begun to incorporate trust as a core criterion in their decision-making, clearly delineating boundaries to avoid repeated skepticism and avoidance.

Another client described an individualized strategy of internalizing successful coping experiences: “*I keep a mental record of times when I successfully managed my anxiety—I may not write it down or share it, but I internalize these successes*” (B41). Although this method is not formally standardized, internalizing such successes helps mobilize existing resources in similar future situations.

Regarding the evaluation of coping strategies, one client stated, “*If a strategy like listening to music has worked in easing my anxiety before, I might use it again; however, I find it ineffective when my anxiety is extremely high*” (C36). This shows an awareness of the situational applicability of different strategies and an ability to flexibly adjust their use.

Furthermore, another client developed a compounded behavioral strategy to manage anxiety: “*I combine walking, listening to music, and doing other tasks at the same time to alleviate my anxiety*” (C41). This layered, integrative approach demonstrates the client’s growing ability to amalgamate various intervention techniques in daily life—signifying a maturation in behavioral control.

Collectively, the reflective and adjustment behaviors at this stage form a self-sustaining system with core functions that include:

(1) Identifying potential challenges (e.g., hesitation prior to medical decision-making);
(2) Evaluating the effectiveness of current strategies (e.g., assessing whether music consistently alleviates anxiety);
(3) Actively seeking more appropriate coping strategies (e.g., combining multiple strategies to innovate solutions).

Through this self-maintenance mechanism, clients are empowered to independently manage their health anxiety after the formal intervention, thereby achieving the LBT&C goal of “continuous self-renewal.”

Notably, the transition to sustained self-regulation reflects core principles from self-regulation theory, as articulated by Carver and Scheier (1981), in which individuals learn to monitor and modify their behavior through continuous feedback and adaptive strategy selection.

7. Discussion: Advancing Ethical Engagement Through Virtue-Based Counseling

This study has demonstrated that integrating Aristotelian virtue ethics into the Logic-Based Therapy & Counseling (LBT&C) framework can successfully guide individuals with health anxiety in deconstructing irrational beliefs, reconstructing balanced cognitive–behavioral patterns, and ultimately establishing a dynamically balanced health perspective. The key findings indicate that, by using Aristotle's pillars—the doctrine of the mean, teleology, and phronesis—as philosophical support, clients were able to shift from catastrophic thinking and compulsive health monitoring to a more flexible, evidence-based appraisal of their well-being. For example, clients gradually abandoned extreme interpretations of normal physical symptoms in favor of probabilistic reasoning and self-regulated behaviors. Moreover, some participants began to recognize the potential benefits of anxiety, reinterpreting such emotional energy into adaptive lifestyle changes.

The results reinforce and extend previous theoretical perspectives. In contrast to traditional value neutrality—which often relies on mechanical logical analysis that neglects the normative dimension of the human condition—this study confirms that embedding a virtue ethics paradigm not only supplements but also transcends the limitations inherent in conventional approaches. The findings are consistent with MacIntyre's (1981) argument that virtue must be understood in relation to narrative unity and traditional communities, as well as with Nussbaum's (2007) Capabilities Approach that emphasizes the centrality of basic human functions as prerequisites for ethical development. In our study, when clients encountered difficulties related to health anxiety, the LBT&C method facilitated a gradual cognitive shift from a survival-mode fixated on bodily imperatives toward a value-based approach prioritizing holistic well-being and the cultivation of virtue.

The theoretical implications of these findings are significant. By empirically validating that philosophical dialogue—grounded in an Aristotelian framework—can systematically reconstruct clients' value systems, the study offers a nuanced interpretation of how ethical interventions may overcome the dilemma of either imposing or completely suspending values. This work advances academic understanding of the interplay between rational reflection, moral development, and psychological well-being, simultaneously bridging a gap between high-level ethical theory and its practical application in therapeutic contexts.

In practical terms, the study's outcomes suggest that mental health practitioners can benefit from a paradigm that integrates philosophical inquiry with conventional therapeutic techniques. The LBT&C method, with its emphasis on guided self-reflection and dialectical questioning, provides a viable intervention model for health anxiety, encouraging clients to replace narrow, fear-based interpretations of bodily sensations with more balanced, rational beliefs. Such an approach is especially relevant given the increasing prevalence of health anxiety in contemporary society and offers concrete strategies for translating abstract ethical ideals into actionable self-regulatory practices. These insights can inform the development of training programs

for counselors, ensuring that ethical guidance is delivered without compromising client autonomy.

However, the study is not without its limitations. The sample size was very small (N = 3), which constrains the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the participants were exclusively recruited from a student population from a single geographical area, thus limiting the diversity of individual backgrounds and cultural contexts addressed. Further limitations include potential biases inherent in self-reported measures and the short duration of follow-up assessments. These factors suggest that while the results are promising, they represent initial evidence that requires replication and extension in larger and more varied samples.

Future research should focus on expanding the sample size and diversifying the participant pool to include clients from different cultural, socioeconomic, and clinical backgrounds. Additionally, longitudinal studies that track the sustainability of the intervention's benefits over an extended timeframe would help to refine and validate the model further. Researchers may also explore how the integration of Aristotelian virtue ethics with other therapy modalities influences outcomes in various mental health conditions. Such extensions would not only solidify the theoretical underpinnings but also enhance the practical applicability of philosophical counseling in diverse contexts.

8. Conclusion: Toward a Virtue-Enriched Model for Ethical Counseling

In conclusion, the inherent dilemma of value neutrality in philosophical counseling arises from the structural tension between "suspending values" and the risk of ethical dysregulation. Rigid neutrality, by denying the normative dimension of human existence, fails to address extreme cases where clients' value systems collapse into mere physical monitoring. By contrast, the integration of virtue ethics, through the establishment of teleological anchors, the diagnosis of value imbalances with the doctrine of the mean, and the contextual judgment provided by phronesis, offers a robust framework to transcend these limitations. This balanced mechanism, characterized by a dynamic interplay between guided dialectical dialogue and client-initiated reflective practices, ultimately fosters a transition from passive cognitive correction to a sustainable, virtue-oriented reconstruction of life's meaning.

The present study contributes to both theory and practice. It demonstrates that philosophical counseling need not be confined to abstract value analysis but can be effectively transformed into a practice that enables the reflective reconstruction of a client's life narrative. By positioning the counselor as a "co-facilitator of virtue," and by compelling clients to reframe fragmented anxiety and concern into an integrated pursuit of eudaimonia, this research highlights how ethical inquiry can be made relevant to everyday challenges. Although further work is necessary to address the limitations identified, these findings open new avenues for integrating philosophical rigor with practical psychological support, offering promise for future interventions that respect individual autonomy while reaffirming normative ethical foundations.

References

Abramowitz, J. S., & Braddock, A. (2008). *Psychological treatment of health anxiety and hypochondriasis: A biopsychosocial approach*. Hogrefe Publishing GmbH.

Beaufort, I. N., De Weert-Van Oene, G. H., Buwalda, V. A., de Leeuw, J. R. J., & Goudriaan, A. E. (2017). The depression, anxiety and stress scale (DASS-21) as a screener for depression in substance use disorder inpatients: a pilot study. *European addiction research, 23*(5), 260-268.https://doi.org/10.1159/000485182.

Beck, A. T. (1976). *Cognitive Therapy and the Emotional Disorders*. New York: International Universities Press.

Bekker, I. (1831). *Aristotelis Opera edidit Academia Regia Borussica: Aristoteles graece (Vol. 1)*. apud Georgium Reimerum.

Carver, C. S., & Scheier, M. F. (1981). *Attention and Self-Regulation: A Control-Theory Approach to Human Behavior*. New York: Springer-Verlag.

Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing Grounded Theory (2nd ed.)*. Sage Publications.

Chen, Q.(2021). The three meanings of Aristotle's concept of "virtue" and their internal unity. *Nanjing Journal of Social Sciences*, (11), 10–16. https://doi.org/10.15937/j.cnki.issn1001-8263.2021.11.002

Chen, Q., & Chen, D. (2024). Types of moral virtues in Aristotle's ethics and their determination. *Academic Research*, (4), 36–42. https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1000-7326.2024.04.007

Cohen E D. (2013).*Theory and practice of logic-based therapy: Integrating critical thinking and philosophy into psychotherapy*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Cohen, E. D. (2016). *Logic-Based Therapy and Everyday Emotions: A Case-Based Approach*. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books.

Cohen, E. D. (2019). The epistemology of logic-based therapy. *International Journal of Philosophical Practice, 5*(1), 48-61.

Cohen, E. D. (2025). Interconnectivity in Logic-Based Therapy. *Religions, 16*(2), 188.https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16020188.

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2015). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory (4th ed.)*. Sage publications.

Dai, L., Bailey, R., & Deng, Y. (2018). The reliability and validity of the Chinese version of the Metacognitions about Health Questionnaire in college students. *Quality of life research : an international journal of quality of life aspects of treatment, care and rehabilitation, 27*(4), 1099–1108. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11136-017-1780-5

Deng, A.(2011). The significance and limits of "ethics without metaphysics": Three arguments in Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics. *Philosophical Trends*, (1), 48–55.

Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. (1985). The Satisfaction With Life Scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 49*(1), 71–75. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327752jpa4901_13

Ding, X.(2016). *Dialogue, analysis and therapy* [Doctoral dissertation, Nanjing University]. https://doi.org/10.27235/d.cnki.gnjiu.2016.000130

Ding, X., & Yu, F. (2022). Philosophical practice as spiritual exercises towards truth, wisdom, and virtue. *Religions, 13*(4), 364. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13040364

Ding, X., Ma, Y., Yu, F., & Abadal, L. M. (2023). The therapy of desire in times of crisis: lessons learned from Buddhism and Stoicism. *Religions, 14*(2), 237. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14020237

Ding, X., Xie, C., & Yu, F. (2024). Beyond dissonance: the transformative power of thought analysis in philosophical practice. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, 11*(1), 1-14.https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-04143-6

Ellis, A. (1994). *Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy: Revised and Updated*. New York: Carol Publishing Group.

Ferraiolo, W. (2010). The IDEA method: stoic counsel. *Philosophical Practice, 5*(2).

Furer, P., Walker, J. R., & Stein, M. B. (2007). *Treating health anxiety and fear of death: A practitioner's guide*. Springer Science & Business Media.

Gert, B. (2004). *Common Morality: Deciding What to D*o. Oxford University Press.

Hadot, P. (1995).*Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*. Blackwell Publishing.

He, Y.(2014). Confucius and Aristotle: Two paradigms of virtue-fortune consistency and their contemporary significance. *Morality and Civilization*, (3), 37–43. https://doi.org/10.13904/j.cnki.1007-1539.2014.03.006

Huang, X., & Chang, Z.(2024). Escaping the dilemma of modern morality: A cross-temporal dialogue between Marxism and neo-Aristotelianism/postmodern ethics. *Qilu Journal*, (2), 48–61.

Kraut, R. (1989). *Aristotle on the Human Good*. Princeton University Press.

Li, B. (2015). Application and Practice of the CISA Theory. *Journal of Humanities Therapy, 6*(1), 1-19.

Li, J.(2007). *The practice and application of CISA theory*. Universitas: Philosophy and Culture, 34(1), 3–17.

Li, T.(2021). From virtue ethics to eudaimonia ethics: Aristotle on happiness, virtue and luck. *Morality and Civilization*, (3), 112–121. https://doi.org/10.13904/j.cnki.1007-1539.2021.03.011

Lovibond, P. F., & Lovibond, S. H. (1995). Depression Anxiety and Stress Scales (DASS-42) [Database record]. APA PsycTests.https://doi.org/10.1037/t39835-000

MacIntyre, A. (1981). *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. University of Notre Dame Press.

Mao, Y., & Chen, D. (2006). Aristotle's doctrine of the mean and behavioral moderation in sustainable development. *Jiangxi Social Sciences*, (7), 73–76.

Marinoff L, & Kapklein C. (1999).*Plato, not Prozac!: applying philosophy to everyday problems*.HarperCollins.

Marinoff L. (2001).*Philosophical practice*. Academic Press.

Meng, W., & Yang, Z.(2020). Practical wisdom in craft and virtue: A comparison between Aristotelian ethics and contemporary ethical naturalism. *Morality and Civilization*, (1), 64–68. https://doi.org/10.13904/j.cnki.1007-1539.2020.01.011

Nussbaum, M. C. (2007). *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership*. Harvard University Press.

Pan, T. (2013). Thought analysis technology from the perspective of logic. *Journal of Nanjing University (Philosophy, Humanities and Social Sciences), 50*(1), 141–147.

Pan, T. (2014). The theoretical presuppositions of thought analysis. *Journal of Anhui University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition), 38*(3), 10–14. https://doi.org/10.13796/j.cnki.1001-5019.2014.03.002

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice (4th ed.)*. Sage Publications.

Pigliucci M. (2017).*How to be a stoic: Ancient wisdom for modern living*. Random House.

Raabe P.(2013).*Philosophy's role in counseling and psychotherapy*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Salkovskis, P. M., & Warwick, H. M. (1986). Morbid preoccupations, health anxiety and reassurance: a cognitive-behavioural approach to hypochondriasis. *Behaviour research and therapy, 24*(5), 597-602. https://doi.org/10.1016/0005-7967(86)90041-0

Salkovskis, P. M., Warwick, H. M., & Deale, A. C. (2003). Cognitive-behavioral treatment for severe and persistent health anxiety (hypochondriasis). *Brief Treatment & Crisis Intervention, 3*(3).

Sirri, L., Grandi, S., & Fava, G. A. (2008). The Illness Attitude Scales: a clinimetric index for assessing hypochondriacal fears and beliefs. *Psychotherapy and psychosomatics, 77*(6), 337-350.

Spitzer, R. L., Kroenke, K., Williams, J. B. W., & Löwe, B. (2006). Generalized Anxiety Disorder 7 (GAD-7) [Database record]. APA PsycTests.https://doi.org/10.1037/t02591-000

Steer, R. A., & Beck, A. T. (1997). Beck Anxiety Inventory. In C. P. Zalaquett & R. J. Wood (Eds.), *Evaluating stress: A book of resources* (pp. 23–40). Scarecrow Education.

Tang, R.(2005). Virtue and practical wisdom in Aristotle's ethics. *Philosophical Research*, (5), 70–79.

Tian, J.(2016). Natural character and rational choice: Aristotle's virtue ethics and its problems. *Morality and Civilization*, (6), 26–32. https://doi.org/10.13904/j.cnki.1007-1539.2016.06.004

Warwick, H. M. (1989). A cognitive-behavioural approach to hypochondriasis and health anxiety. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research, 33*(6), 705-711. https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-3999(89)90086-X

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods (6th ed.)*. Sage Publications.

Yu, S.(2003). A comparison between Confucius' "doctrine of the mean" and Aristotle's "doctrine of the golden mean". *Journal of Peking University (Philosophy and Social Sciences)*, (S1), 16–22.

Zhang, Y., Liu, R., Li, G., Mao, S., & Yuan, Y. (2015). The reliability and validity of a Chinese-version Short Health Anxiety Inventory: an investigation of university students. *Neuropsychiatric disease and treatment, 11*, 1739–1747.https://doi.org/10.2147/NDT.S83501

Beyond Value Neutrality: Reconstructing Ethical Engagement in Philosophical Counseling Through Aristotelian Virtue Ethics

Minqiang Xu

Xi'an Jiaotong University, 10/07/2025

CONTENTS

1 Challenges

2 Theoretical Framework

3 Case Validation

4 Conclusion

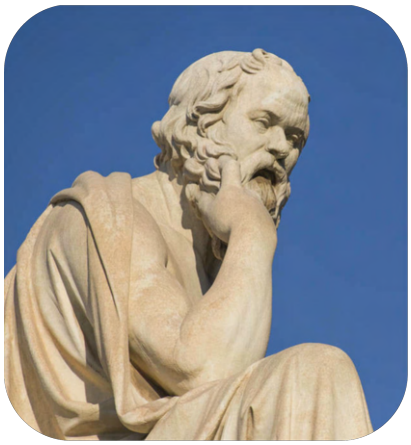
Part 01 Challenges

1.1 Challenges ：A Theoretical Perspective

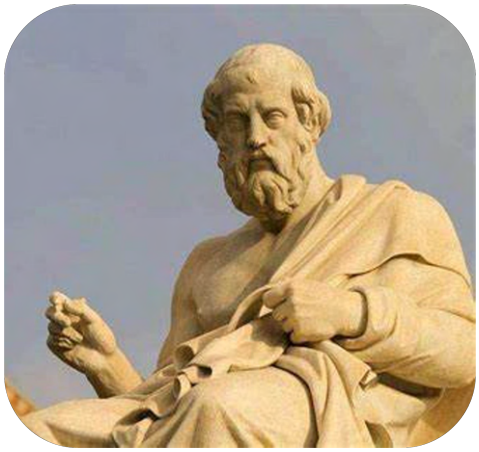
Traditional philosophical counseling adheres to “value neutrality” as its ethical principle, advocating that counselors avoid directly intervening in clients' values.

However, the guiding tenet of “value neutrality” faces practical challenges: mechanical avoidance of value judgments may prevent counselors from intervening in behaviors that deviate from fundamental human values in extreme cases, or even **condone moral wrongdoing**;

conversely, excessive involvement risks falling into the **ethical controversy of “value imposition,”** highlighting the vulnerability of this principle in practice.



1.2 Challenges：A Practical Perspective



The principle of value neutrality faces a structural tension at the practical level: while philosophical counseling **takes the "good life" as its implicit goal**, its methodological tools **attempt to strip away value judgments**.

When counselors deconstruct a client's cognitive impasse, the reasoning framework they rely on implicitly embeds certain values.

This exposes a deep-rooted predicament in philosophical counseling: it seeks to ensure objectivity by suspending values, yet paradoxically reconstructs the normative foundations of ethical practice in its operational procedures.

1.3 Challenges：A Case Validation

Case 1: Health Anxiety Case
Behavior: Continuously monitoring physiological indicators, equating the meaning of life with the maintenance of bodily functions.
Limitations of the traditional approach: Merely deconstructing irrational beliefs without reconstructing the value dimension (creating an ethical vacuum).





Case 2: Programmer Overwork Case
Behavior: Proving self-worth through "voluntary overtime," trapped in the alienation of instrumental rationality.
Diagnostic blind spot: Mechanically upholding neutrality neglects the normative examination of "essential human functioning."

Part 02 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Theoretical Framework:Telos

Specific content	1.Happiness requires external goods uch as wealth and friends. Although these conditions do not constitute happiness itself, they provide essential material foundations for virtuous activities.2. While happiness is grounded in virtue, the mere possession of virtuous character as a potential quality is insufficient; 3. Happiness is self-sufficient and complete in itself, for it is pursued solely for its own sake and requires nothing further to fulfill its purpose.
Meaning	Providing an objective benchmark for value judgment.

Table 1. Theoretical Framework of Telos

2.2 Theoretical Framework:The Mean

Specific content	The mean holds that ethical virtue is the proper regulation of emotions and actions. The mean is not mere compromise but a relational concept, determined by an agent's capabilities, the specific context, and practical judgment. Its core feature is situational dependence. Moreover, attaining the mean requires cultivated virtue—for instance, justice demands institutional engagement to internalize qualities through distributive and judicial practices.。
Meaning	Moderation should be combined with individual capabilities and the context.

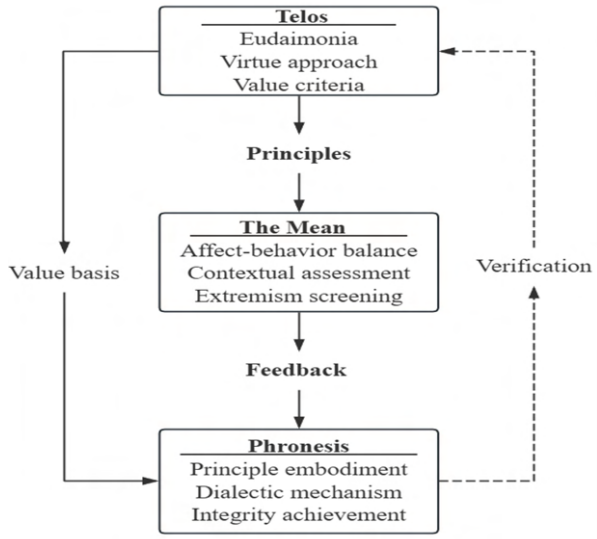
Table 2. Theoretical Framework of The Mean

2.3 Theoretical Framework:Phronesis

Specific content	Practical activities involve diverse situations beyond universal rules, requiring practical wisdom's contextual sensitivity. For example, the right measure of generosity varies: a coin may suffice for a beggar but prove meager for a friend. Such discernment isn't innate but develops through experiential learning.
Meaning	Guide the autonomous application of practical wisdom through Socratic questioning.

Table 3. Theoretical Framework of Phronesis

2.4 Theoretical Framework



Aristotle's teleological framework employs the golden mean and practical wisdom to form a three-stage process: **value setting, situational judgment, and action generation.**

Figure 1. A Diagnostic Framework of Virtue Ethics

2.5 The Triple Principles of Moderately Value-Neutral

Closed-Loop System: Diagnosis-Calibration-Cultivation — Detecting Golden Mean Imbalances	
Steps	Deconstructing Extremes: Virtue, as "a disposition involving conscious choice," intrinsically seeks the relative mean—a dynamic equilibrium between excess and deficiency.
Supplement	Diagnostic Core: This approach reveals that value deviations stem from over-prioritization of a single good. Moreover, extremist tendencies originate in erroneous choices, namely reason's failure to properly weigh the relative worth of goods within concrete circumstances.

Table 4. The Triple Principles of Moderately Value-Neutral

2.5 The Triple Principles of Moderately Value-Neutral

Closed-Loop System: Diagnosis-Calibration-Cultivation — Value calibration of telos	
Steps	Therapist neither declares moral authority nor stays detached, but facilitates dialectical dialogue to awaken clients' awareness of virtuous activities.
Example	For a 12-year-old playing 8h/day whose father smashed his phone: 1.Guide the youth toward essential development (rational thinking/social skills → responsible citizen) 2.Correct father's "moral pollutant" view to clarify responsibilities.

Table 4. (Continued)

2.5 The Triple Principles of Moderately Value-Neutral

Closed-Loop System: Diagnosis-Calibration-Cultivation — The cultivation of virtues in phronesis	
Strategy	A young professional earning ¥8,000 monthly faces financial crisis - incurring ¥200k debt for luxury goods while hoarding discounted items due to anxiety. Questions like “Could these sustain you if unemployed tomorrow?” expose fractures in their value system and distorted reality perception.
Analysis	Transforming therapy into “soul's gymnastics” requires both universal principles and situational adaptation. The counselor activates the client’s practical reason to autonomously discover their golden mean—**achieving Aristotle's aim of “making people better.”**

Table 4. (Continued)

Part 03 Case Validation

3.1 Case Validation：Research Subjects

Subjects: O**n-campus Students**
Methods: **LBT&C**
Main problem: H**ealth Anxiety**
Selection Criteria:

(1) Participants must self-report **behaviors associated with health anxiety** (e.g., excessive concern for personal health, frequent medical visits, repeated online searches related to illnesses).

(2) Participants must be **18 years old** or above.

(3) Participants must have **no clinical history** of psychiatric disorders.

3.1 Case Validation：Research Subjects

After obtaining informed consent, we completed the interviews:

Number	Occupation	Age	Consultation Time	Issue Description
P1	Student	20	44 min.	Frequently searches online for disease information, worrying that ordinary bodily reactions indicate serious illnesses.
P2	Student	20	28 min.	Repeatedly visits the campus clinic for examination of the same body part despite normal medical results.
P3	Student	21	31 min.	Often fixates on minor physical sensations (e.g., heartbeat, dizziness), with emotions heavily influenced by these experiences.

Table 5. Client Information Form

3.2 Case Validation：Research Process

This study employed the LBT&C method with Aristotle's philosophical framework:

Steps	Specific content
Identification of Irrational Beliefs	Assist the individual in recognizing core irrational beliefs that underlie negative emotions.
Logical Analysis	Use philosophical logical reasoning to structurally analyze these beliefs and expose inherent logical fallacies and biases.
Emotional Exploration	Guide the individual to gain a deeper understanding of their emotional experiences and trace their causal links to the belief system.
Construction of Alternative Beliefs	Help the individual develop a more reasonable, realistic, and adaptive belief system to replace the irrational beliefs.
Behavioral Adjustment	Encourage the individual to translate these new beliefs into concrete actions and validate the changes through practical experience.
Continuous Reflection and Adjustment	Guide the individual to continuously evaluate and modify their belief system in everyday life to maintain cognitive and emotional stability.

Table 6. LBT&C with Aristotle's philosophical framework

3.2 Case Validation：Research Process

For data collection, the overall research process was structured around **five** key time points:

Point	Specific content
T1	Pre-test phase – administration of psychological scales prior to the intervention.
T2	Intervention phase – one-on-one LBT&C interviews with each participant (each lasting approximately 30–60 minutes).
T3	Immediate post-test phase – participants complete the psychological scales immediately after the interview.
T4	Dynamic feedback phase – daily feedback records for a week following the intervention, wherein participants complete brief diaries.
T5	Delayed post-test phase – a follow-up assessment conducted 7 days after the intervention to observe the sustainability of the intervention effects.

Table 7. Five key time points

3.3 Case Validation：Research Instruments

Scale Name	Measurement Dimensions	Brief Description	Main Source
Short Health Anxiety Inventory (SHAI)	**Health Anxiety**	Assesses excessive worry and anxiety about health, commonly used to identify groups with high health anxiety levels.	Zhang (2015)
Chinese Version of the Metacognitions Questionnaire-Health Anxiety (CMCQ-HA)	**Metacognitive Beliefs Related to Health Anxiety**	Evaluates the beliefs individuals hold when facing health anxiety.	Dai (2018)
Depression Anxiety Stress Scales-21 (DASS-21)	**Depression, Anxiety, and Stress**	Comprehensively measures current emotional states for screening psychological distress severity.	Lovibond & Lovibond (1995)
Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7)	**Generalized Anxiety**	Rapidly screens the core symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder, suitable for both clinical and research uses.	Spitzer et al. (2006)
Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI)	**Somatic and Cognitive Anxiety Symptoms**	Evaluates physical reactions and cognitive symptoms associated with anxiety.	Steer & Beck (1997)
Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS)	**Life Satisfaction**	Measures the subjective evaluation of overall life quality and fulfillment.	Diener et al. (1985)

Table 8. Detailed Scale Summary

3.4 Case Validation：Quantitative Analysis Results

Due to small sample size (N = 3), descriptive analyses (not t-tests) compared **T1** (pre-intervention), **T3** (immediate post), and **T5** (7-day delayed) results.

Overall, LBT&C showed stable **positive effects** on anxiety: SHAI, CMCQ-HA, and GAD-7 scores decreased significantly post-intervention and remained lower at **T5**.

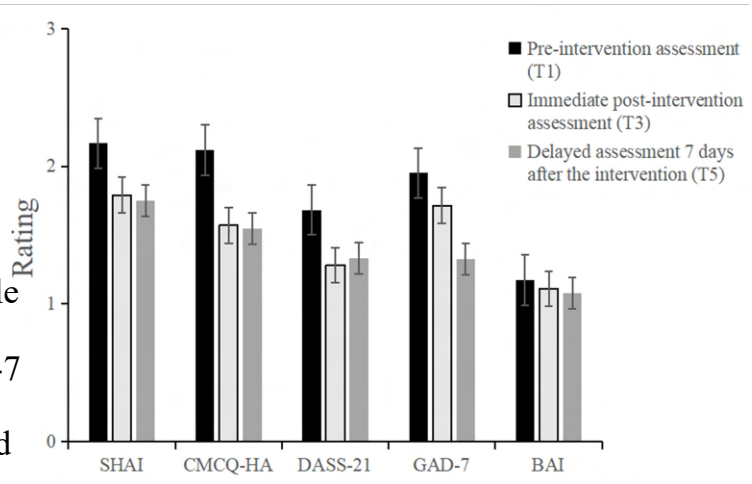


Figure 2. Multi-Stage Mean Value Change Chart of Anxiety and Emotional Dimensions

3.4 Case Validation：Quantitative Analysis Results

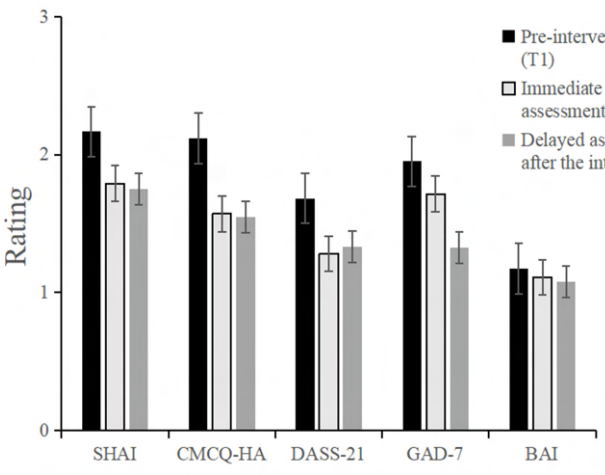


Figure 2. Multi-Stage Mean Value Change Chart of Anxiety and Emotional Dimensions

BAI showed more **modest** changes, potentially reflecting its somatic focus and prior evidence that somatization is **less sensitive** to short-term cognitive interventions than cognitive anxiety. This provides initial support for the observation.

3.4 Case Validation：Quantitative Analysis Results

Participants experienced a significant short-term boost in life satisfaction, driven by **activated positive emotions and behavior strategies**.

At T5, scores slightly dipped from immediate post-test levels but stayed significantly above T1, indicating that LBT&C-induced cognitive restructuring durably **enhanced life meaning and purpose**.

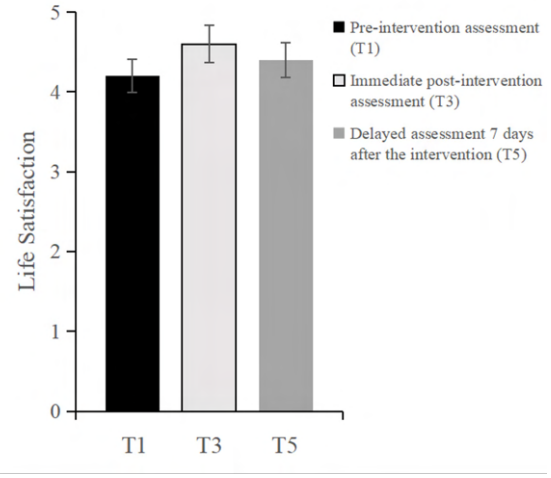


Figure 3. Three-Phase Trend Chart of Life Satisfaction

3.5 Case Validation：Qualitative Analysis Results

We used semi-structured interviews to probe participants' **health anxiety experiences, emotional responses, cognitive beliefs, and behavioral patterns**. Longitudinal tracking with follow-ups complemented interviews for

Steps	Specific content
Development and Refinement of the Interview Guide	Initial draft based on literature/theory → validated via pilot interview with health anxiety patient → refined using feedback and dynamically adjusted throughout study.
Formal Interviews	Conducted post-pre-questionnaires following LBT&C's six-step framework, integrating Aristotle's logic as "philosophical antidote" to trace anxiety origins and reconstruct beliefs. Face-to-face/video sessions were recorded, transcribed, and verified.
Feedback and Follow-Up	Supplementary interviews resolved ambiguities during analysis. Delayed interviews (Day 7 post-intervention) monitored sustained effects, external influences, and emotional/behavioral triggers.

Table 9. Interviews Steps

3.5 Case Validation：Open Coding

1. Researchers extracted **141 raw statements** from interview transcripts through line-by-line open coding, capturing participants' health anxiety triggers, emotional responses, cognitive interpretations, and coping strategies while using “in vivo” labels with participant identifiers (e.g., A1).

2. These initial codes were consolidated into **30 core concepts** by grouping labels sharing similar psychological connotations.

3. Finally, **23 abstract** categories emerged from further synthesis of the core concepts, with partial examples detailed in Table 10.

3.5 Case Validation：Open Coding

Numbering	Sample Excerpts	Open Labeling	Conceptualization	Categorization
A2	Stares blankly at the mirror at night... persistently checking for new acne.	Nightly mirror checks for acne	Monitoring physical details (aa1)	Ritualized safety behaviors (S5)
A3	Scrutinizes facial changes daily... immediately searches Xiaohongshu for solutions to redness/roughness.	Urgent solution-seeking for skin changes	Frequent health information seeking (aa2)	Information preoccupation (S6)
B3	The worst scenario is complete immunity loss (e.g., AIDS)—losing all self-control.	Extreme fear of immunity/autonomy loss	Fear of health autonomy loss (aa20)	Loss-of-control fear (S7)
C18	Trusts online negative cases over doctors... medical variations make me forget details.	Prefers online cases to medical authority	Distrust in medical system (aa5)	Medicalization tendency (S4)
C30	Accepts common causes for menstrual delay... but unconfirmed without tests.	Attributing menstrual delay to common causes	Gradual symptom reinterpretation (aa17)	Risk reappraisal (S10)

Table 10. Partial Examples of Open Coding

3.5 Case Validation：Axial Coding

During axial coding, researchers analyzed the **23 open coding categories** across pre-, mid-, and post-intervention phases, systematically comparing their logical relationships to distill **10 main categories** (F-prefixed), with evolution patterns detailed in Table 11.

Stage	Main Category	Subcategories
Pre-intervention	F1: Cognitive Fallacies	S1: Probability Perception Distortion
		S2: Amplification of Individual Specificity
		S3: Health Perfectionism
	F2: Behavioral Dysregulation	S4: Excessive Medicalization
		S5: Ritualization of Safety Behaviors
		S6: Information Preoccupation
	F3: Emotional Triggers	S7: Loss-of-Control Fear
		S8: Self-Blame Attribution

Table 11. Main Categories and Corresponding Subcategories

3.5 Case Validation：Axial Coding

Stage	Main Category	Subcategories
Mid-intervention	F4: Cognitive Adjustment	S9: Realistic Health Compromise
		S10: Risk Reappraisal
		S11: Authority Trust Realignment
	F5: Behavioral Trial-and-Error	S12: Alternative Strategy Exploration
		S13: Paradoxical Acceptance
	F6: Resource Activation	S14: Experience-Rationality Integration
		S15: Emergence of Cognitive Flexibility

Table 11.
(Continued)

3.5 Case Validation：Axial Coding

Stage	Main Category	Subcategories
Post-intervention	F7: Fallacy Correction	S16: Probability Attribution Normalization
		S17: Health Definition Reconstruction
	F8: Behavioral Optimization	S18: Optimizing Medical Behaviors
		S19: Attention Reallocation
		S20: Anxiety Decoupling Mechanism
	F9: Emotional Regulation	S21: Acceptance Capacity Enhancement
	F10: Resilience Strategies	S22: Dynamic Monitoring System
		S23: Cognitive-Behavioral Synergy

Table 11.
(Continued)

3.5 Case Validation：Selective Coding

Core intervention pathway: Health anxiety manifests as cognitive fallacies (F1), behavioral dysregulation (F2), and emotional triggers (F3).

LBT&C's "philosophical questioning → logical reflection → belief replacement" pathway drives cognitive adjustment (F4), behavioral trials (F5), and resource activation (F6), progressing to corrected cognition (F7), optimized behavior (F8), regulated emotion (F9), and resilience strategies (F10).

This forms stable self-regulation via integrating rational resources with emotional momentum, demonstrating Aristotle's virtue ethics in modern practice (see Figure 4).

3.5 Case Validation：Selective Coding

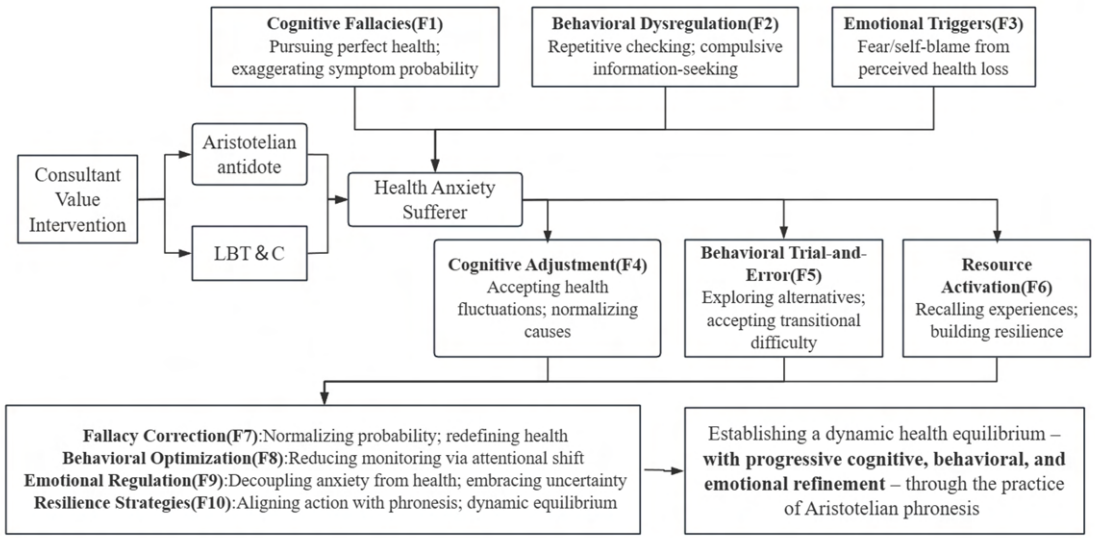


Figure 4. LBT&C Health Anxiety Intervention Model

3.5 Case Validation：Selective Coding

1. The study proposes an "**Operational Model of the Threefold Principle of Moderate Value Neutrality**" (Figure 5) to avoid value imposition and nihilism in philosophical counseling by integrating Aristotle's virtue ethics.

2. Its three dynamically interlocking components:
① **Contextual Diagnosis**: Use detailed questioning to identify extreme beliefs/cognitive imbalances without premature correction, applying Aristotle's doctrine of the mean.
② **Telos Guidance**: Reconstruct clients' value systems toward eudaimonia ("living well" through virtue/soul-goal actualization), clarifying ethical direction.
③ **Dialogue Practice**: Translate values into behavior via Socratic questioning, phronesis (practical wisdom), and empathetic resonance to align actions with beliefs.

3. This non-linear, spiraling process fosters a resilient "**dynamically balanced health perspective**" – mitigating alienation from rigid neutrality and resistance to forced value imposition.

3.5 Case Validation：Selective Coding

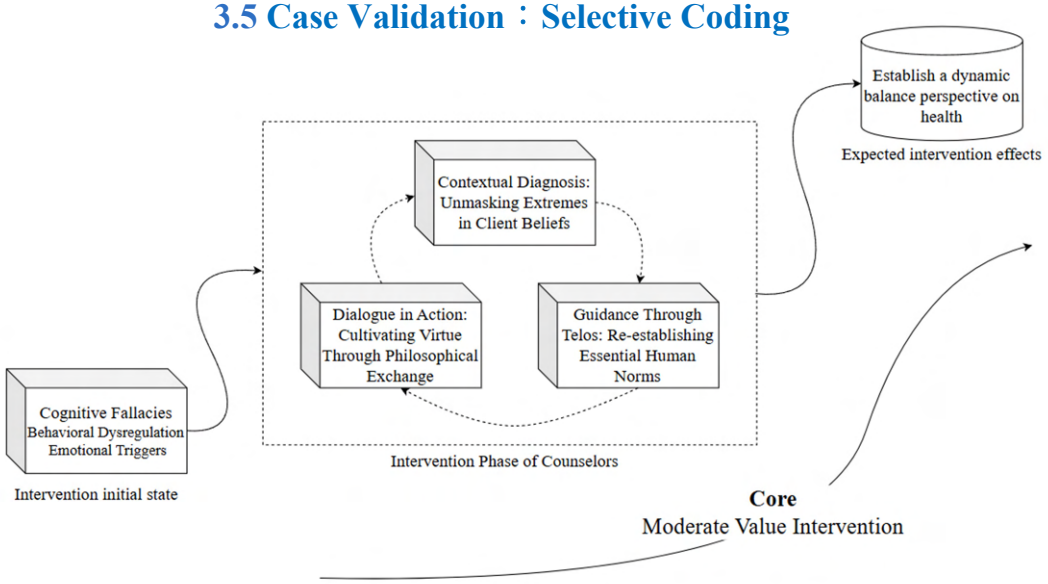


Figure 5. Tripartite Operational Principles Model of Moderate Value Neutrality

3.6 Interview Findings: Identification of Irrational Beliefs

Identification of Irrational Beliefs	
Catastrophic thinking	Interpreting minor discomforts as serious threats (e.g., Participant A pathologizing dizziness).
Hypervigilance	Persistent doubt despite medical reassurance (e.g., Participant A undergoing repeated laryngoscopies)
Unrealistic expectations	Perfectionistic health standards and exaggerated risk perception (e.g., Participant B fearing absolute loss of bodily control).
Overgeneralization	Attributing disproportionate significance to low-probability events (e.g., Participant C fearing pregnancy despite logic).
Self-blame	Excessive internalization of health responsibility (e.g., Participant C attributing illness solely to lifestyle).

Analysis uses Cohen's LBT&C and Aristotelian virtue ethics as a "**philosophical antidote**" , also enabled participants to develop a dynamically balanced view of health.

Table 12. Identification of Irrational Beliefs

3.6 Interview Findings: Logical Analysis & Emotional Exploration

Emotional exploration revealed how core fears fueled irrational beliefs, while logical analysis provided tools to reframe them. This synergy enabled participants to construct sustainable cognitive-emotional frameworks grounded in realistic risk assessment and self-compassion.

Participants developed balanced information processing:

"*I consider severe illness news as something happening to others while staying appropriately vigilant*" (B37)

Cognitive resilience emerged through acceptance of bodily fluctuations and rejection of perfectionism:"*Accepting minor illnesses while maintaining vitality is sufficiently good health*" (C25)

Phased symptom response replaced catastrophizing: Probabilistic cause-selection (e.g., Participant C's 90%-schedule-delay attribution (C16))

3.6 Interview Findings: Alternative Belief Construction

Using Aristotle's pillars (doctrine of the mean, teleology, phronesis), counselors facilitated adaptive belief development:

Participants employed multi-causal reasoning over catastrophizing (e.g., Participant A considering alternatives to serious illness).

Anxiety was reframed as motivation for positive behavior change (Participant A's dietary improvements).

Evidence-based health evaluation became anchored in realistic criteria (Participant A's use of weight/appetite markers).

Participants embraced balanced lifestyle principles (e.g., Participant B's moderated enjoyment of sugary drinks).

Philosophical shifts occurred toward present-focused well-being over survival anxiety (Participant C's rejection of low-probability hypervigilance).

3.6 Interview Findings: Behavioral Integration & Sustained Self-Regulation

Counselors guided participants in implementing practical behavioral strategies and developing **autonomous maintenance systems**:

Domain/Category	Key Strategies & Behaviors	Outcome/Significance
Health Monitoring	• Reduced medical testing frequency • Redefined tests as *tools*, not safeguards (*"Normal check-up ≠ healthy lifestyle"*)	Shift from passive reliance to **proactive health management**
Symptom Response	• Evidence-based prioritization (*"Rule out common causes first"*) • Phased risk assessment (e.g., weight/appetite as biomarkers)	Replacement of **catastrophizing** with **structured action**
Anxiety Management	• Short-term coping (e.g., music/walks) • Compound strategies (*"Combine walking + music + tasks"*)	Development of **situationally adaptive techniques**
Decision Boundaries	• Pre-commitment to trust professionals (*"Avoid vicious cycles"*) • Strategy efficacy evaluation (e.g., test music's limitations)	Prevention of **recurrent anxiety loops**

Table 13. Behavioral Integration & Sustained Self-Regulation



4.1 Discussion

In threats to basic survival dignity, philosophical counseling must first apply **Nussbaum's capability approach** to rebuild foundations, then use **MacIntyre's narrative method** to restore narrative coherence within cultural traditions.

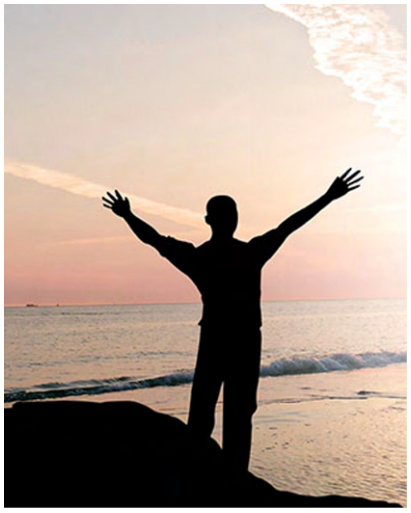




While promising for guiding ethical development and practical application, results are **limited by a very small sample size** (N=3), lack of diversity, and require further validation with larger, more varied groups and longer-term studies.

4.2 Conclusion

Rigid value neutrality in philosophical counseling is problematic due to "ethical dysregulation," failing clients with collapsed value systems. Integrating virtue ethics – through closed-loop system: Diagnosis-Calibration-Cultivation —value calibration of telos – overcomes this. It enables a dynamic, guided dialogue shifting clients from passive correction towards virtue-oriented meaning reconstruction. Counselors act as "co-facilitators of virtue," **helping reframe anxiety into pursuing eudaimonia.**



Jie Wen

The Application of Buddhist Teachings in Daily Life

Introduction

This paper aims to explore the application of Buddhist philosophy and practice in contemporary life by taking mindfulness-based interventions for insomnia as a case study. In recent years, insomnia has emerged as a widespread psychological and social issue. As a non-pharmacological treatment, mindfulness has been increasingly adopted in the therapeutic context for insomnia. Originating from Buddhist meditation practices, mindfulness is now being applied to a growing range of psychological conditions. Interestingly, using the Dhamma as a form of psychological therapy may align more closely with the Buddha's original intent than treating it as a purely speculative philosophy. Most psychologists regard mindfulness as a secular technique, believing it can function independently of its religious roots, often overlooking the rich intellectual resources found in the Buddhist Tipiṭaka. In reality, Buddhist scriptures contain numerous accounts of psychological afflictions and the corresponding methods of healing proposed by the Buddha or his disciples—many of which remain relevant even in the 21st century. By examining the treatment of insomnia through modern mindfulness-based therapy and comparing it with the insights found in the earliest Buddhist canon, the Pāli Tipiṭaka, this article investigates how the Buddha addressed similar concerns and what such teachings might offer to contemporary mental well-being.

1. Contemporary Scientific Approaches to the Treatment of Insomnia

(1) The Definition, Causes, and Treatment of Insomnia

Insomnia, defined as the persistent difficulty in falling asleep, maintaining sleep, or achieving restorative rest, is a widespread condition that affects both mental and physical well-being. From a scientific perspective, insomnia is no longer seen as merely a symptom of other illnesses, but as a distinct disorder with its own etiology and treatment strategies. Insomnia not only significantly impairs an individual's quality of life and leads to cognitive decline, but is also closely associated with a wide range of mental health disorders, including depression.[1] Research in sleep medicine and psychology identifies several contributing factors, including heightened cognitive arousal, stress, anxiety, poor sleep habits, circadian rhythm disruptions, and environmental stimuli such as light and noise. In today's technologically saturated world, exposure to artificial light—especially blue light emitted from screens—delays melatonin secretion and disturbs the body's internal clock, exacerbating sleep difficulties.[2]

---

[1] Jansson-Fröjmark M, Lindblom K. "A bidirectional relationship between anxiety and depression, and insomnia? A prospective study in the general population", *J Psychosom Res*, 64(4)(2008):443-449.

[2] Thomas Roth. "Insomnia: definition, prevalence, etiology, and consequences", J Clin Sleep Med,3(5 Supply) (Aug 2007): S7-10.

Modern treatments for insomnia aim to address both the physiological and psychological dimensions of the disorder. While pharmacological solutions such as sedative-hypnotics or melatonin supplements are commonly prescribed for short-term relief, they are not considered ideal for long-term use due to issues of tolerance, dependence, and side effects. As a result, non-pharmacological interventions have gained prominence, particularly those rooted in cognitive and behavioral models.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I) is currently regarded as the gold standard in clinical practice. It combines cognitive restructuring—addressing maladaptive beliefs and attitudes about sleep—with behavioral techniques such as stimulus control, sleep restriction, and sleep hygiene education.[3] In addition to CBT-I, a range of complementary and integrative therapies has emerged, reflecting the growing interest in holistic approaches to sleep health. These include relaxation training, biofeedback, breathing techniques, and various forms of meditation. While mindfulness-based therapies have received significant attention, other contemplative practices—such as body scan meditation, progressive muscle relaxation, and loving-kindness meditation—have also shown potential benefits. These methods are generally aimed at reducing physiological arousal and emotional reactivity, both of which are core mechanisms in insomnia.[4]

Furthermore, lifestyle and behavioral changes play a critical role. Establishing regular sleep routines, limiting caffeine and alcohol intake, reducing screen exposure before bedtime, and creating a calm sleep environment are all practical strategies supported by empirical evidence.[5] Advances in wearable technology and sleep tracking have also empowered individuals to better understand and manage their sleep patterns.

(2) The Impact of Mindfulness Meditation on Insomnia

The confluence of mindfulness meditation and sleep enhancement has emerged as a focal point of contemporary research, resonating with ancient wisdom that has long underscored mindfulness meditation's tranquility-inducing attributes. Popular modern mindfulness meditation methods, such as MBSR (Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction) and MBCT (Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy) have been widely used in insomnia treatment. The nexus between meditative practices and sleep quality hinges on the former's ability to foster a state of relaxation, conducive to a restful sleep. Several mechanisms underlie mindfulness meditation's positive impact on sleep. Primarily, mindfulness meditation has been associated with the regulation of the autonomic nervous system, fostering a shift from the often dominant sympathetic (‘fight or flight’) response to the parasympathetic (‘rest and digest’) response. This shift

[3] Edinger, J. D., & Means, M. K. “Cognitive–behavioral therapy for primary insomnia”, *Clinical Psychology Review*, vol 25(5) (July 2005): 539–558.

[4] Morin, C. & D. Jarrin. “Epidemiology of insomnia: prevalence, course, risk factors, and public health burden”, *Sleep Med. Clin*. 8(2013): 281–297.

[5] Thomas Roth. “Insomnia: definition, prevalence, etiology, and consequences”, *J Clin Sleep Med*,3(5 Supply) (Aug 2007): S7-10.

is conducive to a lower arousal level, which is beneficial before the transition to sleep. By reducing cognitive arousal, often manifested as a barrage of pre-sleep worries, mindfulness meditation can pave the way for a smoother transition into sleep.[6] Moreover, mindfulness meditation may enhance melatonin production, a hormone pivotal for sleep regulation. Studies have found that long-term practitioners of Vipassanā meditation exhibit enhanced slow-wave sleep (SWS) and rapid eye movement (REM) sleep.[7] Which indicates a measurable enhancement in overall sleep quality.[8]

Empirical evidence underscores the potential of mindfulness meditation as a non-pharmacological intervention for sleep enhancement. Numerous studies have elucidated the positive correlation between meditative practices and improved sleep quality. Furthermore, individuals grappling with insomnia have reported substantial improvements in sleep latency, duration, and efficiency when engaged in regular meditative practices.[9] These findings not only augment the understanding of mindfulness meditation's role in sleep improvement but also beckon a larger discourse on integrating such mind-body practices in holistic approaches to sleep health. Through further exploration and a deeper understanding of the intricate relationships between mindfulness meditation and sleep, it's plausible to envisage a future where mindfulness meditation is a widely recognized and employed tool in combating the burgeoning sleep disorder epidemic.

2. References to Insomnia in the Pāli Tipiṭaka

In the early Buddhist canon, the Pāli Tipiṭaka, we can find numerous passages that relate to the phenomenon of insomnia. These references can be broadly categorized into two areas: the Buddha's analysis of the underlying causes of sleeplessness, and the methods he recommended for addressing it and achieving better sleep.

(1) Causes for poor sleep

There are many causes of poor sleep recorded in suttas, which can be broadly classified into four categories.

---

[6] Van Dam, Nicholas T., Marieke K. van Vugt, David R. Vago, Laura Schmalzl, Clifford D. Saron, Andrew Olendzki, Ted Meissner, et al. "Mind The Hype: A Critical Evaluation and Prescriptive Agenda for Research on Mindfulness and Meditation", *Perspectives on Psychological Science : A Journal of the Association for Psychological Science* 13, no. 1 (January 2018): 36–61.

[7] Ravindra, P. N., Sulekha, S., Sathyaprabha, T. N., Pradhan, N., Raju, T. R., and Kutty, B. M. "Practitioners of vipassana meditation exhibit enhanced slow wave sleep and REM sleep states across different age groups", *Sleep Biol. Rhythms* 8(2010): 34–41.

[8] Nagendra Ravindra P., Maruthai Nirmala , Kutty Bindu M. "Meditation and Its Regulatory Role on Sleep", *Frontiers in Neurology*, vol3(2012).

[9] Pattanashetty, Ravindra, Sulekha Sathiamma, SathyaPrabha Talakkad, Pradhan Nityananda, Raju Trichur, and Bindu M Kutty. "Practitioners of Vipassana Meditation Exhibit Enhanced Slow Wave Sleep and REM Sleep States across Different Age Groups", *Sleep and Biological Rhythms* 8, no. 1 (January 2010): 34–41.

a. Anger

When talking about anger, poor sleep is mentioned as one of the adverse effects it brings:

> "The angry person is ugly; he also sleeps badly.[10]
>
> Again, an enemy wishes for an enemy: 'May he sleep badly!' For what reason? An enemy does not delight when an enemy sleeps well. When an angry person is overcome and oppressed by anger, though he may sleep on a couch spread with rugs, blankets, and covers, with an excellent covering of antelope hide, with a canopy and red bolsters at both ends, still, he sleeps badly.[11]"

b. Anxiety

There are two cases in the text of poor sleep due to anxiety, and both are kings.

In Paṭhamasaṅgāmasuttaṃ Sutta (SN 3.14), the Buddha talked about the King lost the war would not sleep well. And one who gets free from victory or defeat (success desire) and becomes peaceful will sleep well.

> "… King Pasenadi, having been defeated, will sleep badly tonight.
> Victory breeds enmity,
> The defeated one sleeps badly.
> The peaceful one sleeps at ease,
> Having abandoned victory and defeat."[12]

In Samuddakasuttaṃ Sutta (SN 11.10), the lord of the asuras was cured, and for this reason, he woke up three times in the night.

But after being cursed by those seers who were virtuous and of good character, Sambara, lord of the asuras, was gripped by alarm three times in the course of the night.[13]

This section is explained in more detail in the notes to its commentary book, which referred that his poor sleep caused mental problems.

> "Spk: As soon as he fell asleep, he woke up howling as though he had been struck from all sides by a hundred spears. The other asuras came to inquire about his health and were still consoling him when dawn arrived. From then on his mind became sick and trembled (cittaṃ vepati)[14]";

---

[10] Bodhi Bhikkhu. 2012. The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya. Boston: Wisdom Publications, p. 1067.
[11] Bodhi Bhikkhu. 2000. The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya. Boston: Wisdom Publications, p. 1066.
[12] Ibid., p. 177.
[13] Ibid., p. 328.
[14] Ibid., p. 495.

c. Desire

A sutta titled Appaṃsupatisuttaṃ (Little Sleep, AN 5.137) listed five types of people who sleep little:

> "Bhikkhus, these five sleep little at night but mostly keep awake. What five? A woman intent on a man, a man intent on a woman, a thief intent on theft, a king engaged with his royal duties, and a bhikkhu intent on severing the bonds. These five sleep little at night but mostly keep awake.[15]"

Men and women caught up in lust, thieves, kings and bhikkhus. These five types of people all have particular desires. A bhikkhu should sleep little and keep awake in order to attain enlightenment.

d. Muddled mind

A person who falls asleep with a muddled mind instead of clear comprehending will have poor sleep, according to Muṭṭhassatisuttaṃ Sutta (AN 5.210).

> "Bhikkhus, there are these five dangers for one who falls asleep with a muddled mind, lacking clear comprehension. What five? He sleeps badly; he awakens miserably; he has bad dreams; the deities do not protect him; and semen is emitted. These are the five dangers for one who falls asleep with a muddled mind, lacking clear comprehension.[16]"

(2) How to sleep well

In Hatthakasuttaṃ Sutta (AN 3.35), the Buddha claimed he slept very well that he was "one of those in the world who sleep well[17]". A prince asked the Buddha how he could sleep well during the cold winter nights, to which the Buddha replied that he had abandoned lust, hatred, and delusion, which could cause bodily and mental fevers and therefore slept well. The person who has attained Nibbāna, cooled off, without acquisitions, not tainted by sensual pleasures, always sleeps well, having achieved peace of mind.[18] Nibbāna is the highest goal of Buddhist practice, and good sleep is often a byproduct of attaining a tranquil mind. Moreover, corresponding to the previously discussed causes of poor sleep, the Buddha also taught three additional methods to improve sleep quality.

A. Destroying anger

---

[15] Bodhi Bhikkhu. 2012. The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya. Boston: Wisdom Publications, p. 751.
[16] Ibid., p. 822.
[17] Ibid., p. 232.
[18] Ibid., p. 233.

Chetvāsuttaṃ Sutta (SN 1.71) talked about destroying anger makes one sleep soundly and removes sorrow. However, it is unclear whether anger leads to sorrow, which in turn leads to poor sleep, or whether it is two parallel outcomes of anger.

> "Having slain what does one sleep soundly?
> Having slain what does one not sorrow?
> What is the one thing, O Gotama,
> Whose killing you approve?
> [The Blessed One:]
> Having slain anger, one sleeps soundly;
> Having slain anger, one does not sorrow;
> The killing of anger, O devatā,
> With its poisoned root and honeyed tip:
> This is the killing the noble ones praise,
> For having slain that, one does not sorrow."[19]

b. Sleeping mindfully

Sleeping mindfully and with clear comprehension has five benefits for good sleep (AN 5.210). It also provides a specific definition of "good sleep" in Pāli Tipiṭaka.

> "Bhikkhus, there are these five benefits for one who falls asleep mindfully and with clear comprehension. What five? He sleeps well; he awakens happily; he does not have bad dreams; deities protect him; and semen is not emitted. These are the five benefits for one who falls asleep mindfully and with clear comprehension."[20]

c. Loving-kindness meditation

Sleeping well is three of the eleven benefits of loving-kindness (Mettāsuttaṃ Sutta, AN 11.15). Herein, a night of good sleep is separated into three parts — "sleep well", "awake happily", and "no bad dreams".

> "Bhikkhus, when the liberation of the mind by loving-kindness has been pursued, developed, and cultivated, made a vehicle and basis, carried out, consolidated, and properly undertaken, eleven benefits are to be expected. What eleven?
> "One sleeps well; one awakens happily; one does not have bad dreams…"[21]

(3) Buddhism and Modern Science: An Integrated Approach to Insomnia

[19] Ibid., p. 133, 255, 337.
[20] Bodhi Bhikkhu. 2012. The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha : A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya. Boston: Wisdom Publications, p. 822.
[21] Ibid., p. 1573.

a. Underlying Factors Contributing to Poor Sleep Quality
a) Buddhist Perspective:
The Buddhist narrative posits that internal emotional and mental states significantly contribute to sleep quality. Specifically, four primary factors are outlined:
Anger: Described as a precursor to poor sleep, manifesting in restlessness and discomfort despite physical comfort.
Anxiety: Illustrated through kings' experiences, where anxiety over warfare led to disrupted sleep.
Desire: Diverse desires keep individuals awake, representing a form of internal unrest.
Muddled Mind: Lack of clear comprehension before sleep leads to poor sleep quality.

b) Modern Societal Perspective:
In the contemporary societal narrative, poor sleep quality is often linked to external factors and medical conditions:
Insufficient Sleep Opportunity: Due to personal or work-related constraints, individuals may not allocate enough time for sleep.
Sleep Disorders: Conditions like insomnia and sleep apnea disrupt regular sleep patterns.
Lifestyle Factors: Irregular sleep schedules, caffeine or alcohol consumption, and frequent travel across time zones contribute to sleep deprivation.
Medical Conditions: Chronic pain, respiratory problems, and mental health disorders like anxiety and depression can interfere with sleep.

b. Strategies for Enhancing the Quality of Sleep
a) Buddhist Perspective:
The text suggests a mental approach towards improving sleep quality:
Overcoming Anger: By conquering anger, individuals can achieve a tranquil mind conducive to better sleep.
Mindful Sleeping: Practicing mindfulness and clear comprehension before sleep contributes to better sleep quality.
Loving-kindness Meditation: This form of meditation is said to provide three sleep-related benefits: sleeping well, waking up happily, and not having bad dreams.

b) Modern Societal Perspective:
Modern societal discourse emphasizes a more pragmatic approach:
Maintaining Healthy Sleep Habits: Prioritizing a regular sleep schedule and creating a conducive sleep environment are essential.
Addressing Sleep Disorders: Seeking medical intervention for sleep disorders can significantly improve sleep quality.
Lifestyle Adjustments: Modifying lifestyle factors like reducing caffeine and alcohol intake, and managing stress through relaxation techniques can foster better sleep.
Compared to people today, those living in the Buddha's time were subject to fewer external disturbances to sleep—such as artificial lighting or the blue light emitted by

mobile devices. As a result, the Buddha's teachings on sleep quality focus more on internal psychological states rather than environmental factors. Despite these differences, certain problems pinpointed by Buddha such as anger, anxiety, desire, and scattered thinking leading to insomnia, have also been corroborated by contemporary scientific inquiries. The methods proposed by the Buddha for enhancing sleep quality, namely overcoming anger, mindfulness practices before sleep, and loving-kindness meditation, have been substantiated by scientific studies as efficacious in ameliorating sleep quality.

Conclusion

This article has briefly introduced the application of mindfulness as a non-pharmacological approach to insomnia treatment in modern science, alongside an exploration of how insomnia is addressed and discussed in early Buddhist texts. In doing so, it aims to build a bridge between ancient wisdom and contemporary scientific understanding. The Buddha's teachings are typically grounded in everyday experience and deliberately avoid metaphysical speculation detached from practical life. Rather, the Dhamma is based on careful observation and deep reflection on bodily and mental phenomena. As discussed through the topic of insomnia, the Buddha insightfully identified emotional states—such as anger, anxiety, desire, and overthinking—as immediate causes of sleeplessness. This psychological framework closely parallels the foundational logic of contemporary cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), highlighting a striking convergence between early Buddhist insight and modern psychological science. The meditative practices found in Buddhism—which have since been adapted and integrated into modern psychology—include not only the well-known practice of mindfulness meditation, but also loving-kindness meditation (mettā bhāvanā). These methods are particularly effective in calming emotional disturbances and fostering mental clarity. Through consistent practice, they can bring about a fundamental shift in one's patterns of thinking, enabling individuals suffering from insomnia to more rationally observe and respond to negative emotions and restless thoughts. In doing so, practitioners come to recognize the impermanence (anicca), unsatisfaction (dukkha), and non-self (anattā) nature of these mental phenomena, thereby loosening their grip and reducing their impact on sleep.

In this light, mindfulness is not merely a tool for managing stress or enhancing productivity, but a philosophical (Buddhist) practice aimed at cultivating well-being through insight into the nature of the mind. By integrating early Buddhist insights with contemporary scientific understanding, we are reminded that the pursuit of better sleep—and indeed, of well-being itself—is intimately tied to how we perceive, interpret, and inhabit our mental and emotional lives. Seen through this lens, the path from sleeplessness to serenity is not just clinical, but profoundly philosophical.

References

Books

Bodhi, Bhikkhu. 2000. The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Samyutta Nikāya. Boston: Wisdom Publications.

Bodhi, Bhikkhu. 2012. The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya. Boston: Wisdom Publications.

Articles

Edinger, Jack D., and Mary K. Means. 2005. "Cognitive–Behavioral Therapy for Primary Insomnia." Clinical Psychology Review 25 (5): 539–58.

Jansson-Fröjmark, Malin, and Kristoffer Lindblom. 2008. "A Bidirectional Relationship between Anxiety and Depression, and Insomnia? A Prospective Study in the General Population." Journal of Psychosomatic Research 64 (4): 443–49.

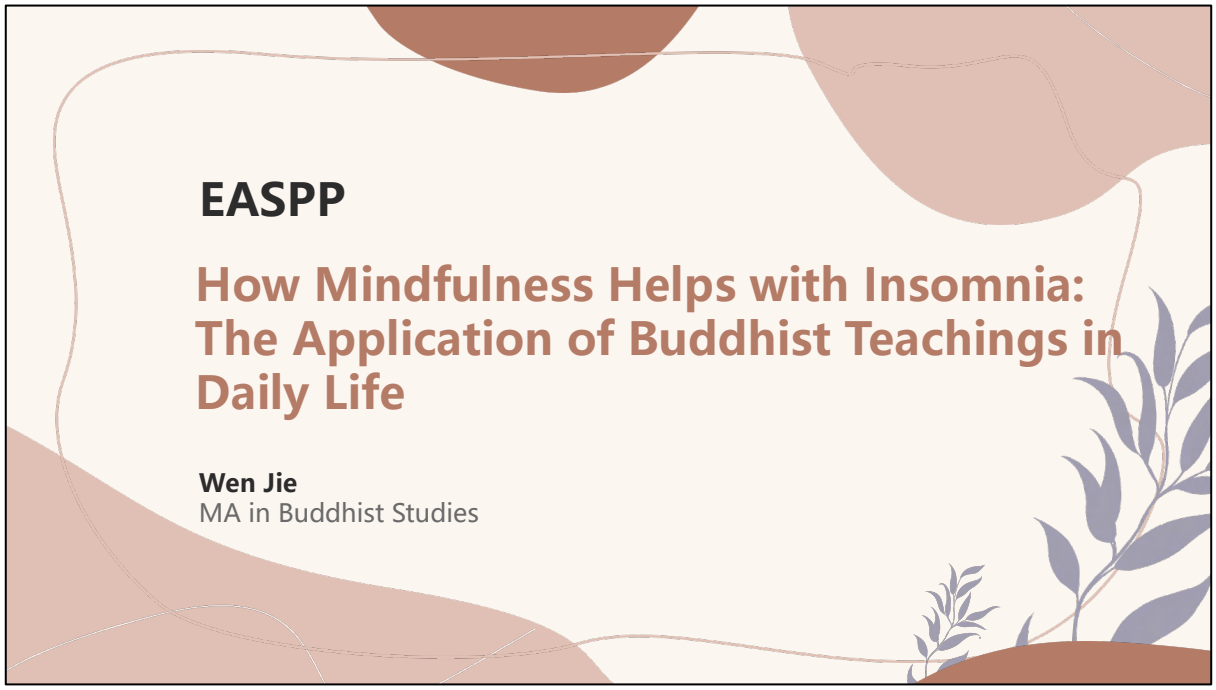
Morin, Charles, and Diane Jarrin. 2013. "Epidemiology of Insomnia: Prevalence, Course, Risk Factors, and Public Health Burden." Sleep Medicine Clinics 8: 281–97.

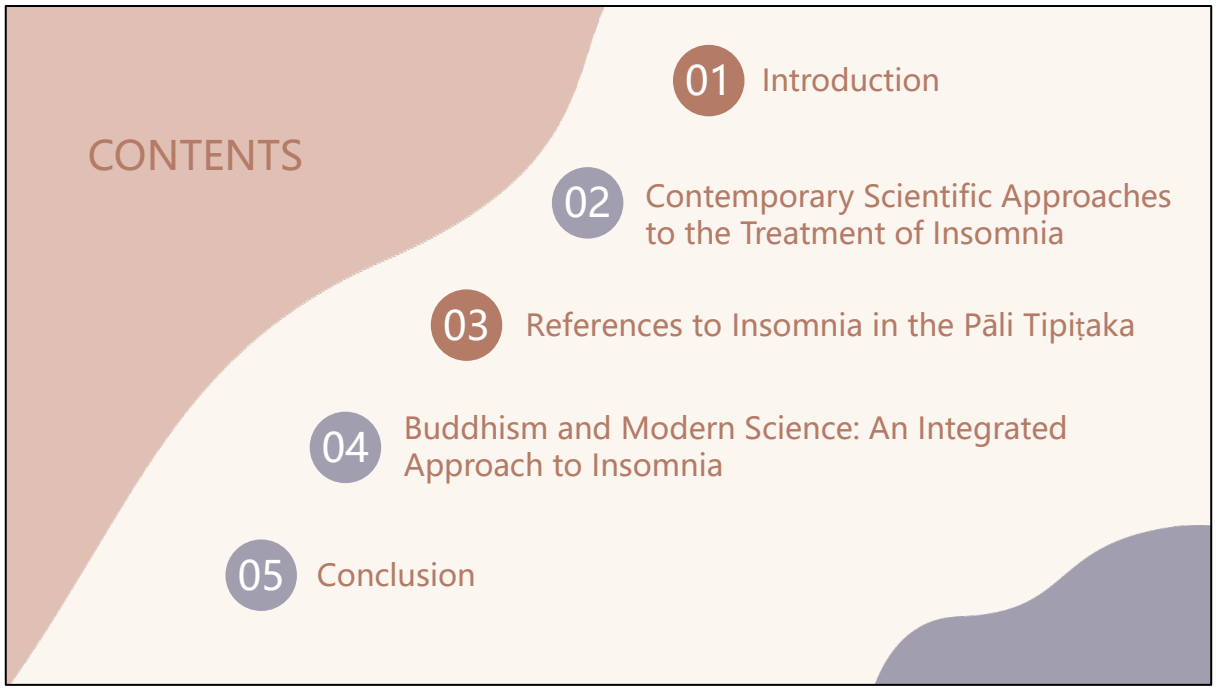
Nagendra, Ravindra P., Maruthai Nirmala, and Bindu M. Kutty. 2012. "Meditation and Its Regulatory Role on Sleep." Frontiers in Neurology 3.

Pattanashetty, Ravindra, Sulekha Sathiamma, SathyaPrabha Talakkad, Nityananda Pradhan, Trichur Raju, and Bindu M. Kutty. 2010. "Practitioners of Vipassana Meditation Exhibit Enhanced Slow Wave Sleep and REM Sleep States across Different Age Groups." Sleep and Biological Rhythms 8 (1): 34–41.

Roth, Thomas. 2007. "Insomnia: Definition, Prevalence, Etiology, and Consequences." Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine 3 (5 Suppl): S7–S10.

Van Dam, Nicholas T., Marieke K. van Vugt, David R. Vago, Laura Schmalzl, Clifford D. Saron, Andrew Olendzki, Ted Meissner, et al. 2018. "Mind the Hype: A Critical Evaluation and Prescriptive Agenda for Research on Mindfulness and Meditation." Perspectives on Psychological Science 13 (1): 36–61.


EASPP
How Mindfulness Helps with Insomnia: The Application of Buddhist Teachings in Daily Life
Wen Jie
MA in Buddhist Studies


CONTENTS
01 Introduction
02 Contemporary Scientific Approaches to the Treatment of Insomnia
03 References to Insomnia in the Pāli Tipiṭaka
04 Buddhism and Modern Science: An Integrated Approach to Insomnia
05 Conclusion

Part One

Introduction

Introduction

This paper aims to explore the application of Buddhist philosophy and practice in contemporary life by taking mindfulness-based interventions for insomnia as a case study. In recent years, insomnia has emerged as a widespread psychological and social issue. As a non-pharmacological treatment, mindfulness has been increasingly adopted in the therapeutic context for insomnia. Originating from Buddhist meditation practices, mindfulness is now being applied to a growing range of psychological conditions.



Introduction

Interestingly, using the Dhamma as a form of psychological therapy may align more closely with the Buddha' s original intent than treating it as a purely speculative philosophy. Most psychologists regard mindfulness as a secular technique, believing it can function independently of its religious roots, often overlooking the rich intellectual resources found in the Buddhist Tipiṭaka. In reality, Buddhist scriptures contain numerous accounts of psychological afflictions and the corresponding methods of healing proposed by the Buddha or his disciples—many of which remain relevant even in the 21st century.



Introduction

By examining the treatment of insomnia through modern mindfulness-based therapy and comparing it with the insights found in the earliest Buddhist canon, the Pāli Tipiṭaka, this article investigates how the Buddha addressed similar concerns and what such teachings might offer to contemporary mental well-being.



Part Two

Contemporary Scientific Approaches to the Treatment of Insomnia

Contemporary Scientific Approaches to the Treatment of Insomnia

(1) The Definition, Causes, and Treatment of Insomnia

Insomnia, defined as the **persistent difficulty in falling asleep, maintaining sleep,** or **achieving restorative rest**, is a widespread condition that affects both mental and physical well-being. From a scientific perspective, insomnia is no longer seen as merely a symptom of other illnesses, but as a distinct disorder with its own etiology and treatment strategies. Insomnia not only significantly impairs an individual' s quality of life and leads to cognitive decline, but is also closely associated with a wide range of mental health disorders, including depression.



The Definition, Causes, and Treatment of Insomnia



Research in sleep medicine and psychology identifies several contributing factors, including **heightened cognitive arousal, stress, anxiety, poor sleep habits, circadian rhythm disruptions,** and **environmental stimuli such as light and noise**. In today's technologically saturated world, exposure to artificial light—especially blue light emitted from screens—delays melatonin secretion and disturbs the body's internal clock, exacerbating sleep difficulties.

The Definition, Causes, and Treatment of Insomnia

Modern treatments for insomnia aim to address both the physiological and psychological dimensions of the disorder. While pharmacological solutions such as sedative-hypnotics or melatonin supplements are commonly prescribed for short-term relief, they are not considered ideal for long-term use due to issues of tolerance, dependence, and side effects. As a result, **non-pharmacological interventions** have gained prominence, particularly those rooted in cognitive and behavioral models.



The Definition, Causes, and Treatment of Insomnia

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia **(CBT-I)** is currently regarded as the gold standard in clinical practice. It combines cognitive restructuring—addressing maladaptive beliefs and attitudes about sleep—with behavioral techniques such as stimulus control, sleep restriction, and sleep hygiene education. In addition to CBT-I, a range of complementary and integrative therapies has emerged, reflecting the growing interest in holistic approaches to sleep health. These include **relaxation training**, **biofeedback**, **breathing techniques**, and **various forms of meditation.** While m**indfulness-based therapies** have received significant attention, other contemplative practices—such as body scan **meditation, progressive muscle relaxation, and loving-kindness meditation**—have also shown potential benefits. These methods are generally aimed at reducing physiological arousal and emotional reactivity, both of which are core mechanisms in insomnia.

The Definition, Causes, and Treatment of Insomnia

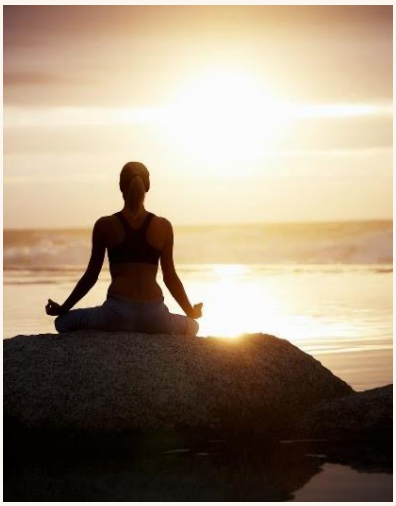


Furthermore, **lifestyle** and **behavioral changes** play a critical role. Establishing regular sleep routines, limiting caffeine and alcohol intake, reducing screen exposure before bedtime, and creating a calm sleep environment are all practical strategies supported by empirical evidence. Advances in wearable technology and sleep tracking have also empowered individuals to better understand and manage their sleep patterns.

Contemporary Scientific Approaches to the Treatment of Insomnia

(2) The Impact of Mindfulness Meditation on Insomnia

The confluence of mindfulness meditation and sleep enhancement has emerged as a focal point of contemporary research, resonating with ancient wisdom that has long underscored mindfulness meditation's tranquility-inducing attributes. Popular modern mindfulness meditation methods, such as MBSR (Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction) and MBCT (Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy) have been widely used in insomnia treatment. The nexus between meditative practices and sleep quality hinges on the former's ability to foster a state of relaxation, conducive to a restful sleep.



The Impact of Mindfulness Meditation on Insomnia

Several mechanisms underlie mindfulness meditation's positive impact on sleep. Primarily, mindfulness meditation has been associated with the regulation of the autonomic nervous system, fostering a shift from the often dominant sympathetic ('fight or flight') response to the parasympathetic ('rest and digest') response. This shift is conducive to a lower arousal level, which is beneficial before the transition to sleep. By reducing cognitive arousal, often manifested as a barrage of pre-sleep worries, mindfulness meditation can pave the way for a smoother transition into sleep. Moreover, mindfulness meditation may enhance melatonin production, a hormone pivotal for sleep regulation. Studies have found that long-term practitioners of Vipassanā meditation exhibit enhanced slow-wave sleep (SWS) and rapid eye movement (REM) sleep. Which indicates a measurable enhancement in overall sleep quality.

The Impact of Mindfulness Meditation on Insomnia

Empirical evidence underscores the potential of mindfulness meditation as a non-pharmacological intervention for sleep enhancement. Numerous studies have elucidated the positive correlation between meditative practices and improved sleep quality. Furthermore, individuals grappling with insomnia have reported substantial improvements in sleep latency, duration, and efficiency when engaged in regular meditative practices. These findings not only augment the understanding of mindfulness meditation's role in sleep improvement but also beckon a larger discourse on integrating such mind-body practices in holistic approaches to sleep health. Through further exploration and a deeper understanding of the intricate relationships between mindfulness meditation and sleep, it's plausible to envisage a future where mindfulness meditation is a widely recognized and employed tool in combating the burgeoning sleep disorder epidemic.

Part Three

References to Insomnia in the Pāli Tipiṭaka

References to Insomnia in the Pāli Tipiṭaka

In the early Buddhist canon, the **Pāli Tipiṭaka**, we can find numerous passages that relate to the phenomenon of insomnia. These references can be broadly categorized into two areas: the Buddha' s analysis of the **underlying causes of sleeplessness**, and **the methods he recommended for addressing it and achieving better sleep.**



Causes for poor sleep

- a. Anger
- b. Anxiety
- c. Desire
- d. Muddled mind

Causes for poor sleep

1. Anger

When talking about anger, poor sleep is mentioned as one of the adverse effects it brings:

"The angry person is ugly; he also sleeps badly.

Again, an enemy wishes for an enemy: 'May he sleep badly!' For what reason? An enemy does not delight when an enemy sleeps well. When an angry person is overcome and oppressed by anger, though he may sleep on a couch spread with rugs, blankets, and covers, with an excellent covering of antelope hide, with a canopy and red bolsters at both ends, still, he sleeps badly. "



Causes for poor sleep



2. Anxiety

There are two cases in the text of poor sleep due to anxiety, and both are kings.

In Paṭhamasaṅgāmasuttaṃ Sutta (SN 3.14), the Buddha talked about the King lost the war would not sleep well. And one who gets free from victory or defeat (success desire) and becomes peaceful will sleep well.

"... King Pasenadi, having been defeated, will sleep badly tonight.

Victory breeds enmity,
The defeated one sleeps badly.
The peaceful one sleeps at ease,
Having abandoned victory and defeat."

Causes for poor sleep

3. Desire

A sutta titled Appaṃsupatisuttaṃ (Little Sleep, AN 5.137) listed five types of people who sleep little:

"Bhikkhus, these five sleep little at night but mostly keep awake. What five? A woman intent on a man, a man intent on a woman, a thief intent on theft, a king engaged with his royal duties, and a bhikkhu intent on severing the bonds. These five sleep little at night but mostly keep awake. "

Men and women caught up in lust, thieves, kings and bhikkhus. These five types of people all have particular desires. A bhikkhu should sleep little and keep awake in order to attain enlightenment.



Causes for poor sleep



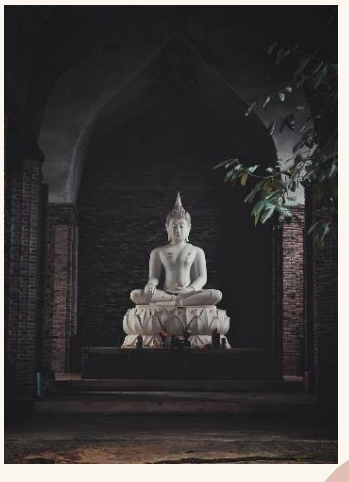
4. Muddled mind

A person who falls asleep with a muddled mind instead of clear comprehending will have poor sleep, according to Muṭṭhassatisuttaṃ Sutta (AN 5.210).

"Bhikkhus, there are these five dangers for one who falls asleep with a muddled mind, lacking clear comprehension. What five? He sleeps badly; he awakens miserably; he has bad dreams; the deities do not protect him; and semen is emitted. These are the five dangers for one who falls asleep with a muddled mind, lacking clear comprehension. "

How to sleep well

In Hatthakasuttaṃ Sutta (AN 3.35), the Buddha claimed he slept very well that he was "**one of those in the world who sleep well** " . A prince asked the Buddha how he could sleep well during the cold winter nights, to which the Buddha replied that he had abandoned lust, hatred, and delusion, which could cause bodily and mental fevers and therefore slept well. The person who has attained Nibbāna, cooled off, without acquisitions, not tainted by sensual pleasures, always sleeps well, having achieved peace of mind. Nibbāna is the highest goal of Buddhist practice, and good sleep is often a byproduct of attaining a tranquil mind. Moreover, corresponding to the previously discussed causes of poor sleep, the Buddha also taught three additional methods to improve sleep quality.



How to sleep well



1. Destroying anger

Chetvāsuttaṃ Sutta (SN 1.71) talked about destroying anger makes one sleep soundly and removes sorrow. However, it is unclear whether anger leads to sorrow, which in turn leads to poor sleep, or whether it is two parallel outcomes of anger.

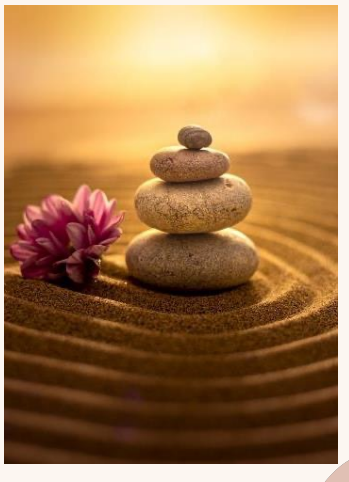
"Having slain what does one sleep soundly?
Having slain what does one not sorrow?
What is the one thing, O Gotama,
Whose killing you approve?
[The Blessed One:]
Having slain anger, one sleeps soundly;
Having slain anger, one does not sorrow;
The killing of anger, O devatā,
With its poisoned root and honeyed tip:
This is the killing the noble ones praise,
For having slain that, one does not sorrow."

How to sleep well

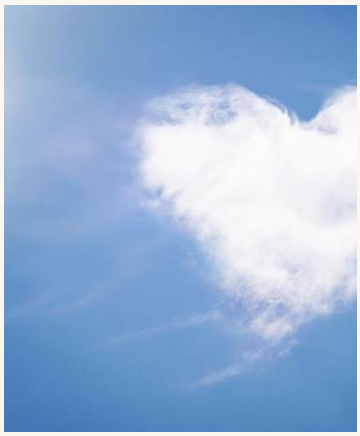
2. Sleeping mindfully

Sleeping mindfully and with clear comprehension has five benefits for good sleep (AN 5.210). It also provides a specific definition of "good sleep" in Pāli Tipiṭaka.

"Bhikkhus, there are these five benefits for one who falls asleep mindfully and with clear comprehension. What five? He sleeps well; he awakens happily; he does not have bad dreams; deities protect him; and semen is not emitted. These are the five benefits for one who falls asleep mindfully and with clear comprehension."



How to sleep well



3. Loving-kindness meditation

Sleeping well is three of the eleven benefits of loving-kindness (Mettāsuttaṃ Sutta, AN 11.15). Herein, a night of good sleep is separated into three parts — "**sleep well**", "**awake happily**", and "**no bad dreams**".

"Bhikkhus, when the liberation of the mind by loving-kindness has been pursued, developed, and cultivated, made a vehicle and basis, carried out, consolidated, and properly undertaken, eleven benefits are to be expected. What eleven?

"One sleeps well; one awakens happily; one does not have bad dreams…"

Part Four

Buddhism and Modern Science: An Integrated Approach to Insomnia

Underlying Factors Contributing to Poor Sleep Quality

Buddhist Perspective

Anger, Anxiety, Desire, Muddled mind...

Heightened cognitive arousal, Stress, Anxiety, Poor sleep habits, Circadian rhythm disruptions, and Environmental stimuli...

Societal Perspective

Strategies for Enhancing the Quality of Sleep

Buddhist Perspective

Overcoming Anger, Mindful Sleeping, Loving-kindness Meditation

Societal Perspective

Maintaining Healthy Sleep Habits
Addressing Sleep Disorders
Lifestyle Adjustments
CBT, Mindfulness therapy...

Buddhism and Modern Science: An Integrated Approach to Insomnia



Compared to people today, those living in the Buddha' s time were subject to fewer external disturbances to sleep—such as artificial lighting or the blue light emitted by mobile devices. As a result, the Buddha' s teachings on sleep quality focus more on **internal psychological states** rather than environmental factors. Despite these differences, certain problems pinpointed by Buddha such as anger, anxiety, desire, and scattered thinking leading to insomnia, have also been corroborated by contemporary scientific inquiries. The methods proposed by the Buddha for enhancing sleep quality, namely overcoming anger, mindfulness practices before sleep, and loving-kindness meditation, have been substantiated by scientific studies as efficacious in improving sleep quality.

Part Five

Conclusion

Conclusion

This article has briefly introduced the application of mindfulness as an approach to insomnia treatment in modern science, alongside an exploration of how insomnia is addressed and discussed in early Buddhist texts. In doing so, it aims to build a bridge between ancient wisdom and contemporary scientific understanding.

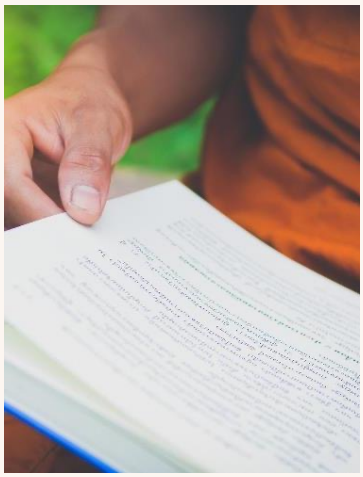
The Buddha' s teachings are typically grounded in everyday experience and deliberately avoid metaphysical speculation detached from practical life. Rather, the Dhamma is based on careful observation and deep reflection on bodily and mental phenomena.



Conclusion

As discussed through the topic of insomnia, the Buddha insightfully identified emotional states—such as anger, anxiety, desire, and overthinking—as immediate causes of sleeplessness. This psychological framework closely parallels the foundational logic of contemporary cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), highlighting a striking convergence between early Buddhist insight and modern psychological science. The meditative practices found in Buddhism—which have since been adapted and integrated into modern psychology—include not only the well-known practice of **mindfulness meditation**, but also **loving-kindness meditation** (mettā bhāvanā). These methods are particularly effective in calming emotional disturbances and fostering mental clarity. Through consistent practice, they can bring about a fundamental shift in one' s patterns of thinking, enabling individuals suffering from insomnia to more rationally observe and respond to negative emotions and restless thoughts. In doing so, practitioners come to recognize the **impermanence (anicca), unsatisfaction (dukkha)**, and **non-self (anattā)** nature of these mental phenomena, thereby loosening their grip and reducing their impact on sleep.

Conclusion



In this light, mindfulness is not merely a tool for managing stress or enhancing productivity, but a philosophical (Buddhist) practice aimed at cultivating well-being through insight into the nature of the mind. By integrating early Buddhist insights with contemporary scientific understanding, we are reminded that the pursuit of better sleep—and indeed, of well-being itself—is intimately tied to how we perceive, interpret, and inhabit our mental and emotional lives. Seen through this lens, the path from sleeplessness to serenity is not just clinical, but profoundly philosophical.


Thank you for your listening

B1

Xingyu Chen & Jingyi Zhang(Xi'an Jiaotong University)

Role-Playing Games as Self-Technologies for Identity Reconstruction: Utilizing Foucault's "Technologies of the Self" to Analyze RPGs as a Modern In tervention

西安交通大學 XI'AN JIAOTONG UNIVERSITY

Role-Playing Games as Self-Technologies for Identity Reconstruction

Utilizing Foucault's "Technologies of the Self" to Analyze RPGs as a Modern Intervention

Presenter： Xingyu Chen & Jingyi Zhang

Mentor: Xiaojun Ding

Date:July 11, 2025

西安交通大學 XI'AN JIAOTONG UNIVERSITY

Contents

01 Introduction: Identity Crisis in the Digital Age

02 Foucault's "Technologies of the Self"

03 RPGs as Modern Self-Technologies

04 Therapeutic Game Design Framework

05 Conclusion & Future Directions

西安交通大学 XI'AN JIAOTONG UNIVERSITY

The Landscape of Digital Identity Fragmentation



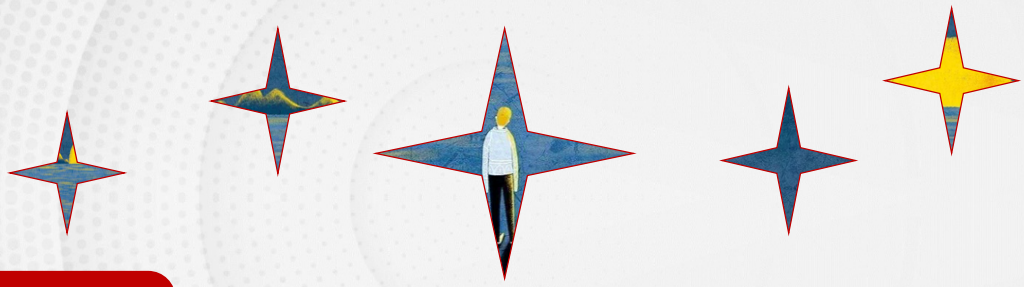


Digital existence leads to unprecedented identity fragmentation and Modern individuals face self-cognitive confusion

In this era of pervasive digital existence, individuals grapple with unprecedented identity fragmentation and self-cognitive confusion. Role-playing games, leveraging their inherent strengths in narrative immersion, virtual identity construction, and ethical decision-making systems, offer participants a low-risk space and integrative pathways for identity exploration.

西安交通大学 XI'AN JIAOTONG UNIVERSITY

The Landscape of Digital Identity Fragmentation



RPGs provide

- Low-risk identity exploration space
- Virtual identity construction
- Narrative immersion
- Ethical decision-making systems

西安交通大学 XIAN JIAOTONG UNIVERSITY

Foucault's Four Fundamental Technologies

1	**Production technologies**	First are production technologies, concerning the production and reproduction of material necessities.
2	**Sign systems**	Second are sign systems, such as writing enabling historical transmission and mathematical notation catalyzing scientific leaps.
3	**Technologies of power**	Third are technologies of power, the mechanisms through which social institutions regulate individual behavior via normalization.
4	**Technologies of the self**	These are practices permitting individuals, by their own means or with others' help, to perform systematic operations on their own bodies, souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, aiming for self-transformation and optimization.

西安交通大学 XIAN JIAOTONG UNIVERSITY

Technologies of the Self - Core Concept

The self becomes both the agent and the object of action, signifying individual agency in self-formation. Unlike the first three, which focus on how external forces shape the subject, technologies of the self concentrate on how the subject constructs itself.

Embodied perception

In embodied perception, Foucault stressed that "the body, as the vessel of life, cannot be an object of renunciation", advocating for "creative means to experience bodily pleasure".

Aesthetic experience

The aesthetic dimension elevates everyday life into an artistic creation, achieving self-transcendence through aesthetically valuable practices, akin to the ancient Greek pursuit of happiness and beauty.

Truth-seeking

The truth dimension manifests in using "truth games" like confession, writing, and meditation to forge a deep connection with the self.

Historical evolution: Greece ››› Rome ››› Christianity

西安交通大學 XIAN JIAOTONG UNIVERSITY

Ancient vs. Modern Self-Technologies

Ancient

- **"Care of the self" as primary**
- **Self-perfection goal**
- **Self as existence**

self-writing, combining self-contemplation and self-shaping, constituted a quintessential form of self-technology. This writing was fundamentally a textual presentation of the self, complementary to daily life. It alleviated the spiritual crises of solitude and became a channel for examining one's thoughts.

VS

Modern

- **"Know thyself" as primary**
- **Self-knowledge goal**
- **Self as object**

In modernity, however, this relationship has fundamentally inverted: self-knowledge has become the primary imperative. Modern individuals care for themselves not to know themselves; paradoxically, knowing oneself often becomes a path to self-renunciation.

西安交通大學 XIAN JIAOTONG UNIVERSITY

RPGs as Digital Self-Technologies

Three core correspondences:

Digital self-writing

Theories like Grodal's "virtual embodiment" suggest that character progression systems tightly bind player cognition to game symbols. Within this binding, the journals players write for their characters become surrogate vessels for self-expression.

Plural self-exploration

Character creation systems provide experimental platforms for exploring plural selves. Through customization (appearance, class, background), players perform experimental reconstructions of self-concept.

Ethical askesis

Players' "truth-telling" through autonomous choices in virtual scenarios is an exercise of their moral agency. Moral psychology shows RPG ethical tasks activate players' "moral schemas", with decision patterns correlating significantly to real-world moral cognition. The importance lies in creating a low-risk, high-immersion zone for moral experimentation.

西安交通大學 XIAN JIAOTONG UNIVERSITY

Digital Self-Writing Examples

Justice Online: "Jianghu Travelogue" journals

Player-generated content:

- 01 **Guild logs**
- 02 **Strategy guides**
- 03 **Plot discussions**
- 04 **Dynamic text co-created by player-system interaction**



This collective practice echoes Foucault's view of "writing as a social technology", where individuals refine self-perception through others' feedback.

西安交通大學 XIAN JIAOTONG UNIVERSITY

Character Creation as Self-Exploration

Final Fantasy XIV race options:

Elezen (elegant) Lalafell (diminutive)

Final Fantasy XIV, for instance, offers diverse races from elegant Elezen to diminutive Lalafell.

Three exploration modes:

- **Idealized self-projection**
- **"Other" self-experimentation**
- **Compensatory identity seeking**



This freedom makes games digital domains for Foucault's "care of the self".

Moral Choice Systems as Parrhesia

Final Fantasy XIV dilemmas:



01 **Protect weak vs. obey authority**

02 **Players exercise "truth-telling" through choices**

03 **Digital equivalent of ancient risk-taking frank speech**

Therapeutic Interventions Framework

Identity Crisis

01 Existential anxiety

Life's fragmentation hinders coherent life narratives, manifesting as existential anxiety, value confusion, and motivational loss.

02 Temporal fragmentation

Postmodern time often feels discontinuous, disrupting past-present-future coherence and self-identity.

03 Presentism

Presentism erodes long-term planning, trapping individuals in instant gratification.

04 Individual-group conflict

Individual vs. Group: Balancing group belonging and individuality is a core digital-social challenge.

05 Evaluation anxiety

Pervasive evaluation anxiety stems from internalizing external judgment.

RPG Solution

01 Narrative quest frameworks

RPGs counter this through structured narrative frameworks, offering clear meaning references.

02 Character progression systems

RPG character progression systems create visible growth trajectories, turning abstract time passage into concrete skill gains and character evolution.

03 Resource management mechanics

RPGs counter this via resource management and delayed reward mechanics, recalibrating time perception.

04 Multiplayer social labs

Multiplayer RPGs create unique social laboratories with adjustable group dynamics parameters.

05 Programmed social feedback

RPGs utilize programmed social feedback architectures to create supportive evaluation environments.

西安交通大學 XI'AN JIAOTONG UNIVERSITY

Four-Dimensional Evaluation

·Subject Agency:
Autonomy, competence, relatedness

Drawing on Deci & Ryan's Self-Determination Theory, genuine self-technology should satisfy needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Design must avoid over-reliance on behaviorist stimulus-response mechanics.

·Reality Transfer:
Game-to-life translation

The ideal "magic circle" effect positively influences reality, not becoming an escapist enclave.

Dimensional Evaluation

·Reflective Depth:
Meta-cognitive development

Effective self-technology should enhance, not diminish, critical thinking. This is key to differentiating philosophical therapy from mere entertainment.

·Ethical Safety:
Data privacy, meaningful choices

Evaluates design against therapeutic ethics: safeguarding data privacy, informed consent, avoiding exploitative mechanics. Particular attention is paid to the depth of moral choice systems.

西安交通大學 XI'AN JIAOTONG UNIVERSITY

Theoretical Contributions

Extends Foucault to digital media studies

Extending Foucault's self-technologies into digital media studies, forging a new paradigm for game research;

Defines "digital self-technologies" concept

Defining an operational concept of "digital self-technologies", adding a new analytical tool for identity studies;

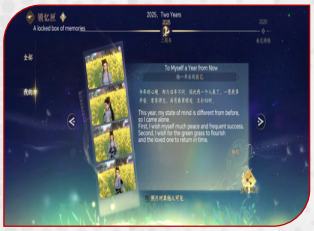
Builds gamified philosophical therapy framework

Adding a new analytical tool for identity studies; and constructing a framework for gamified philosophical therapy targeting five specific crises, using RPG mechanics as the response.

西安交通大學 XIAN JIAOTONG UNIVERSITY

Practical Significance

RPG mechanics aid identity integration:



Narrative immersion

↓

Meaning reconstruction



Character projection

↓

Self-exploration



Moral choices

↓

Ethical cognition

西安交通大學 XIAN JIAOTONG UNIVERSITY

Future Research Directions

Cross-cultural adaptations

AI-powered personalized protocols

01 — 02 — 03

Longitudinal efficacy studies

西安交通大學
XI'AN JIAOTONG UNIVERSITY

Role-Playing Games as Self-Technologies for Identity Reconstruction

Thanks for listening



Qiman Liu (Peking University)

"Remedying Self-alienation in AI-linked Bodies: Philosophical Practice for Digital Intelligence Cyborgs"

1. Introduction

With the popularization of smart phones, smart bracelet and brain-computer interfaces, in the era of mobile health, our physical bodies are gradually connected to the Internet, making us who use smart devices driven by digital intelligence technologies, such as sensors, the Internet and AI algorithms, become users of the Internet of Bodies (IoB). Similar to the Internet of Things (IoT), the Internet of Bodies has made it possible to data-enable biological information about the human body.[1] The Internet of Bodies devices, supported by sensors capable of collecting massive amounts of human body data, the Internet for transmitting human body data, and AI algorithms for processing human body data, have not only enhanced human perception of the self, but also reshaped the shape of the human body. Building on Donna Haraway's and Deborah Lepton's discussion of the "cyborg," we argue that the physical body and physical data of each Internet of Bodies user is contacted, connected, and embedded in the Internet of Bodies device through digital intelligence, in effect generating a new form of cyborg - the Digital Intelligence Cyborg.

Digital Intelligence Cyborgs (DICs) emerge from the Internet of Bodies, an ecosystem of ingestible, wearable, and implantable devices that connect human bodies to networks, enabling continuous data collection and feedback loops between flesh and algorithmic systems. These DICs represent a fusion of biological processes and digital intelligence, whereby sensor arrays, connectivity infrastructures, and AI-driven analytics transform lived bodily states into quantifiable metrics for medical and wellness discourses. Under the guise of continuous health surveillance and optimization, IoB devices enact a complete medicalization of DICs' embodied life—shifting from traditional, episodic interventions to an all-encompassing, algorithmic governance of the body as data subject.[2] This totalizing datafication coupled with social acceleration—where digital infrastructures demand instantaneity of response—generates chronic temporal pressure and erodes reflective time, precipitating profound self-alienation as individuals lose access to pre-data bodily awareness and autonomous self-interpretation.

In this paper, we will study the issue of self-alienation of the DICs in internet social interaction, and propose the "virtual emptiness paradox": the more individuals engage with infinite digital possibilities, the more hollow their sense of self appears. Finally, we will attempt to find solutions for the DICs in Eastern and Western thought, and give a

[1] Dhanaraj, R. K., Rawal, B. S., Krishnamoorthi, S., & Balusamy, B. (Eds.). (2023). *Artificial Intelligence in IoT and Cyborgization*. Springer Nature Singapore: V.

[2] Liu, Q., & Tang, W. (2025). From Internet of Bodies to Digital Intelligence Cyborg: A Path to Complete Medicalization of the Bodies. *Journal of Engineering Studies*, DOI: 10.3724/j.issn.1674-4969.20240122. CSTR: 32282.14.JES.20240122

new existentialism theory that can remedy our bodies that have been deeply involved by AI, standing on the shoulders of many philosophers.

2. Virtual Emptiness Paradox and Digital Intelligence Cyborgs' Self-alienation

First, the complete medicalization enabled by IoB devices transforms every bodily fluctuation into an algorithmically defined health metric. No longer confined to episodic clinical encounters, the body is subject to real-time surveillance and normative intervention, eroding the boundary between living experience and digital representation. Simultaneously, digital infrastructures impose a regime of instantaneity that mirrors Hartmut Rosa's concept of social acceleration[3]: DICs face relentless temporal pressure to monitor, interpret, and respond to data streams and social prompts without respite. This chronic acceleration undermines reflective time and scatters subjective experience across fragmented digital engagements.

Second, the demand for public spiritual display in virtual spaces externalizes private realms of thought, emotion, and meaning. The expectations to externalize inner experiences as curated social displays transforms private spiritual space into performative content, intensifying feelings of emptiness and distancing users from authentic relational engagement. Drawing on Sherry Turkle's critique of online performance,[4] DICs are compelled to curate their "inner lives" as sharable content, creating an illusion of openness that paradoxically deepens social and existential disconnection. The boundless abundance of online interaction and content options gives rise to what might be termed the "virtual emptiness paradox": the more individuals engage with infinite digital possibilities, the more hollow their sense of self appears. Empirical studies link excessive social media use and constant connectivity to heightened loneliness, anxiety, and depression, suggesting that the digital profusion hollow out the soul rather than enrich it.[5]

Third, the embodied nature of human existence is reconfigured in human–computer interaction as the body becomes both the site of data production and the interface of digital control. Embodied-cognition theories emphasize that meaningful thought arises from situated bodily engagement; yet, in DICs, technological mediation interposes a layer of algorithmic interpretation between sensation and self-awareness. This reified "data body" fosters a new form of technological self-alienation, wherein individuals experience estrangement not only from others and the world, but from their own pre-data bodily selves. In the realm of technology and human-computer interaction, self-alienation can manifest in various ways. Technology has the potential to create a disconnect between an individual's lived experience and the underlying conditions that

---

[3] Rosa, H. (2003). Social acceleration: ethical and political consequences of a desynchronized high–speed society. *Constellations: An International Journal of Critical & Democratic Theory*, *10*(1).

[4] Turkle, S. (1995). *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*. New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks.

[5] Seabrook, E. M., Kern, M. L., & Rickard, N. S. (2016). Social networking sites, depression, and anxiety: a systematic review. *JMIR mental health*, *3*(4), e5842.

shape that experience, as well as fostering a sense of separation between individuals and their surrounding worlds, and contributing to broader social divisions. The pervasive hyper-connectivity of the digital age can exacerbate feelings of alienation by promoting a fragmented and detached mode of existence. As individuals increasingly focus on constructing and maintaining carefully curated digital personas, they may risk losing touch with their authentic selves and the genuine relationships that define their existence. Some scholars argue that digital alienation arises when an individual's digital life or online identity becomes subject to exploitation.[6] The concept of "technological alienation" describes a situation where the majority of individuals engage in labor using machines that they neither own nor fully comprehend.[7] This concept takes on a unique significance with DICs, where the "machine" becomes an integral part of their own bodies, potentially leading to a deeper sense of estrangement from their own physical form and personal agency.

The pervasive nature of constant connectivity in the digital age has significant ramifications for an individual's sense of self and overall well-being. The state of being "always on" can induce considerable stress, anxiety, depression, and mental exhaustion due to the overwhelming influx of information and the societal pressure to maintain constant availability. Social media platforms often cultivate a culture of comparison, where individuals are continuously exposed to idealized portrayals of others' lives, contributing to negative mental health outcomes such as depression, anxiety, and diminished self-esteem. The fear of missing out further intensifies anxiety and the compulsion to remain perpetually connected to digital networks. Moreover, constant connectivity can disrupt natural sleep patterns, which are fundamental for maintaining mental health and emotional equilibrium. It can also foster social isolation by diminishing the quality and frequency of meaningful in-person interactions, potentially substituting deep human connections with more superficial online engagements.[8] The expectation of being constantly accessible can create a state of perpetual hypervigilance, elevating stress and anxiety levels even in response to non-urgent information. This condition could be amplified in DICs, who may be continuously monitoring and transmitting data related to their own bodily functions. The reliance on external validation through metrics like "likes" and comments on social media can significantly impact self-esteem, leading to feelings of rejection or inadequacy when such validation is lacking. DICs might experience similar pressures related to their digital self-representation and the data they choose to share within online communities.

The immersion in virtual worlds and the reliance on digital self-representation can also contribute to increased feelings of emptiness, depression, and detachment from real-life interactions. Excessive engagement with social media has been consistently linked

---

[6] Dainow, B. (2016). Digital alienation as the foundation of online privacy concerns. *Acm Sigcas Computers and Society*, *45*(3), 109-117.

[7] Wendling, A. (2009). *Karl Marx on technology and alienation*. Springer, p.56.

[8] Pantic, I. (2014). Online social networking and mental health. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, *17*(10), 652-657.

to heightened feelings of loneliness and overall dissatisfaction with life. Utilizing social media as a means of escaping from the challenges of reality is considered an unhealthy coping mechanism that prevents individuals from fully acknowledging and processing their emotions. The discrepancy between an individual's "true self" and the idealized "Facebook self" or other forms of digital self-representation can lead to a range of psychological problems and vulnerabilities.[9] Furthermore, communicational alienation arising from the nature of digital systems can contribute to broader intergenerational alienation and pervasive feelings of estrangement. The phenomenon of "emotional self-alienation" describes a state where individuals experience a deficiency in their ability to identify with, acknowledge, or express their own emotions, a condition that may be exacerbated by the reduced presence of embodied communication in online interactions.[10] DICs, with their potentially altered or technologically mediated bodily experiences, might be particularly vulnerable to this form of alienation from their own emotional landscape. The rapid and continuous evolution of digital communication technologies can also create an unstable foundation for interpersonal understanding, further contributing to feelings of alienation and disconnection.[49] As the technologies integrated into the bodies of DICs are also likely to undergo rapid advancements, these individuals might experience a similar sense of instability in their own sense of self and their connections with others.

3. Remedying Self-alienation with Eastern and Western Thought

Self-alienation, as a philosophical concept, encompasses a state or feeling of detachment, estrangement, and isolation from oneself, others, one's work, and the broader world, often accompanied by a sense of meaninglessness and a lack of personal value.[11] At its core, alienation involves a problematic separation between a subject and an object that are considered to belong together in a fundamental way. Early philosophical perspectives on technology-induced alienation often focused on the idea of objectification, suggesting that technology transforms individuals into mere objects rather than subjects with agency. Karl Marx's influential theory of alienation elaborated on this concept by describing the ways in which capitalist systems and the division of labor lead to the estrangement of workers from the products of their labor, the act of working itself, their fellow human beings, and ultimately from their own human nature. Existentialist philosophy, on the other hand, views alienation as an inherent aspect of the human condition, stemming from the individual's confrontation with the inherent absurdity of existence and the absence of preordained meaning.[12]

---

[9] Gil-Or, O., Levi-Belz, Y., & Turel, O. (2015). The "Facebook-self": Characteristics and psychological predictors of false self-presentation on Facebook. *Frontiers in psychology*, *6*, 99.

[10] Lohkamp, J. (2023). Emotional Alienation and Online Sociality. *Cognitive Science Student Journal*, 10. 1-8.

[11] Coeckelbergh, M. (2012). Technology as Skill and Activity: Revisiting the Problem of Alienation. *Techne: Research in Philosophy & Technology*, *16*(3).

[12] Anjum, N. (2019). Notion of Alienation, An Existentialist Approach. *International Journal of Engineering and Applied Sciences,* Vol. 6, No. 3, (2019), pp. 10-13.

The historical understanding of alienation reveals that the concept has not always carried negative connotations; in ancient times, it could sometimes refer to a positive detachment from the limitations of worldly existence in pursuit of higher states of contemplation. This historical nuance is important for understanding the specific nature of alienation as it manifests in the context of contemporary technological integration. Martin Heidegger's philosophical work offers a critical perspective on hyper-connectivity in the digital age, arguing that it fosters a state of distraction that leads to a profound disconnection from authentic being and an alienation from genuine engagement with the world. His concept of "Being-in-the-World" (Dasein) underscores the importance of a grounded and meaningful existence, which is potentially undermined by excessive immersion in virtual environments.

To address these interlocking dimensions of self-alienation, we propose a Humanities Therapy–enhanced Philosophical Practice framework that synthesizes Lou Marinoff's humanities therapy with the practical philosophy of self-cultivation in Confucianism and existentialism. Lou Marinoff's work on "Humanities Therapy" offers a compelling framework for understanding and addressing the challenges posed by our increasingly technologically mediated world, which he terms "technosociety".[13] Marinoff distinguishes between a "technocracy," where governance is primarily in the hands of technological elites, and a "technosociety," where traditional political systems remain in place but daily personal, social, economic, and cultural interactions are predominantly mediated by technology.[14] He posits that the current overemphasis on technology, coupled with a corresponding underexposure to the humanities, leads to a variety of detrimental effects, including cognitive and behavioral deficits, a growing disconnect between mind and body, a pervasive loss of meaning in life, the virtualization of personal identity, and increasing cultural illiteracy. His approach emphasizes the application of philosophical insights and the power of dialogue to navigate life's complex challenges and ethical dilemmas, ultimately fostering self-understanding and promoting personal growth.[15] Marinoff specifically highlights the "divorce of minds from bodies" that he observes in technosociety, largely attributed to the excessive and often compulsive use of mobile phones. This concept holds particular relevance for DICs, whose integration with technology could further complicate the intricate relationship between their minds and their physical bodies, potentially leading to an even more profound sense of alienation from their own physicality. Furthermore, Marinoff raises concerns about the potential for a decline in fundamental cognitive skills due to an over-reliance on AI. This is a critical consideration for DICs, who, by definition, integrate AI to enhance their intelligence.

---

[13] Lou, Marinoff (2020). Humanitarian therapy as a means of protecting against detriments of technological community. *Sotsium I Vlast* 2:19-28.

[14] Marioff, L. (2019). Humanities Therapy as a Remedy for Detriments of Technosociety. In *The Proceeding of 2019 International Conference on Humanities Therapy in Technosociety at Nanjing University*.

[15] Li, H., Ding, X., & Li, M. (2024). A cross-cultural comparison of Chinese and Western philosophical practice: exploring new paths for philosophical healing and social harmony. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, *11*(1), 1-21.

Such dependence on AI for cognitive functions could inadvertently erode their natural cognitive abilities and foster a sense of alienation from their own minds. Ultimately, Marinoff's work underscores the idea that the multifaceted problems of technosociety, including the pervasive sense of alienation, are fundamentally philosophical in nature and necessitate solutions rooted in the wisdom of philosophy and the humanities, rather than relying solely on scientific, technological, or medical interventions.[16] This perspective strongly supports the need for a philosophical approach to effectively address the issue of self-alienation in individuals who are increasingly becoming Digital Intelligence Cyborgs.

The principle of the Confucianism golden mean regarding the restraint of emotions before they are expressed, can also serve as an important theoretical guideline for the implementation framework of philosophical practice for DICs. Originating from Confucius and further developed by the Zisi-Mencius school,[17] the Confucian principle "What Heaven imparts to man is called human nature; to follow our nature is called the Way; to cultivate the Way is called education" culminates in the individual's sincere embodiment of the Doctrine of the Mean (Zhongyong), particularly the state of "equilibrium before the feelings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy are aroused". This final way of self-cultivation and practice will ultimately lead to sincerity(cheng). As the saying goes, "A gentleman is sincere in his intentions". This systematic guidance for personal cultivation offers a method for resolving the problem of self-alienation for DICs in our contemporary digital-intelligent society. The principles of the Confucianism golden mean offer valuable tools for managing the challenges and opportunities presented by their integration with AI and the internet. This includes focusing on their own responses to external circumstances, practicing self-control over their digital engagement and the consumption of information, and cultivating emotional resilience and acceptance of their unique condition as DICs.

To effectively address the potential for self-alienation in Digital Intelligence Cyborgs, a comprehensive philosophical practice is needed that draws upon the strengths of various philosophical traditions. This practice should integrate elements of existentialism, and Confucianism, alongside insights from Humanities Therapy, to foster a sense of integration and authenticity.

Existentialist reflections can guide DICs in exploring the deeper questions of meaning and purpose in their lives as hybrid beings. This involves embracing the unique freedom and responsibility that accompany their enhanced capabilities and actively defining their authentic identity in the context of their biological and technological integration, rather than passively accepting externally imposed definitions. Adapting Martin Heidegger's concept of releasement (Gelassenheit), practitioners foster an

[16] Marinoff, L. (2012). Humanities Therapy: Restoring Well-Being in an Age of Culturally-Induced Illness. *Keynote address//Proceedings of the 11th International Confe rence on Philosophical Practice. Huma nities Institute, Kangwon National University*, 27-48.

[17] Liang, Tao. 2008. Guodian zhujian yu simeng xuepai (Guodian Bamboo Manuscripts and the Si-Meng School). Beijing: China Renmin University Press, pp. 292-300.

attitude of “letting-be,” encouraging DICs to resist compulsive responsiveness to digital prompts and to reclaim unstructured temporal space for contemplative presence.
As for the specific form of practice, we believe it should be carried out in the way of Socratic dialogue. Practitioners engage DICs in probing questions that expose the hidden assumptions encoded in algorithmic self-narratives—beliefs about health, productivity, and identity derived from continuous data feedback. This dialogical method reestablishes cognitive autonomy by revealing and challenging unexamined premises.

4. Conclusion

The above integrated philosophical practice can be further structured into a framework that includes: a Self-Awareness Module, encouraging DICs to explore their feelings of alienation through introspective practices; a Technological Agency Module, focused on developing strategies for mindful technology use and establishing healthy boundaries with their integrated devices; a Meaning-Making Module, guiding DICs in reflecting on their core values and life purpose in both the physical and digital realms; an Embodied Integration Module, promoting practices that foster a strong and positive connection between their biological and technological selves; and a Community and Connection Module, encouraging active engagement with supportive communities, both online and offline, to combat feelings of isolation and foster a sense of belonging. What’s more, specific practices focused on embodiment and identity integration are crucial. This includes regular engagement in physical activities and embracing nature, much like a naturalist, to maintain a strong connection with their biological bodies and reflecting on the intricate relationship between their physical and virtual selves to foster a greater sense of coherence and wholeness in the life-world.
In conclusion, the emergence of Digital Intelligence Cyborgs represents a significant step in the ongoing evolution of the human relationship with technology, presenting both remarkable opportunities and profound existential challenges. The risk of self-alienation in this new era is substantial and requires thoughtful consideration and proactive intervention. By integrating the wisdom of Humanities Therapy with the practical tools of existentialism, and Confucianism, a robust philosophical practice can be developed to help DICs navigate the complexities of their hybrid existence and cultivate an integrated, authentic, and meaningful sense of self in the age of AI-linked bodies. By weaving together Western and Eastern traditions of philosophical reflection, our Humanities Therapy–enhanced Philosophical Practice offers a holistic remedy for self-alienation in the age of AI-linked bodies. As IoB technologies continue to evolve, ongoing interdisciplinary research and dialogue will be essential to refine these interventions and to safeguard the integrity of human identity and embodied experience.

The First International Conference of the East Asian Society of Philosophical Practice："Philosophical Practice in 21st Century East Asia"

The Temporal Wisdom in *Zhou Yi* from the Perspective of Philosophical Counseling

ZHANG Lizeng, Ph.D.
Professor, Department of Philosophy
Director, Philosophical Counseling Research and Practice Center
Shandong Normal University
Email: zhanglizeng6666@126.com; 103078@sdnu.edu.cn

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

CONTENTS

1. "The Change Inseparable from Time"
2. The Timely Appropriateness ("*Shizhong*", 时中)
3. "The temporal position"("*Shiwei*", 时位)
4. Seizing "the Right Timing"

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

Introduction

Philosophical counseling aims to enhance the practical wisdom of clients. Although it originated in the West, philosophical counseling should not only draw upon Aristotelian Western wisdom—emphasizing philosophical traditions such as those of Socrates, the Stoics, and existentialism—but also attach the same importance to Eastern philosophy, particularly traditional Chinese wisdom.

Ran Lahav anticipated that various Eastern traditions will make significant contributions to the development of contemporary philosophical counseling.

Lou Marinoff integrated Aristotelian thought with Eastern philosophies such as Buddhism and Confucianism to establish the "ABC theory", as a means of addressing the challenges of an extreme world.

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

Introduction

I Ching is a great classic of ancient Chinese wisdom. It is revered as the "first of all classics and the source of the Great Dao". *Zhou Yi* (*I Ching* and its philosophical interpretations - *Ten Wings*) reveal profound insights into life and existence. The wisdom of *Zhou Yi* can apply to all things—it can trace the origin of phenomena, explore their outcomes, and uncover their essential nature.

Since ancient times, Chinese people have consulted *I Ching* before taking action, as stated in *Xi Ci*(《系辞传》): "*Before undertaking anything, one should consult it and act accordingly*." The wisdom of *Zhou Yi* helps people diagnose, resolve, or cope with problems in life， and more importantly, it helps prevent many potential life predicaments.

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

Introduction

Therefore, mastering the wisdom of *I Ching* enables one to both accept the will of Heaven and understand the course of fate, thereby finding peace in life, as expressed in the saying: "*Joyfully accept Heaven's will and understand one's destiny, thus free from anxiety*" (Chapter 4, *Xi Ci I*). *Zhou Yi*'s wisdom can serve as a valuable resource for philosophical counseling.

As a philosophy of change, *Zhou Yi* centers on the dynamic processes of transformation, which are inseparable from the dimension of time. Hence, uncovering the wisdom of "timing" holds crucial significance and value for developing a model of philosophical counseling grounded in *Zhou Yi*.

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

1. "The Change Inseparable from Time"

I Ching emphasizes change and explains the principles of change. Chapter 2 of *Xi Ci II* states: "*When things reach their limit, they change; through change, they become smooth; through smoothness, they endure. Therefore, Heaven aids those who understand the way of change, and it is nothing unfavorable for them.*" This statement means that when anything develops to its utmost, change must occur. As long as change continues, things will progress smoothly, and smooth progress naturally leads to lasting endurance. As Confucius said, "*Those who understand the way of change understand what the Gods are doing*." Thus, it is crucial to grasp the principles of change of *Zhou Yi*.

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

1. "The Change Inseparable from Time"

The sixty-four hexagrams of the I Ching constitute a symbolic system of human–nature interaction. This system reflects the interconnectedness of things and events in human experience, encompassing human factors such as values, emotions, culture, prediction, and decision-making. *Wen Yan Zhuan* (《文言传》) states, "*If a person aligns with time, connecting with his/her position in the universe, he/she can harmonize with the virtues of Heaven and Earth, with the clarity of the sun and moon, with the order of the four seasons, and with the fate of the spirits and gods*".

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

1. "The Change Inseparable from Time"

If the entire set of sixty-four hexagrams represents a large cosmic cycle of change, then each hexagram corresponds to a particular period, stage, or scene. From a micro perspective, each individual line ("*yao*",爻) represents a different point in time and space within a certain scene in a certain period. The six lines in a hexagram reflect the conditions of change at six different spatiotemporal points and indicate how one should respond accordingly. And the different outcome results from different responses.

Chapter 3 of *Xi Ci II* states: "*The yao (爻) imitates the movements of all things under Heaven*." The characteristics of the *yao* enlighten us to follow to the change of the world and to adjust ourselves according to the time. Whether you can follow the law of change, and whether you can make adjustments over time, the results are different, including fortune or misfortune, regret or no regret.

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

1. "The Change Inseparable from Time"

The explanation of hexagrams in *I Ching* are often expressed as follows: "*Acting in accordance with the time" and "moving together with the time*". The changes and flows of heaven, earth, and all things follow or adapt to the changes of time. For human life, the time and the timing is extremely important. In the *Wenyan Zhuan*, the most brilliant interpretation of the *Qian* hexagram is to interpret the fifth line – "*the Flying Dragon in the Sky: it is beneficial to see the great man whose actions must conform to the order of time*." Confucius said: "*Junzi* (君子)*always acts at the right time*." This means that *Junzi* can do the most appropriate thing at the most appropriate time, which is the unity of heaven and man (*tianrenheyi,*天人合一), and is also the proper integration of humans with time.

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

1. "The Change Inseparable from Time"

Chapter 11 of *Xi Ci I* states, "*I Ching is not only able to predict the future, but also contains the philosophical wisdom of the past*." The future and past refer to the dimension of time, which highlight the development law of things that have happened, and to predict the trend and outcome of future development. In the view of Confucianism, learning "*Yi*" (易)is not to predict the future through divination, but to master the Dao of "*Yi*". The future is naturally predicted by mastering the Dao of "*Yi*".

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

2. Timely Appropriateness ("*Shizhong*", 时中)

I Ching emphasizes not only the "time" within the "Four Seasons", but also highlights "timely appropriateness" ("*shizhong*", 时中) that is to follow the changes of *Yin and Yang*(阴阳) and the creation of life and morality. "Timely appropriateness" is a more dynamic concept than simply "centrality" ("*zhong*", 中). Firstly, "timely appropriateness" not only means achieving the mean in reality but also implies a potential state of harmony and order. Secondly, "timely appropriateness" is an appropriate behavioral characteristic of achieving the mean; "timely appropriateness" involves the positioning of the individual within the entire context , which individual must understand his/her situation in order to act appropriately toward the sustained coherence, order, harmony, and coordination.

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

2. Timely Appropriateness ("*Shizhong*", 时中)

The natural development of things always follows an inherent temporal order that is about "the harmony with the time". For humans, it is necessary first to recognize this natural tendency and understand the context in order to find the appropriate course of action that aligns with the development of things.

A person strives to realize and develop the hidden potentials and qualities within a given context. This effort must be coordinated with the *Yin and Yang* within that context. Whether a certain action is appropriate depends on its harmony with all *Yin and Yang* aspects of the situation, which is "timely appropriateness". The action at the "timely appropriateness" is both connected and coordinated with the time and the changes of the circumstance. Such action can not only promote order and harmony, but also avoid deterioration that leads to misfortune.

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

2. Timely Appropriateness ("*Shizhong*", 时中)

In specific situation, a person can have either a correct or incorrect attitude toward time or opportunity. The best relationship between a person and the time should be a natural harmony, which one grasped the appropriate timing with the current circumstances. For example, in the *Qian* hexagram, the first line (初九) says, "*The Hidden dragon, do not act!*" It means that the dragon must conceal and conserve strength, and refrain from rash to action for this moment. In the *Kun* hexagram(坤卦), the third line (六三) says in its *Image Commentary* ("*daxiangzhuan*",《大象传》), "*With the latent virtue, one can be waiting for manifesting at the right time*." It emphasizes to judge the situation, grasp the opportunity, and act when the time comes. The *Gen* hexagram（艮卦） advises: "*Stop when it's the time to stop; act when it's the time to act*." That means whether one act or not must consider the "timely appropriateness".

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

2. Timely Appropriateness ("*Shizhong*", 时中)

Therefore, one must also understand "timely appropriateness" rather than only understand "time". "Timely appropriateness" carries meaningful guidance and practical functions for our decisions and behaviors. If one can act in accord with the times and his/her situations within the entire context, there is perfect in his/her life. A person with the virtue of "timely appropriateness" can flexibly apply their virtues and fully express human nature and energy in different environments. However, if one fails to act in accordance with the "timely appropriateness, the disaster will be brought upon oneself, which is called "missing the timing" ("*shishi*", 失时).

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

3. "Temporal Position"("*Shiwei*",时位)

The first chapter of *Xi Ci I* states, "*When understanding the principles governing all things under the Heaven, one can find his/her proper position within the Heaven and Earth*." It means that one can find a fitting place between Heaven and Earth if he/she has mastered the fundamental principles and great laws governing all things in the universe. The fitting place is the concept of "position" ("*wei*", 位) in *Zhou Yi*. The "position" is not purely spatial, but also temporal.

In fact, the spatiotemporal laws of the sixty-four hexagrams correspond to the spatiotemporal laws of Heaven and Earth. Once an individual masters the laws of change of Heaven and Earth, he/she can find the right position within the universe. *Xu Gua Zhuan(*《序卦传》), the commentary about the order of hexagrams, provides a creative explanation of the temporal sequence and spatial orientation of the eight trigrams, and endow them with the unifying factor of space and time.

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

3. "Temporal Position"("Shiwei",时位)

The first chapter of *Xi Ci I* states: "*The sage thinks the 'position' as the greatest treasure." Zhou Yi Ji Jie* (《周易集解》), the collected explanations on the *Zhou Yi*, states, "*The sages practice the Dao of the Yi, in the course of which they must follow the great virtues of Heaven and Earth, and cherish the celestial 'position'."* Considering the sixty-four hexagrams and their lines (yao, 爻), the "position" should be understood as "temporal position" ("*shiwei*", 时位). *I Ching* unites and combines both time and position. Each of the sixty-four hexagrams contains six temporal positions, which are six spatiotemporal points. For example, *Tuan Zhuan* (《彖传》) of *Qian* hexagram(乾卦) states, "*the six positions are completed under the times*" (六位时成). Only by conforming to the temporal positions of Heaven and Earth, the life can continuously generate and renew itself. *I Ching* emphasizes both "time" and "position", but comparatively, the "time" is more important than the "position", because whether good or bad and whether regret or shame are ultimately determined by the "time."

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

3. "Temporal Position"("Shiwei",时位)

Sometimes, the "time" refers to the right moment or timing, and also including the meaning of the environment, context, and specific conditions in which a hexagram occurs. *I Ching* expresses the changes of time, opportunity, and circumstances through the transformations of its hexagrams and lines. A hexagram represents time, while a line represents the change adapting to the time. The "time" represents the time of some certain "position". Each "position" is determined in the progress of time. Position exists within the dimension of time, and one cannot consider position without time. Therefore, both "time" and "position" contain each other. If time and position are not coordinated, problems arise. For example, the generational gap between parents and children occurs because parents overlook the growth and changes of their children and fail to keep up with the changes of their position. Hence, each "position" must be adjusted according to "time".

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

4. Seizing "the Right Timing"

Chapter 2 of *Xi Ci II* states, "*When things reach an extreme, they change; through change they become smooth; and when smooth, they endure*." Chapter 1 of *Xi Ci II* also says, "*Those who are adaptable are the men who follow times*." To bring about transformation and smooth progress, one must respond to the appropriate time. The appropriate time is timing or opportunity. *I Ching* strongly values the importance of seizing the right timing.

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

4. Seizing "the Right Timing"

Each "line statement" (*yaoci,* 爻辞) in the hexagrams conveys three key messages: first, each line' situation in which this point of time and position is located throughout the course of change; second, what action should be taken at this point of time and position; and third, what will happen as acting? This structure of hexagram helps us find appropriate ways to respond to the situation.

Chapter 8 of *Xi Ci I* states, "*Deliberate before taking action*". *Zhou Yi* can help one determine the "position" and "timing" in the midst of the changes of all things. It gives one a comprehensive, holistic, dynamic, and in-depth understanding of oneself and one's circumstances. Especially, it gives one a clear recognition of one's temporal and spatial position within the ongoing development, and so one has a rational judgment about whether the time is ripe or not.

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

4. Seizing "the Right Timing"

Chapter 10 of *Xi Ci I* also states, "*By Yi, the sages probe the depths and investigate subtle signs*." *Yi* is the tool used by sages to examine the subtle omens. *I Ching* and its commentaries frequently mention the "incipient awareness" ("*zhiji*"，知几), which emphasizes the importance of perceiving subtle signs and grasping fleeting opportunities. The term "incipience"("*ji*", 几) carries two meanings: first, it refers to subtlety or minuteness — something that is slight and barely perceptible; second, it is synonymous with "opportunity" or "timing". In the Eastern Jin dynasty, Han Kangbo annotated, "'*Incipience' is a subtle sign*". The "incipience" refers to the subtle sign that emerges in the very beginning of the change, so it is very faint, fleeting, and transient. The subtle sign is precisely timing or opportunity.

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

4. Seizing "the Right Timing"

The "incipience" represents a marvelous function of *Yi*, and it is also the wisdom of *Yi*. In *Yizhuan* (《易传》), Confucius stressed the importance of cultivating the ability of the "incipient awareness" ("*zhiji*", 知几). This ability can help one "*remain secure without forgetting danger, exist without forgetting extinction, and be orderly without forgetting chaos*" (Chapter 5, *Xi Ci II*). Those who have the ability of "incipient awareness" can grasp the fleeting opportunities from subtle premonitions. "*Yunzi (君子) acts with the 'incipience' ("jianjierzuo",见几而作); he does not wait till the end of the day.* " (Chapter 5, *Xi Ci II*) It means that as soon as *Junzi* perceives the faint signs of change, he immediately takes action without procrastination.

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

4. Seizing "the Right Timing"

The *Kun* hexagram(困卦) is the criterion for distinguishing morality. The "*Kun*" in *Kun* hexagram means difficulty or distress. Chapter 7 of *Xi Ci II* says, "*Difficulties can be used to distinguish virtues*." It is the time someone in troubles that his/her moral characters are clearly revealed. The *Kun* hexagram admonishes people how to try to get out of a difficult situation, and that it is a good time to test whether the person holds firmly to moral principles. Adversity is a timing to cultivate virtues.

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

Conclusion: Keeping Pace with the Times

Where there is change, there will be fortune and misfortune. In the midst of change, some situations contribute to one's success, while the others act as obstacles. If we can act according to the times and seize the favorable opportunity, we will be able to successfully achieve the goal, which is fortune; Otherwise, if we fail to seize the favorable opportunity, we cannot achieve the auspicious results, which is misfortune. In this way, whether fortune or misfortune depends on change and its temporal dimension. People who value and know how to use their time are more likely to succeed.

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

Conclusion: Keeping Pace with the Times

Therefore, the philosophical counseling based on the temporal wisdom in *Zhou Yi* can help clients understand the "time" and grasp "timing". In practice, philosophical counselors can remind clients of three aspects followed:

1) pay attention to the temporal dimension of change;

2) consider the "position" at a particular time and in the holistic context.

3) cultivate the ability of the "incipient awareness" ("*zhiji*"，知几), and seizing the right timing.

Overall, with the temporal wisdom in *Zhou Yi*, people can keep pace with the times and reach "the timely appropriateness"("*shizhong*", 时中) in a state of harmony.

山东师范大学
SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

THANKS FOR YOUR LISTENING

ZHANG Lizeng Email:zhanglizeng6666@126.com

Jin Xin (Nanjing University)

"Teacher Authority vs. Student Autonomy: Conflict and Reconciliation of Critical Thinking in Confucian-Context P4C Education"

In the era of globalization and information explosion, critical thinking (CT), as one of the core competencies of the 21st century, has become a crucial goal of educational reform worldwide. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) explicitly identified critical thinking as an essential skill for future citizens in its Education 2030 Framework (OECD, 2018), while the World Economic Forum (WEF) ranked it among the most valuable abilities in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (WEF, 2020). Meanwhile, with the rise of Philosophy for Children (P4C) in recent years, educators globally have increasingly recognized the significant benefits of the Community of Philosophical Inquiry (CPI) — an open-ended pedagogical approach — in cultivating children's CT and related cognitive skills. Research by Lipman (2003) demonstrates that philosophical dialogue and collaborative inquiry not only enhance students' logical reasoning but also foster open-mindedness and reflective thinking. Some Western educational theorists, such as Neill and Lamb (1996), have even developed a radical anarchist philosophy of education, arguing that traditional authoritarian structures in schooling stifle genuine virtue and freedom, and that schools should instead encourage independent exploration and meaning-making. However, implementing CT through P4C education in primary and secondary schools within East Asian cultural contexts presents unique challenges rooted in deep-seated traditions. Societies such as China, South Korea, and Japan have education systems profoundly shaped by Confucianism. The pedagogical principles articulated in Confucian classics—such as "transmitting rather than creating, trusting and loving the ancients (述而不作，信而好古)" (*Analects* 7:1) and "teachers are those who transmit the Way, instruct knowledge, and resolve doubts (师者，所以传道授业解惑也)" (Han, 798/2010) — have cultivated an educational culture that emphasizes knowledge transmission and respect for authority. Particularly in Confucian moral education, the emphasis on self-discipline, or "restraining oneself and returning to propriety (克己复礼)", and collectivist harmony creates a prima facie paradox with the spirit of questioning, independent thinking, and innovation advocated by CT. This paradox manifests not only in classroom interactions between teachers and students but also permeates assessment systems, curriculum design, and broader societal expectations of education. The critical challenge for East Asian educators, therefore, lies in achieving the localization of CT cultivation while respecting cultural traditions.

1. Paradox of moral education

The challenges encountered by P4C in East Asian educational contexts fundamentally reveal a profound philosophical dilemma in modern moral education—how to strike a

balance between value guidance and intellectual autonomy. While this tension appears superficially as a clash between Eastern Confucian educational traditions and Western critical pedagogy, it actually reflects a more universal predicament of educational modernity. When we examine global educational practices, we find similar contradictions existing ubiquitously in various forms. Through a series of empirical studies, Kizel (2015, 2016) uncovered that the prevailing "culture of fear" in modern school education constitutes a structural obstacle to philosophical inquiry. This fear manifests not only as students' apprehension toward authority but also becomes internalized as the education system's own defense mechanism—systematically excluding existential questions that might challenge the established order through standardized curricula, disciplined classroom spaces, and utilitarian evaluation systems. In such an environment, even experienced teachers face profound professional identity crises when attempting to implement open-ended programs like P4C. Tracking studies of East Asian teachers by Good & Yamabe (2022) found that when traditional paradigms of moral inculcation meet the requirement of suspended judgment in philosophical inquiry, educators often become trapped in irreconcilable cognitive conflicts. As one teacher's poignant question illustrates: "Should I be a guardian of traditional values or a catalyst for intellectual liberation? This identity dilemma constantly influences my teaching decisions (Good & Yamabe, 2022:232)".

The philosophical roots of this predicament can be traced back to classical propositions in Western moral education theory. Aristotle, when exploring the mechanisms of virtue cultivation, had already keenly recognized the subtle yet complex dialectical relationship between external habit formation and internal rational autonomy. Twentieth-century educational philosopher R. Peters (1981) systematized this insight into the famous "paradox of moral education": education must both transmit the value norms essential for societal continuity and cultivate independent individuals capable of rational reflection on these very norms. This paradox manifests in practice as three interrelated tensions: first, a developmental chronological contradiction—children's moral development requires external guidance, yet genuine moral autonomy presupposes mature rational capacity; second, a methodological dilemma—habit formation may inhibit the development of critical consciousness, while complete laissez-faire cannot ensure value transmission; and finally, a crisis of legitimacy regarding educational authority—there exists an inherent tension between teachers' role as moral exemplars and their position as subjects of critical questioning.

Meanwhile, some scholars have turned to Eastern wisdom for resources to resolve this paradox. Huang's (2011) study of Confucian educational thought reveals that the pedagogical insight from the Analects - "When a ruler's personal conduct is correct, his government is effective without issuing orders" - actually suggests a third way that transcends simplistic binaries. The moral cultivation Confucius emphasized differs fundamentally from both external value imposition and value-neutral thinking training; rather, it creates a subtle ethical atmosphere through the educator's exemplary modeling ("teaching by personal example"). However, this seemingly perfect solution still faces significant challenges in contemporary educational contexts.

First, while teachers' moral demonstration is more subtle than direct indoctrination, it still inherently presupposes the superiority of certain values. Second, this model relies too heavily on individual educators' moral charisma, making it difficult to institutionalize sustainable spaces for critical inquiry. Most importantly, the traditional exemplary model struggles to accommodate the value pluralism of modern society. When students from diverse cultural backgrounds bring their own value preconceptions into the classroom, relying solely on teachers' moral exemplification becomes insufficient for fostering genuine rational dialogue.

Confronted with these challenges, we must reconceptualize the role of teacher authority in P4C. While postmodern educational theories' deconstruction of authority remains valuable, completely negating educators' guiding role would leave moral education directionless. What we need to develop is a more dialectical understanding of the teacher's role - neither a traditional moral authority nor a value-neutral discussion facilitator, but rather a "positioned dialogical partner." This new professional identity demands dual competencies from educators: the ability to articulate their own value positions clearly while maintaining an openness to questioning those very positions. In this model, teachers' value guidance occurs not through external imposition but through the natural presentation of rational justifications for various positions during philosophical dialogues, allowing students to form their own judgments through comparison and reflection. The quest for this delicate equilibrium represents the crux of resolving the paradox of moral education.

2. Confucian authority in the classroom

The concept of authority in education remains a pivotal issue in pedagogical philosophy. Rosemont's (2006) seminal typology distinguishes between authoritarian authority (rooted in coercive power) and authoritative authority (based on knowledge and rational persuasion), providing a crucial framework for analyzing classroom dynamics. Traditional pedagogy legitimizes teacher authority through knowledge asymmetry, creating a teacher-centered, unidirectional knowledge transmission model that systematically marginalizes peer-to-peer learning.

This authority structure manifests most prominently in Confucian-influenced East Asian systems, where teacher authority extends beyond cognitive superiority to encompass deep cultural sanctity. The Confucian ideal of teachers as "transmitters of the Way, instructors of knowledge, and resolvers of doubts" creates a unique authority matrix blending epistemological hierarchy with ethical obligation. Such cultural coding makes East Asian classroom authority particularly complex and resistant to Western pedagogical reforms emphasizing egalitarian dialogue.

The East Asian education system is currently situated in a profound tension between traditional Confucian values and modern Western educational philosophies, with this cultural collision generating complex contradictions at every level of educational practice. Rooted in the hierarchical worldview of "Heaven, Earth, Sovereign, Parent, and Teacher," Confucian educational tradition emphasizes the sanctity of teacher

authority and the authoritative transmission of knowledge, viewing education as a vital mechanism for maintaining social harmony and moral order. Within this paradigm, teachers are endowed with near-parental authority, while students' primary virtues are "reverence for teachers and respect for their teachings" and "humbly receiving instruction." Being "obedient" and "compliant" are often the first skills elementary students are expected to master in school. Students who frequently question their teachers are generally viewed unfavorably, perceived as "disrespecting elders" or overstepping their bounds.

This reverence for authority, combined with a collectivist tendency, forms a distinctive pedagogical and cultural ecosystem. Within this environment, the teacher-student relationship carries cultural significance that extends far beyond mere knowledge transfer—teachers are not merely knowledge providers but also moral exemplars and guardians of cultural heritage. These multiple role expectations naturally position teachers as authoritative figures in the classroom, while students are cast as passive recipients and inheritors. The status differential between students and teachers is particularly pronounced in East Asian cultures, where hierarchical relationships are deeply embedded in social norms and daily interactions. The classroom thus becomes a microcosm of broader societal structures, where traditional values continue to shape educational dynamics even as globalized pedagogical approaches gain influence.

Under the long-term influence of this cultural atmosphere, students gradually develop a unique cognitive orientation: they perceive knowledge as a fixed system of truths rather than an open field for questioning and exploration. In the classroom, students skillfully memorize textbook content and accurately reiterate their teachers' viewpoints, yet rarely volunteer personal interpretations. Even when faced with obvious contradictions or questionable knowledge, most choose silence over skepticism. This habitual passivity in knowledge acquisition has become deeply embedded in their learning behaviors.

Helgesen's (2014) research highlights a typical manifestation of this contradiction: in many East Asian classrooms, while teachers may formally adopt interactive methods such as group discussions and brainstorming, they still maintain absolute control over classroom discourse through carefully designed leading questions and predetermined answer expectations. In the study, a university professor in Seoul described her classroom dilemma as follows:

> “I have often tried to have discussions, and to force students to reason, to tell them that virtually any answer is right as long as they can explain why they have this or that opinion. But I am not very successful in the classroom. Students don't like to ask questions, and they really hate it when they confront questions with more than one correct answer. … My students are young in body but old in mind. The students are brought up with a strong sense of authority: they adjust to and obey authorities. This is also a reason for the lack of democracy in the classroom. (Helgesen 2014:179)”

The deeper impact manifests in the dynamics of classroom interaction. Traditional teaching often exhibits a "center-periphery" structure: the teacher, as the absolute center, controls both discourse and evaluation authority, while students remain in a passive, peripheral position as mere recipients. This unidirectional transmission model is reflected not only in the flow of knowledge but also in the very nature of teacher-student exchanges — teachers' questions typically presuppose standardized answers, and students' responses are expected to conform to established frameworks. Any deviation from this norm, whether expressing dissent or offering original perspectives, often meets with suppression or negative evaluation.

This systemic discursive control produces dual consequences: cognitively, it hinders the development of students' critical thinking and creative reasoning abilities; affectively, it gradually erodes their confidence and courage in self-expression. A thought-provoking phenomenon is that even in learning environments designed to encourage free discussion, many East Asian students instinctively wait for teachers to "grant" speaking opportunities rather than proactively claiming discursive space. This deeply ingrained passivity represents the most profound educational imprint of authority-worship culture.

Csikszentmihalyi's (1988) theory of creativity provides a crucial lens for understanding this cultural divergence—he views creativity as the dynamic interplay of individual talent, domain knowledge, and cultural environment. Within this framework, Confucian values emphasizing compliance and harmony in East Asian cultures may indeed constrain the flourishing of individual creativity to some extent. Cross-cultural studies consistently show that compared to their Western counterparts from individualistic societies, East Asian students demonstrate relatively weaker performance in creativity-related dimensions like divergent thinking and willingness to challenge authority (Kim 2009; Saeki et al. 2001). These differences cannot be simply attributed to innate ability but are more likely shaped by cultural conditioning.

3. Student autonomy and critical thinking in P4C education

The concept of P4C originated in the West (Lipman, 2003), where individual liberalism prevails. This democratic educational philosophy, rooted in the Western Enlightenment tradition, advocates for egalitarian dialogue between teachers and students, particularly within P4C curricula where critical thinking and independent reasoning are regarded as central educational objectives. The philosophy maintains that the value of education lies not in the mechanical transmission of knowledge, but in cultivating students' capacity to question, analyze, and reconstruct knowledge.

3.1 Relationship between student autonomy and critical thinking

Critical thinking is a mode of thought that is decisive yet not stubborn, evaluative yet not harsh, and assertive yet not dogmatic. At its core, it involves independent judgment and encompasses a range of cognitive skills, including interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation (Facione, 2011). Genuine

critical thinking is characterized not only by broad intellectual curiosity but also by thorough engagement with information, trust in rational inquiry, and openness to diverse worldviews and perspectives. Cultivating this mode of thinking helps learners maintain an open mind when confronting complex issues while enabling them to form well-reasoned judgments based on evidence and logic.

Research indicates a strong correlation between critical thinking and learner autonomy (Pemberton & Nix, 2012). For instance, in the TESOL program at the University of Nottingham, students who were given the autonomy to select research topics (such as teaching methodologies or language policies) and lead discussions in learning circles demonstrated significantly enhanced critical thinking abilities. This empowerment transformed their learning approach from passive knowledge absorption to active meaning-making. A case in point is Saori, a student who, while researching tobacco taxation policies, identified a fundamental contradiction between protecting farmers' livelihoods and safeguarding public health. This critical analysis not only deepened her understanding of the issue but also shifted her motivation from merely "completing assignments" to "actively exploring." This transition reflects a broader shift from "other-directed" to "self-directed" learning. Furthermore, Nottingham's learning circles required students to integrate theoretical knowledge with personal teaching experiences and refine their research directions through peer feedback. For example, student Betty, upon recognizing overlooked perspectives through group discussions, adjusted her research framework accordingly. Such critical reflection not only advanced her academic skills but also strengthened her autonomous control over learning strategies.

However, fostering critical thinking and autonomous learning poses distinct challenges in East Asian educational contexts. Xiao's (2015) study of China's education system highlights how the traditional "exam-oriented" model severely constrains students' independent thinking and exploratory capacities. In this system, learning is reduced to rote memorization of standardized answers and repetitive drills, with test scores serving as the sole metric for evaluating students and schools. This utilitarian approach leads teachers to focus narrowly on textbook content, while students become accustomed to passive reception, lacking both the time and incentive to question the validity or value of the knowledge presented. Over time, this cultivates a passive mindset where students habitually rely on teachers, textbooks, or online sources for "correct answers" rather than engaging in active critical inquiry.

While developing critical thinking is essential for fostering learner autonomy, relying solely on conventional subject courses (e.g., language or mathematics) to achieve this goal is unrealistic within the current system. Standardized testing, while ensuring educational equity, simultaneously restricts pedagogical flexibility. Therefore, specialized programs such as P4C may offer a viable solution. Through systematic training in reasoning and reflection, such courses help students gradually develop critical thinking habits, enabling them to pursue autonomous inquiry across broader learning contexts.

3.2 P4C practice in East Asian countries

The 4C educational objectives proposed by P4C—Critical Thinking, Creative Thinking, Caring Thinking, and Collaborative Thinking—constitute a comprehensive framework for cognitive development that aligns closely with the core competencies advocated in East Asian educational reforms. Taking China as an example, the China Student Development Core Competencies framework issued in 2022 explicitly lists "scientific spirit" (including critical thinking) and "learning to learn" (including reflective practice) as key indicators. This conceptual convergence has endowed P4C with unique appeal when introduced into East Asian education systems, leading to rapid large-scale implementation: multiple Chinese universities (e.g., Hangzhou Normal University, Xiamen University, Nanjing University) have established research centers of P4C, while primary schools in cities like Nanjing, Hangzhou, Wenzhou, and Wuxi have incorporated philosophical dialogue into their curricula. Nonprofit organizations such as "Gu Shi Tian" have further promoted P4C practices in rural schools through localized teaching materials. In Japan, the P4C KANSAI alliance has integrated the Hawaiian p4cHI approach with moral education courses via teacher workshops.

However, ideological consensus has not automatically dissolved cultural tensions in practice. East Asian classrooms commonly exhibit teachers' subconscious adherence to their authoritative role as knowledge transmitters, creating an invisible barrier to P4C implementation. Kim's (2009) classroom research revealed a paradox: although many Korean teachers endorsed "student-centered" principles, their actual teaching practices remained dominated by closed-ended questions, with an average wait time for student responses of less than two seconds. A similar phenomenon is evident in China: classroom observations at an experimental primary school in Nanjing showed that even when using "circle discussion" formats, teachers retained control over dialogue, often providing "correct answers" during student disagreements. This disjunction between theory and practice fundamentally reflects a deeper clash of values between Deweyan democratic education, which views learning as a process of experiential reconstruction, and Confucian pedagogical traditions, which frame education as moral-cultural transmission.

This conflict manifests acutely at the institutional level. Although China's Ministry of Education has incorporated "critical thinking" into its curriculum standards, its practical application in core subjects like language and mathematics remains limited. P4C, with its emphasis on egalitarian dialogue and critical inquiry, faces three structural obstacles in mainstream education: (1) a lack of specialized training in philosophical dialogue in teacher education programs, hindering the development of a qualified teaching force; (2) collective lesson planning systems that reinforce standardized teaching templates; and (3) parental anxiety toward philosophy discussions that "challenge authority." For instance, when fourth-grade students were asked to reflect on their classroom learning over three weeks, none could articulate any substantive critiques—a testament to their near-blind reverence for teacher authority.

These challenges confirm Matthews' (1996) prediction: when P4C encounters the Confucian tradition of "teacher authority," it either retreats into "cultural enclaves" like

international schools or is co-opted as a superficial ornament for exam-oriented education.

3.3 Cases in P4C classes

The fundamental challenge in implementing P4C within East Asian educational contexts stems from a deeply ingrained "worship of knowledge certainty"—a cognitive paradigm that is not only internalized in educators' teaching practices but also profoundly shapes learners' thinking patterns. We once organized frontline teachers to conduct philosophical inquiry courses on "deconstructing authority worship." Post-class feedback revealed that many teachers worried the weakening of authority might compromise knowledge transmission efficiency. More paradoxically, even professionally trained P4C teachers face a dilemma between methodology and educational ethics when encountering student statements that contradict mainstream values: Should they adhere to the principle of "value neutrality" in philosophical inquiry, or fulfill their educator's responsibility of "value guidance"?

Take a P4C open class on "Life and Future" at a school in Jiangsu Province as an example. One student declared his passion for gaming, arguing that it represents a legitimate lifestyle where he finds fulfillment. He aspired to become a professional esports player and make a living from it. When the student proclaimed that "competitive gaming is an ideal career choice," the teacher, while adhering to inquiry principles by not refuting the statement in class, expressed deep confusion during post-class reflection. She said, "As a P4C teacher, when a child's statements conflict with the moral values we aim to impart, should we continue listening to their expressions or intervene with our own corrections?" This confusion reflects a cultural anxiety unique to East Asian educators: how to balance encouraging free expression with maintaining social norms. More notably, when teachers strictly follow P4C methodology—avoiding value judgments and encouraging peer dialogue—new issues may emerge. In some classes, students exploit their newly acquired discursive power for deliberately provocative remarks, while other cases involve students showing verbal disrespect toward teachers. The “chaos” caused by the absence of authority sharply conflicts with the Confucian educational tradition of revering teachers and respecting their teachings.

A deeper challenge lies in the difficulty of transforming cognitive paradigms. We have observed in practice that when attempting philosophical dialogues with middle school students untrained in P4C, few are willing to actively express their views, resulting in relatively dull classroom dynamics. After a session on mind-body dualism, a student pressed, "Teacher, what's your view? Do you think souls exist?" This case is highly symbolic—it exposes the knowledge dependency formed by East Asian students under long-term exam-oriented education: they crave definitive answers rather than engaging in open-ended inquiry. Such eagerness for certainty often requires years of philosophical immersion to alleviate, yet current East Asian education systems struggle to provide such an extended transition period.

4. Reconciliation of CT and control in P4C class

The tension between teacher authority and student autonomy constitutes not only the root cause of moral education paradoxes but also a prominent challenge in implementing P4C within East Asian Confucian cultural contexts. To address these challenges, our authentic case study research has developed a comprehensive three-pronged response strategy.

4.1 The Teacher's Role as Procedural Authority

Michaud and Vältialo (2016) systematically delineated three representative models of educational authority: the traditional model, the anarchist model, and the shared authority model. The traditional model positions teachers as epistemic authorities, requiring students to passively accept knowledge systems with "absolute value" (such as Platonic conceptions of truth). While prevalent in conventional educational practice, this model's inherent suppression of student autonomy fundamentally conflicts with modern democratic educational principles. In contrast, the anarchist model completely denies the legitimacy of educational authority, advocating for students' absolute freedom—an extreme stance that problematically dissolves the crucial role teachers play in intellectual guidance and value formation. Through critical reflection on these two polarized models, Michaud and Vältialo proposed a third way: the shared authority model. Rooted in Dewey's progressive educational philosophy, this model emphasizes the co-construction of educational authority through democratic dialogue between teachers and students. Within this framework, the teacher's role transforms from knowledge monopolist to learning facilitator, establishing dialogic classroom ethics to achieve educational objectives.

At the practical level of teacher authority, Gregory's (2008) principle of being "pedagogically powerful but philosophically humble" and Split & Sharp's (1995) conceptualization of the teacher as a "model of inquiry" offer significant guidance. This approach requires teachers to maintain basic instructional order while demonstrating philosophical inquiry methodologies as equal participants, avoiding any manifestation of epistemic hegemony in philosophical discussions. Following Michaud and Vältialo's (2016) theoretical framework, teachers are best positioned as procedural authorities—facilitators who focus on cultivating questioning techniques and critical thinking skills rather than controlling the direction of discussion content. This model demands teachers preserve the openness of philosophical inquiry, refrain from providing definitive answers, and persistently stimulate students to examine the contestability of philosophical concepts. Lyle (2016) further notes that Matthews' concept of "rational authority" provides a fresh perspective for understanding classroom dynamics. This form of authority, built on mutual respect between teachers and students, acknowledges both the teacher's professional responsibility for student well-being and necessary decision-making power, while requiring that such decisions be based on reasoning comprehensible to students and ultimately serve their developmental needs.

These theoretical constructions collectively point to a central thesis: to resolve moral paradoxes in education, teachers must transcend traditional epistemic authority and maximize the protection of student autonomy. The attitude of philosophical humility essentially embodies Socratic wisdom of "know thyself" and resonates with Confucius' teaching that "among any three people, there must be one who can be my teacher." Within Confucian cultural contexts, where students generally expect teachers to provide definitive correct answers, P4C practitioners need to consciously restrain from directly expressing personal philosophical stances — a disciplined restraint that precisely demonstrates professionalism.

Regarding the previously mentioned case of a student expressing desire to play video games as a career, P4C teachers should maintain rigorous philosophical inquiry rules: avoiding moral preaching while ensuring orderly discussion. Through sustained CPI, students develop profound friendships. Anderson's (2021) research confirms that such philosophically cultivated friendships catalyze moral development—through peer interactions, students continuously adjust behaviors and gradually internalize socio-moral concepts. In this process, teachers serve as facilitators creating dialogic environments conducive to moral growth.

P4C educators in East Asia particularly need to comprehend the dialectical relationship that "students need not be inferior to their teachers, nor teachers necessarily superior to their students (Han, 798/2010)." The suspension of standard answers actually cultivates students' openness to diverse perspectives. While teachers may commend the rigor of students' reasoning processes, they should refrain from direct evaluation of content. This disciplined approach not only preserves the harmony of educational relationships by avoiding ideological confrontations but allows students to focus on improving thinking quality rather than engaging in positional debates with teachers.

4.2 Oriental Adaptation of the 4C Objectives

Faced with this conflict, P4C currently stands at a crossroads with two potential developmental paths. The first involves localizing and Orientalizing the current teaching objectives and methodologies of P4C, which originated from Anglo-American democratic traditions. The second path seeks to utilize P4C as a means to reshape social perceptions and ultimately drive ideological transformation in society. Clearly, the latter approach would require top-down implementation through state power, and the task of reshaping social consciousness would prove extraordinarily difficult, if not impossible to accomplish. Therefore, the former path — adapting P4C through localization — represents the more viable and appropriate direction for the development of P4C education.

Critical thinking in the Western philosophical tradition is rooted in Descartes' universal skepticism. This mode of thinking advocates maintaining a questioning attitude toward all untested notions, even challenging the fundamental reliability of sensory perception. Descartes established an unshakable foundation for such radical doubt through his

proposition "Cogito, ergo sum" ("I think, therefore I am"). This critical tradition has continuously evolved throughout Western intellectual history, all emphasizing cognitive progress through constant questioning and negation. In Anglo-American P4C practices (e.g. UK, US, Australia, etc.), this critical spirit manifests as encouraging students to maintain open skepticism toward various viewpoints, regarded as a crucial pathway to cultivating independent thinking and rational judgment.

However, when this concept of critical thinking is introduced into East Asian cultural contexts, it encounters unique challenges of cultural adaptation. Although Facione (2011) emphasizes that critical thinking means being "skeptical without being cynical," even the terms "questioning" and "critique," especially the Chinese translation of "批判" (pīpàn), often carry connotations of "opposition" and "criticism," imbued with negative and confrontational undertones. This differs significantly from the Western philosophical emphasis on rational analysis and constructive skepticism in critical thinking. Many educators and parents harbor reservations about this mode of thinking, fearing it may disrupt traditional teacher-student relationships and classroom order. These cultural differences are reflected not only at the semantic level but also more profoundly in cognitive habits and educational philosophies. The East Asian educational tradition prioritizes the transmission and accumulation of knowledge, contrasting with the Western cognitive approach that emphasizes individual questioning and debate.

The Confucian tradition tends to emphasize "standard answers," yet its classic dictum from The Great Learning - "If you can renovate yourself one day, do so every day, and continue to do so day after day （苟日新，日日新，又日新）" — underscores the importance of constant self-renewal and progress. This profound insight holds significant implications for stimulating students' initiative and creativity in learning. The notion of "continuous daily renewal" inherently rejects rigid conformity and can serve as a critique of rote memorization, advocating instead the value of continuous knowledge reconstruction. When combined with Confucius' teaching from *The Analects* - "I examine myself three times daily（吾日三省吾身）" — it encourages students to cultivate habits of self-reflection.

To address this issue of cultural adaptation, we propose transforming "critical thinking" into concepts more aligned with East Asian cultural psychology: "reflective thinking" (反思) and "deliberative thinking" (慎思). This transformation is not merely a terminological substitution but a reinterpretation of the thinking process itself. Reflection emphasizes self-examination based on listening to others' perspectives, while deliberation focuses on carefully weighing different viewpoints. This adapted model of thinking cultivation retains the core elements of critical thinking—such as examining multiple perspectives, rational analysis, and self-correction—while avoiding cultural friction. In practical teaching, this gentle and gradual approach is more readily

accepted by teachers and students, enabling the cultivation of independent thinking skills without undermining traditional educational norms.

The key to this Eastern adaptation lies in finding points of convergence between cultural traditions and modern educational ideals. By emphasizing reflection and deliberation rather than direct questioning and negation, P4C can respect East Asian cultural characteristics while achieving the educational goal of fostering students' rational thinking abilities. This represents both a creative transformation of Western critical thinking theory and an innovative development of East Asian educational traditions in a modern context. Future efforts should focus on exploring how to establish thinking cultivation methods suitable for students at different developmental stages, ensuring this Orientalized CT education can truly take root and flourish.

4.3 CPI Avoiding Direct Cultural Conflict

Finally, given the significant differences between Eastern and Western cultures, it is essential to consider the distinctive characteristics of East Asian cultures, particularly the emphasis on respect for teachers and hierarchical relationships. This is especially true in Japan and Korea, where highly nuanced honorific linguistic systems remain deeply ingrained in social interactions. Korea, in particular, employs an intricate "speech level system" (상대높임법), requiring speakers to adjust their language based on the age, social status, and relationship with the listener. These cultural differences make direct discussion of certain sensitive topics—such as critiques of filial piety (China: 孝道/xiàodào; Korea: 효심/hyoshim; Japan: 孝行/kōkō) or challenges to elder authority—potentially culturally uncomfortable and even disruptive to educational practice. Therefore, when cultivating critical thinking, a more culturally adaptive strategy is necessary: avoiding issues that may trigger defensive reactions and instead guiding students toward more universal philosophical questions. This approach allows for the development of independent thinking while respecting cultural traditions.

The modernization of East Asian societies is not a mere replication of Western models but rather a creative synthesis of Confucian ethics and modern values (Wei-ming, 1996). This adaptive logic applies equally to education—critical thinking can be nurtured without directly challenging cultural authority by engaging students in more abstract philosophical discussions. Watanabe et al. (2025) argue that East Asian education should develop localized hybrid models rather than wholesale adoption of Western paradigms. This perspective suggests that the ultimate goal of education is not to overturn tradition but to cultivate citizens who can balance critical thinking with cultural identity. For example, when discussing filial piety, instead of directly asking, "Is filial piety outdated?" educators might explore questions such as "What is the relationship between duty and freedom?" or "How can personal choices be balanced with family responsibilities?" This allows students to reflect on the ethical reasoning behind cultural norms without directly questioning them. Similarly, when addressing respect for teachers, rather than posing the provocative question, "Should teachers be challenged?" discussions could focus on "What gives knowledge its authority?" or

"How can different perspectives be communicated effectively?" This indirectly fosters critical thinking without undermining traditional respect for educators. In debates about collectivism versus individualism, instead of stark East-West comparisons, students might examine "How can individuals maintain independent thinking within a group?" or "How can social consensus coexist with personal beliefs?"—making the discourse more inclusive.

This strategic approach avoids direct cultural conflict while allowing students to naturally engage with sensitive issues through philosophical inquiry. The key challenge for East Asian education lies in maintaining respect for teachers and collective values while providing sufficient intellectual autonomy. By selecting more universal philosophical questions, educators can cultivate future citizens who possess both critical thinking skills and the ability to navigate the complexities of modern society—all while remaining grounded in cultural tradition.

5. Conclusion

The tension between teacher authority and student autonomy in Confucian-context education presents a profound paradox in the cultivation of CT through P4C education. While CT is a cornerstone of 21st-century education, its implementation in East Asian societies must navigate the legacy of Confucian traditions, which emphasize respect for authority, knowledge transmission, and moral harmony. This paper highlights the cultural and pedagogical challenges of reconciling Western-derived P4C methodologies with East Asian educational values, proposing adaptive strategies to bridge these divergences.

Key to this reconciliation is redefining teacher authority as procedural rather than epistemic, transforming educators into facilitators of open-ended inquiry while maintaining cultural respect. The shared authority model, rooted in Deweyan progressive education, offers a balanced framework, ensuring that CT development does not undermine societal norms. Additionally, localizing CT concepts — such as reframing "critical thinking" as "reflective thinking" and "deliberative thinking" — can mitigate cultural friction by aligning with Confucian ideals of self-renewal and introspection.

Practically, P4C in East Asia must avoid direct challenges to sensitive cultural tenets (e.g., filial piety) by focusing on universal philosophical questions that indirectly foster critical inquiry. This approach respects hierarchical relationships while nurturing independent thought. Empirical evidence from P4C implementations in China, Japan, and South Korea underscores the importance of teacher training, institutional support, and gradual cultural adaptation.

Ultimately, CT should be viewed not as a threat to Confucian traditions but as a complementary force, enriching education by blending critical inquiry with cultural identity. Future research should explore interdisciplinary CT integration and the role of technology in facilitating P4C practices. For policymakers and educators, this paper advocates a nuanced, culturally sensitive approach to P4C, ensuring that East Asian

education systems remain globally competitive while preserving their unique philosophical heritage.

References

Anderson, A. (2021). Paradox, Friendship, and Philosophy for Children. In: Mendonça, D., Franken Figueiredo, F. (eds) *Conceptions of Childhood and Moral Education in Philosophy for Children.* Kindheit – Bildung – Erziehung. Philosophische Perspektiven. J.B. Metzler, Berlin, Heidelberg. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-64180-4_9

Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience & Education*. New York: Touchstone.

Facione, P. A. (2011). Critical thinking: What it is and why it counts. *Insight assessment*, *1*(1), 1-23.

Good, W., & Yamabe, E. (2022). What conflicts do teachers face in the process of transforming their professional identities through P4C in their first years of practice?. In *Philosophy with Children and Teacher Education* (pp. 226-234). Routledge.

Gregory, M. (2008). *Philosophy for Children: Practitioner Handbook*. Upper Montclair, NJ: Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children.

Han, Y. (2010). On teachers (J. Knoblock, Trans.). In *Chinese literary works* (Vol. 2, pp. 45-48). Columbia University Press. (Original work published 798)

Helgesen, G. (2014). *Democracy and Authority in Korea: The Cultural Dimension in Korean Politics*. Taylor and Francis.

Hershock, P. D., & Ames, R. T. (Eds.). (2012). *Confucian cultures of authority*. State University of New York Press.

Huang, Y. (2011). Can virtue be taught and how? Confucius on the paradox of moral education. *Journal of Moral Education*, *40*(2), 141–159.

Kim, T. (2009). Confucianism, Modernities and Knowledge: China, South Korea and Japan. In: Cowen, R., Kazamias, A.M. (eds) *International Handbook of Comparative Education. Springer International Handbooks of Education*, vol 22. Springer, Dordrecht. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-6403-6_55

Kizel, A. (2015). Pedagogy of fear as paralyzing men's question. *Education: Men's Questions*, 214-23.

—— (2016). Pedagogy out of fear of philosophy as a way of pathologizing children. *Journal of Unschooling and Alternative Learning*, *10*(20), 28-47.

Lipman, M. (2003). *Thinking in education*, 2nd ed. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Lyle, S. (2016). The construct of the child: the 'C'in PwC. In *Philosophy for Children* (pp. 25-36). Routledge.

Matthews, G. (1980). *Philosophy and the Young Child*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

—— (1992). *Dialogues with Children*. Cambridge. MA: Harvard University Press.

—— (1996). *The Philosophy of Childhood*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Michaud, O. (2019). A qualitative study on the nature of educational authority in three school-wide events in an elementary school. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, *22*(2), 148–160. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2017.1355482

—— & Välitalo, R. (2016). Authority, democracy and philosophy: the nature and role of authority in a community of philosophical inquiry. In *The Routledge international handbook of philosophy for children* (pp. 59-66). Routledge.

Neill, A.S. and Lamb, A. (1996). *Summerhill School: A New View of Childhood*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin.

OECD (2018). *The Future of Education and Skills: Education 2030*. OECD Publishing. https://www.oecd.org/education/2030/E2030%20Position%20Paper%20(05.04.2018).pdf

Pace, J. L., & Hemmings, A. (2007). Understanding Authority in Classrooms: A Review of Theory, Ideology, and Research. *Review of Educational Research*, *77*(1), 4–27.

Pemberton, R., & Nix, M. (2012). Practices of critical thinking, criticality and learner autonomy. *Special Issue of Learning*, *19*(2), 79-95.

Peters, R. (1981). *Moral development and moral education*. London: George Allen and Unwin.

Rosemont, H. (2006). Two loci of authority: Autonomous individuals and related persons. *Confucian cultures of authority*, 1-20.

Splitter, L.J. and Sharp, A.M. (1995). *Teaching for Better Thinking: The Classroom Community of Inquiry.* Melbourne, Australia: Australian Council for Educational Research.

Saeki, N., Fan, X., & Van Dusen, L. (2001). A comparative study of creative thinking of American and Japanese college students. *The Journal of Creative Behavior*, *35*(1), 24-36.

Watanabe, A., McKinney, J., & Steiner, E. (2025). Values in Practice: Contextualizing the p4cHI Style Approach in Japanese Education. *Philosophy & cultural embodiment*, *4*(1), 16-33.

Wei-ming, T. (1996). Confucian Traditions in East Asian Modernity. *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, *50*(2), 12–39. https://doi.org/10.2307/3824246

World Economic Forum (2020). *The Future of Jobs Report 2020*. WEF. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Future_of_Jobs_2020.pdf

Xiao, W. W. (2015). Educational reflection and cultivation strategies on the lack of critical thinking. *Journal of Chinese Education*, (1), 25-29.

B2

Rui Cao (Nanjing University)

"Digital Hoarding Through Philosophical Lens: Existential Challenges and Cognitive Transformation in Technological Society"

Introduction

A computer's 'low memory' warning prompted me to begin cleaning up memory. During this cleanup process, the researcher discovered that stored manuscripts alone occupied as much as 11GB of space. After screening, it was found that most of these manuscripts were saved with the intention of 'reading them someday,' but were ultimately never opened. This is not an isolated case. The Douban group 'I Think I Have Digital Hoarding Syndrome,' despite having only 45 posts, but has received 750,000 views. The 'Hoarding Consumption Group,' which aims to guide netizens in rationally handling hoarded items, already has over 3,000 members. The digital hoarding habit of 'storing equals reading' or 'saved items will always be useful' has deeply penetrated our lives.

Unlike traditional object hoarding, digital hoarding does not appear to occupy our physical space, nor does it expose us to life-threatening dangers like the Collyer brothers. However, it is precisely this 'zero-threshold' characteristic that has made digital hoarding a new norm in life without our awareness.

It can be seen that although digital hoarding appears to be an information management behavior on the surface, the universality of the digital hoarding phenomenon suggests that it may touch upon deeper issues. With the popularization of digital technology, hoarding behavior has shifted from physical space to virtual space. This transformation not only changes the objects and methods of hoarding, but more importantly, it may alter the fundamental relationship between humans and information, technology, and the world. In recent years, interdisciplinary research on digital hoarding has provided us with important perspectives: for example, psychological research has revealed the cognitive or emotional mechanisms of digital hoarding, sociological research has analyzed the group characteristics and social impacts of digital hoarders, and information management studies have explored how digital hoarding affects cognitive efficiency. However, these studies mostly view digital hoarding as a problem that needs to be solved, while paying less attention to its ontological significance. That is, when we ask 'why do humans in the technological age choose to respond to the information environment by hoarding digital content,' we need not only causal explanations but also an essential understanding of human modes of existence, which enters the realm of philosophical thinking.

Therefore, this paper attempts to move away from the empirical scientific research framework oriented by behavior and turn to the perspective of philosophical analysis,

treating the phenomenon of digital hoarding as an important window for understanding the human existential condition in the technological age. This paper argues that digital hoarding is not merely an information management behavior, but rather the result of the interaction between technology and human modes of existence. Through in-depth analysis of the digital hoarding phenomenon, we may be able to better understand: how technology has changed the relationship between humans and the world, and how we seek authentic modes of existence in technology-mediated environments. It can be said that digital hoarding is not merely a behavior, but a manifestation of human modes of existence in the technological age. It involves a fundamental change in the relationship between humans and objects—that is, from physical possession to symbolic reference. The deep mechanisms of this change may require ontological analysis to truly help our understanding.

At the same time, digital hoarding involves the unique 'modes of givenness' (Gegebenheitsweisen)—they are presented in symbolic form on interfaces (file names, icons), but their substantial content always remains untouched. This complex structure of 'symbolic presence but content absence' requires phenomenological analysis for better comprehension. Second, the existential anxiety and self-deception mechanisms reflected in digital hoarding have mature theoretical foundations in Heidegger's existential analysis. Based on this research approach, this paper will unfold analysis on three levels: first, clarifying the basic characteristics of digital hoarding as a philosophical phenomenon, explaining how it differs from traditional hoarding behavior and the philosophical significance of this difference; second, deeply analyzing the human existential condition reflected in digital hoarding and exploring what kind of survival predicament in the technological age it reveals; finally, exploring how we should understand and respond to the existential predicament reflected in digital hoarding when technology has deeply intervened in human life.

Ⅰ. Philosophical Characteristics of Digital Hoarding

1.1 The Ontological Transformation of Hoarding Objects

To understand the philosophical significance of digital hoarding, we first need to clarify its basic characteristics as a phenomenon. Compared to traditional hoarding behavior, digital hoarding presents fundamental differences in objects, methods, and spaces. These differences are not merely changes in storage media; more importantly, they reflect an ontological transformation in the relationship between humans and objects. Through analysis of the digital hoarding phenomenon, we can reveal the essential structure of digital hoarding and lay the foundation for further philosophical exploration.

Hoarding was initially introduced as a scientific term primarily to describe the behavior of animals (especially rodents) collecting food, reflecting the biological impulse for resource possession. Initially, traditional hoarding was similar, mainly targeting

physical entity items with physical attributes—such as food[1], clothing, books, etc. These hoarded objects all occupy physical space, have clear ownership boundaries and use value. However, the objects of hoarding in the digital age have undergone fundamental transformation: we begin to hoard e-books, documents, images, videos, and other digital content. Unlike physical objects, these digital contents challenge our traditional understanding of 'ownership.' This transformation is not only reflected in the form of hoarded objects; the deeper change lies in the reconstruction of the concept of ownership: the ownership of physical products is based on their physical boundaries, but in the digital world, these boundaries present essential ambiguity.[2] Because digital content has characteristics of reproducibility, fluidity, and non-spatiality, the traditional ownership logic based on physical boundaries fails here. Digital hoarding thus presents as a symbolic existence: what we hoard is no longer physical objects themselves, but references and pointers to content.

This transformation from materiality to symbolism not only changes the mode of existence of hoarded objects but also redefines people's understanding of 'possession.' In this process, digital objects present three characteristics: first is complete reproducibility—after all, any digital object can be infinitely copied while maintaining its integrity. It can be seen that 'traditional memory is relatively fragile and susceptible to damage, while the easy replication and transferability of digital information give it natural resistance to physical aging;'[3] second is non-spatiality—hoarded digital content exists in encoded form, breaking through the limitations of physical space. On the user side, digital hoarding has almost no impact on physical space, but with the development of cloud storage, its convenient, fast, and cheap advantages are becoming increasingly obvious, with growing appeal to individuals and organizations;[4] finally is stronger fluidity. First, digital objects can freely convert and spread between devices and platforms, making the threshold for digital hoarding lower. Second, this stronger fluidity may promote digital hoarding because 'large amounts of information and fast transmission speeds lead to insufficient individual information processing capacity, thus guiding hoarding behavior under supply-demand imbalance.'[5]

---

[1] See Thomas Maier. On phenomenology and classification of hoarding: a review, *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, 110.5(2010):323-337, p323.

[2] ZHANG Zheng, & LIU Chenxu. (2024). 海量信息下社交媒体用户数字囤积的心理机制初探 [A preliminary study on the psychological mechanism of digital hoarding among social media users under massive information]. Journal of Southwest Minzu University (Humanities and Social Sciences Edition), 45(4), 135–142. (in Chinese), p139

[3] ZHAO Dongxiang. (2020). 大数据环境下个人的数字囤积行为研究 [Research on personal digital hoarding behavior in big data environment] [Master's thesis, Wuhan University]. (in Chinese), p39.

[4] XIE Xiao, GAO Xinyuan, WANG Zhuoyun, et al. (2023). 数字囤积: 概念溯源、活动分析和研究展望 [Digital hoarding: Conceptual origins, behavioral analysis and research prospects]. Library and Information Service, 67(23), 124–137. https://doi.org/10.13266/j.issn.0252-3116.2023.23.011 (in Chinese), p129.

[5] ZHANG Yanfeng, HUANG Yating, & GAO Jingchao. (2024). 大数据环境下个人数字囤积行为驱动要素识别及引导策略研究 [Driving factors identification and guidance strategies of personal digital hoarding behavior in big data environment]. Modern Information, Advance online publication. 1–

These characteristics of digital hoarding reveal the fundamental transformation of hoarding behavior: we have shifted from ‘substantive possession’ oriented toward material resources to ‘symbolic possession’ oriented toward informational content. This transformation raises important philosophical questions: Does digital hoarding suggest a new form of ‘object’? If the objects of traditional hoarding are ‘physical objects,’ can the objects of digital hoarding be called ‘existential objects’? The philosophical implications of this difference deserve our deep exploration.

1.2 The Existential Logic and Characteristics of Digital Objects

The objects of traditional material hoarding have substantiality, and we establish direct relationships with them based on physical attributes. Digital hoarding is different: the objects of digital hoarding are encodings or codes that cannot be measured by traditional physical attributes and can only be perceived and used through technological means. The same digital content can simultaneously ‘exist’ in multiple devices. This fundamental difference indicates that the objects of digital hoarding may have entirely new modes of existence.

But are the objects of digital hoarding truly pure existential objects? Although from the hoarder’s side, the objects of digital hoarding are symbolic existences (such as electronic documents, photos, and other objects), the storage of digital hoarding objects still depends on physical devices (such as servers, hard drives, and other equipment). Take the first recorded patient with digital hoarding syndrome as an example: he said that because the number of his photos was too enormous, he had to use eight external hard drives.[6] This tension precisely reveals the uniqueness of digital hoarding objects: digital hoarding objects are a type of fusional existence that is neither pure symbols nor traditional real objects. Their existential logic is based on technological systems rather than physical attributes, which constitutes a fundamental difference from traditional real objects: the existential logic of traditional real objects is based on physicality—their length, width, and height are determined by physical attributes, and their use and storage are also based on physical properties. The existential logic of digital hoarding objects is based on technology—their existence and function completely rely on specific technological systems rather than physical attributes. For example, an e-book must have corresponding hardware devices and software environment support to be read; otherwise, it cannot be used.

The existential logic of traditional real objects forms its foundation. Although Mario Bunge does not directly discuss the physicality of real objects, in Matter and Mind, he points out that with the development of science, the concept of matter has undergone important transformations from classical mechanism to field theory and quantum theory. While these developments have broken through intuitive understanding of

17. http://kns.cnki.net/kcms/detail/22.1182.G3.20241030.1316.002.html (in Chinese), p. 6/17.

[6] Martine J van Bennekom, Rianne M Blom, Nienke Vulink, et al. A case of digital hoarding[J]. *Case Reports*, 2015, 2015: bcr2015210814, p2 of 4.

matter and even challenged Aristotelian and Newtonian concepts of matter[7], regardless of how they develop, traditional matter always exists based on its physicality and does not depend on human cognition or technological means. Similarly, although Heidegger in Being and Time does not advocate reducing objects to pure physical attributes, but emphasizes the meaning of objects in use, proposing that 'we shall call the useful thing's kind of being in which it reveals itself by itself handiness.'[8] Undeniably, physical attributes still form the foundation of this usage relationship—the weight and hardness of a hammer are prerequisites for its ability to be 'ready-to-hand'（Zuhandenheit） for hammering. This contrasts with digital objects' complete dependence on technological systems for their mode of existence.

The physicality of objects constitutes the fundamental characteristic of material existence. This forms a sharp contrast with digital hoarding objects—the existential logic of digital hoarding objects is based on technology, with their existence and function completely relying on technological systems. A digital document needs corresponding hardware and software support to be accessed and used. It can be said that the essence of digital hoarding objects is 'open and reprogrammable,'[9] with file storage, access permissions, data encoding, etc., all determined by technological system rules rather than physical attributes.

Based on the technological existential logic, digital hoarding objects have a unique characteristic—it can be said that digital hoarding objects are a type of 'fusional existence.' Scholar Yannis Kallinikos also believes so. He mentions that 'Digital artifacts, we claim, have an ambivalent ontology. They are objects yet they lack the plenitude and stability afforded by traditional items and devices.'[10] Although digital hoarding objects need physical carriers, this physicality is indirect—what plays the decisive role is technological support rather than physical attributes. Even if a hard drive has storage capacity, digital content still cannot be accessed without the corresponding technological environment. Therefore, although digital hoarding objects are not completely divorced from physicality, the dominant logic of their existence is technological. This dual nature makes them a 'fusional existence' between pure symbols and traditional real objects.

[7] Mario Bunge. Matter and Mind: A Philosophical Inquiry[M]. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2010, p23, 39.

[8] Martin Heidegger, Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit[M]. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996, p65.

[9] See Jannis Kallinikos, Aleksi Aaltonen, Attila Marton. The ambivalent ontology of digital artifacts[J]. MIS quarterly, 2013: 357-370, p359.

[10] Jannis Kallinikos, Aleksi Aaltonen, Attila Marton. The ambivalent ontology of digital artifacts[J]. *MIS quarterly*, 2013: 357-370, p357.

Ⅱ. Existentialist Analysis of Digital Hoarding

2.1 The Dual Structure of Existential Anxiety

In sociological research, digital hoarding behavior is considered a composite of multiple anxieties. As scholars like Dai Bao point out, individuals' 'IT anxiety, digital anxiety, fear of missing out, and deletion anxiety together constitute the psychological causes of the digital hoarding phenomenon.'[11] However, if we turn our gaze to the philosophical dimension, we will find that digital hoarding behavior actually reflects the existentialist predicament of humans in technological society—when material abundance dissolves the 'survival anxiety' represented by traditional hoarding, we begin to face more the question of 'how to exist.' This existentialist anxiety represented by digital hoarding behavior is mainly manifested in two aspects: anxiety arising from the finitude of time, and anxiety arising from considerations of self-meaning.

The first anxiety reflected by digital hoarding is: anxiety arising from the finitude of time. This is an anxiety that arises from feeling the passage of time, perceiving the uncertainty of the future, and being affected by the limitations of our own existence. We try to construct an 'eternal archive' in virtual space by hoarding e-books, instructional videos, WeChat articles, and other digital content, thereby alleviating our fear of the passage of time. From this perspective, the essence of digital hoarding behavior is to increase the sense of control over the future and alleviate fear of life's finitude.

However, the anxiety reflected by digital hoarding behavior does not have entirely negative connotations. In Heidegger's philosophy, it is called a 'Being-toward-death' existential state. Heidegger tells us that true freedom comes precisely from accepting this finitude of life: 'The delineation of the existential structure of being-toward-the-end helps us to develop a kind of being of Da-sein in which it can be wholly as Da-sein. The fact that even everyday Da-sein is always already toward its end, that is, is constantly coming to grips with its own death, even though 'fleetingly,' shows that this end, which concludes and defines being whole, is not something which Da-sein ultimately arrives at only in its demise.'[12] In other words, only by understanding how we face death (finitude) can we truly understand the completeness of human existence (Da-sein), and even in daily life, we always face death to some extent, even through 'fleeing' modes: even if we try to avoid thinking about death, this avoidance itself is a form of understanding or response to death. The same is true for digital hoarders: digital hoarders appear to deny the limitations of time through infinite collection, but in reality, it is precisely because they know time is limited that such digital hoarding behavior occurs.

---

[11] DAI Bao, ZHANG Pengjin, & WANG Yueqian. (2024). 研究生学术性数字囤积行为的影响因素及后果——基于扎根理论的探索性研究 [Factors influencing and consequences of graduate students' academic digital hoarding behavior: An exploratory study based on grounded theory]. *Modern Information*, *44(4)*, 53–65. (in Chinese), p55.

[12] Martin Heidegger, Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit[M]. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996, p239.

Digital hoarding behavior not only reflects our anxiety about the passage of time but also exposes our anxiety about the uncertainty of self-meaning—in the modern society of information overload, we fear being submerged by massive amounts of information to the point of losing our uniqueness. Therefore, we want to use digital hoarding behavior to compensate for self-meaning and approach our expected image. However, this approach confronts us with a paradox: through electronic hoarding behavior, we both try to fill meaning for ourselves and exacerbate the situation of information overload through digital hoarding behavior. Taking humanities scholars as an example, in the context of accelerated knowledge production, traditional knowledge internalization methods seem unable to keep up with the speed of academic updates. Faced with this predicament, scholars' strategies have changed: scholars' attitudes toward information have shifted from 'understanding' to 'electronic possession,' constructing symbolic 'personal knowledge bases' by hoarding massive literature to confirm academic identity. As scholar Jo Ann Oravec mentions in her research: 'Digital or virtual hoarding behavior... involves virtual items that can play a role in personal identity management, providing some support for personal memory renewal and group memory maintenance.'[13] The essence of this behavior is making 'data breadth' rather than 'knowledge depth' proof of academic identity. However, this confirmation of self-meaning fails to achieve its goal. Empirical research by scholars like Jia Mingxia points out that 'scholars' utilization rate of digital resources is low, more manifested as a form of formal storage.' [14] This behavior of determining self-meaning through digital hoarding precisely reflects the predicament that digital society brings us: our sense of uncertainty about self-meaning is so strong that we resort to digital possession or digital hoarding to fill self-meaning.

2.2 Philosophical Analysis of Self-Deception Mechanisms

Besides demonstrating two types of anxiety, digital hoarding behavior also reflects characteristics of self-deception. In Sartre's existentialist philosophy, self-deception is a special state of consciousness. Sartre says, 'Only what changes everything is the fact that in bad faith it is from myself that I am hiding the truth. Thus the duality of the deceiver and the deceived does not exist here.'[15] Here, Sartre points to the core of self-deceptive behavior: unlike deception, self-deception is deception that the same subject performs on itself. From this perspective, the psychological process of digital

---

[13] Jo Ann Oravec. Digital (or virtual) hoarding: emerging implications of digital hoarding for computing, psychology, and organization science[J]. *International Journal of Computers in Clinical Practice (IJCCP)*, 2018, 3(1): 27-39, p35.

[14] JIA Mingxia, ZHAO Yuxiang, & SONG Xiaokang. (2023). 人文学者数字囤积行为模式及形成机理探索——基于关键事件技术法的访谈 [Exploring behavioral patterns and formation mechanisms of digital hoarding among humanities scholars: Interviews based on Critical Incident Technique]. Library and Information Service, 67(4), 55–67. https://doi.org/10.13266/j.issn.0252-3116.2023.04.006 (in Chinese), p58.

[15] Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology[M], USA:Pocket Books, 1978, p49.

hoarding is very similar to the self-deception structure that Sartre describes and can essentially be viewed as a self-deceptive behavior: digital hoarding creates a 'false sense of control' for us because we confine our attention to the surface actions of collecting behavior, thereby avoiding present possibilities—that is, the possibility of making actual judgments and immediate interactions with electronic content. This manifests in action as escaping the responsibility of 'needing to make choices.'[16] For example, when we bookmark an unread article or save a video we plan to watch, we are actually engaging in a form of self-deception: this illusion of 'storage equals mastery' is a typical manifestation of what Sartre calls 'self-deception'—we use the present certainty of 'storage behavior' to escape the future uncertainty of 'learning responsibility.' At the moment of bookmarking, we simultaneously know that we may never return to view this content, yet through the act of bookmarking, we suggest to ourselves that we still control this information and knowledge. It creates an illusion of processing information, making us mistakenly believe that we have somehow mastered this content, when in reality, we have only delayed the moment of truly facing and processing this information.

Moreover, this self-deception also manifests as deliberate neglect of temporality: when we bookmark digital content, we tend to ignore certain facts—in reality, the digital content we bookmark requires time to digest and understand, but we choose to immerse ourselves in the false sense of security of 'being able to access at any time.' Using Sartre's terminology, digital hoarders are in a state of "being what I am not in the mode of not being what I am, and 'not being what I am' in the mode of 'being what I am.'"[17] Specifically, we are neither the kind of person 'who will return to read all saved content' that we think we are—that is, we are what we are not; nor are we willing to admit that we are the kind of person 'who cannot keep up with the information torrent'—that is, we are not what we are. This is precisely a typical self-deception: we oscillate between two facts that are difficult to reconcile.

However, although both involve self-deceptive psychology, digital hoarding behavior and physical hoarding behavior have significant differences in manifestation and environmental conditions. Physical object hoarders' self-deception manifests in believing that items 'will be used someday,' underestimating the quantity of their items, or simply rationalizing hoarding as 'collecting.' However, physical object hoarding behavior brings obvious physical consequences (such as insufficient space and environmental chaos), and these physical consequences are relatively easy to

[16] As above, in this work, Sartre illustrates the concept of 'bad faith' (mauvaise foi) through an example of 'a woman on her first date':She does not wish to appear eager; she is merely enchanted by what his respectful and cautious demeanor reveals to her. She refuses to perceive this conduct as an attempt to achieve what is termed the 'first approach'—that is, she avoids recognizing the possibility of temporal development implied by such behavior. Instead, she confines it to what it is at present. This example effectively demonstrates how self-deception (bad faith) evades responsibility by restricting present possibilities.

[17] As above, Here Sartre states: 'What then is the project of bad faith (mauvaise foi)? To cause me to be what I am not in the mode of 'not being what I am', or not to be what I am in the mode of 'being what I am'. Fr. p. 102.

observe. Therefore, related research on physical object hoarding has already been quite extensive. For example, scholars have ‘conducted in-depth discussions on the sociodemographic characteristics, social behavioral performance, and personality traits of physical hoarders from psychological, clinical medical, and sociological perspectives.’

However, digital hoarding behavior is more hidden, and the self-deception behind it is also more concealed. With technological development, the continuous expansion of storage space and the popularization of ‘cloud services’ make digital hoarding have almost no direct physical consequences on the user side, which also makes the self-deceptive behavior behind digital hoarding easier to maintain: in physical object hoarding, the sense of obstruction or inconvenience that item accumulation brings us may force us to face our behavior at some point, while digital hoarding does not produce similar physical consequences: when our device storage space is insufficient, we can expand storage or transfer digital content to the cloud rather than delete or organize content. At least, the effort required to organize digital hoarded items is much less than organizing physical items. This absence of physical limitations means we don't have to immediately face choices and makes it difficult for us to be passively forced to make choices. It can be seen that although self-deception is the common psychological foundation of various hoarding behaviors, the objects and environment of hoarding determine the development path of this self-deception. The almost unlimited storage capacity of digital space and the characteristic that digital devices can continuously expand their capacity make it easier for us to maintain an ‘invisible’ state of self-deception than ever before.

In fact, recognizing the existence of self-deception is an important step toward ‘good faith’ (bonne foi). Similarly, recognizing the philosophical self-deception behind digital hoarding behavior and becoming aware of facts such as ‘we cannot control all information’ may help us establish a healthier relationship with digital content: we should base this on recognizing the real limitations of time rather than on self-deception and the false sense of security we create for ourselves. If this sincere attitude is manifested in the management of digital hoarded objects, it might mean accepting the fact that ‘we need to make choices about digital content.’ As Sartre pointed out, when we directly face our behavior, self-deception becomes difficult to maintain.[18] For digital hoarders, this might manifest as: more calmly facing realities such as ‘I will never be able to read all saved articles’ or ‘I will not revisit all saved videos.’ Furthermore, at the epistemological level, this recognition might guide us to develop better filtering habits, prompting us to filter based on actual value and priorities rather than escaping the responsibility of filtering or reading through indiscriminate

[18] As above, French original p. 85. The text states: In fact, one must acknowledge that if I attempt to deceive myself cynically and unresistingly, this endeavor utterly fails; the lie disintegrates under the gaze (regard). Consciousness of deception is relentlessly constituted within my project (projet) as its very condition—thereby undermining the lie from within. This demonstrates Sartre's view that when we directly ‘gaze upon’ (regarder) or become fully conscious of our self-deception, the act of bad faith cannot be sustained.

bookmarking. At the practical level, this might mean that we need to regularly review our digital collections, delete content we believe we won't use, or establish stricter bookmarking standards, only keeping content that is truly relevant to our core areas of concern. Through this approach, we can begin to accept finitude and make more authentic and meaningful choices within this finitude.

Ⅲ. Ontological Consequences of Digital Hoarding and the Pursuit of Authenticity

3.1 Reconstruction of Cognitive Relations

The physical characteristics of traditional hoarding behavior are manifested not only in the hoarded objects but also in the physical consequences of hoarding—items are collected, accumulated, and finally occupy physical space. This traditional hoarding process can be directly understood as 'accumulation': items are stacked one by one like bricks, eventually becoming visible, physical hoarding that occupies physical space. In this phenomenon, hoarding behavior occupies physical space, and the limits of hoarding are thus constrained by physical space. However, the emergence of digital hoarding has changed our cognition of hoarding: when we hoard e-books, documents, images, or videos, what we hoard is no longer the items themselves but references or pointers to content. It can be said that what we actually hoard are 'symbols,' and we form a relationship between subject and symbol with digital hoarded objects.

When examining the relationship between us and digital hoarded objects, Cassirer's symbolic theory may provide us with an important perspective for thinking. Cassirer says, 'Symbol—in the proper meaning of this term—cannot be reduced to a mere signal. Signals and symbols belong to two different universes of discourse: a signal is a part of the physical world of being; a symbol is a part of the human world of meaning. Signals are 'operators'; symbols are 'designators.' Signals, even when understood and used as such, have nevertheless some sort of physical or substantial being; symbols have only a functional value.'[19] Cassirer's distinction between symbols and signals, while not directly applicable to discussing physical hoarding and digital hoarding, provides us with an analogical framework for thinking about digital hoarding.[20] Just as signals belong to the physical world of being while symbols belong to the world of meaning, traditional hoarding deals with concrete material items, while digital hoarding primarily involves symbolic content.

Digital hoarded objects, like the symbols Cassirer speaks of, have value not in their physical carriers but in their functionality—they point to specific content, meaning, or

[19] Cassirer Ernst. *An essay on man: An introduction to a philosophy of human culture*[M]. US: New Haven and London Yale University Press, 2021, p32.

[20] As above, pp. 32–33, when Cassirer discusses signs (Zeichen), he primarily refers to physically embodied yet information-carrying symbols. For instance, he examines animal responses to signs. These fundamentally differ ontologically from physical hoarded objects (such as books, clothing, and other material entities).

possibilities. This gives us inspiration, allowing us to recognize that our cognition of physical hoarding differs from our cognition of digital hoarding: in our cognition, traditional hoarding deals with items that have 'physical or substantial being,' while digital hoarding deals with symbols that have only 'functional value.' This cognitive distinction about hoarding allows us to understand the cognitive transformation caused by the transformation of hoarding: in digital hoarding, our understanding of hoarding has shifted from 'material accumulation' to 'content indexing.' When we save a PDF document or bookmark a web article, we are not adding a new object to physical space but establishing a new symbolic reference—a symbolic relationship between us and digital hoarded objects. Cassirer points out that 'symbols are part of the human world of meaning,'[21] and the fundamental difference between symbols and physical signals lies precisely in that symbols create a dimension of meaning. From this perspective, digital hoarding also has symbolic qualities—what we hoard is no longer physical objects themselves but symbols with referential functions.

Through this symbolic relationship, we no longer directly contact items themselves but indirectly reference and access content through digital symbols (such as file names, icons, links). This relationship is essentially abstract and transcends physical space. It is precisely this transformation in our relationship with hoarded objects that also changes our way of understanding hoarding—from perceiving the accumulation of concrete items to processing and retrieving abstract content. For example, in traditional hoarding, our relationship with items is direct and based on physical contact; we can touch, move, or rearrange these items. In digital hoarding, our relationship with hoarded objects becomes indirect and abstract; we must use symbolic systems as mediation. This transformation from direct contact to indirect contact not only changes our interactive methods with 'objects' but also reconstructs our cognitive relationship with hoarded content.

3.2 Authenticity: Reconstructing the Relationship with Technical Objects

It can be seen that digital hoarding reconstructs our cognitive relations to some extent, pushing hoarded objects toward a symbolized mode of existence. This transformation does not necessarily bring alienation; the key lies in how we redefine our relationship with technology. Heidegger's concept of authenticity provides important insights for this.

Authenticity (Eigentlichkeit in German) is a core concept in existentialist philosophy, particularly occupying an important position in Heidegger's Being and Time. In Being and Time, Heidegger says: 'Dasein always determines itself as a being from a possibility that it is, from a possibility that it understands in its Being in one way or another.'[22] 'Because Dasein is essentially its possibility, this being can 'choose' itself in its Being, gain itself; it can also lose itself or never gain itself and only 'seemingly'

[21] As above, pp. 32.

[22] HEIDEGGER, M. (2018). Being and Time (2nd ed.). (CHEN Jiaying, WANG Qingjie, et al., Trans.). Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company. (Original work published 1927), p. 56.

gain itself.'[23] It can be said that although authenticity later experienced considerable criticism and discussion, for Heidegger at the time, authenticity represented a state where a person can recognize themselves, accept themselves, and exist as a unique individual—an existential state that expects us to make choices that truly reflect our nature rather than blindly following social norms or others' expectations. It can be said that authenticity itself is not a moral judgment but a way—the way a person relates to their own existence. When a person can face their own finitude, understand their true possibilities, and make decisions based on this, they can be said to achieve authentic existence.

Based on Heidegger's concept of authenticity and considering the digital hoarding crisis we currently face, since digital technology has become the basic environment for most human existence rather than simply a tool, we may need to consider 'authenticity' in digital society based on this background. Starting from Heidegger's authenticity, because authenticity concerns how individuals break free from the depersonalized state of 'the They' and truly possess their own existence. In Being and Time, when Heidegger analyzes how people exist in daily life, he introduces the concept of 'the They': 'This 'who' is something neutral: the They.'[24] He further explains that 'it is not any definite person, and all persons—though not as a sum—are this They.'[25] This means 'the They' is not a specific individual, nor merely a collection of people, but an anonymous, universalized mode of existence in which individuals give up the responsibility of autonomous decision-making. Heidegger clearly points out: 'The They is everywhere present, but in such a way that wherever Dasein presses for a decision, it has always already slipped away. However, because the They predetermines all judgment and decision, it takes away from each Dasein the responsibility.'[26] In the state of the They, 'as the They enjoys, so we enjoy; as the They reads and judges literature and art, so we read and judge; even as the They withdraws from 'the masses,' so we withdraw; as the They becomes indignant about something, so we become 'indignant.''[27] This observation about humans' tendency to follow the crowd and avoid autonomy also has applicable value in the digital age—it can be seen that when faced with massive digital content, if we worry about missing any content and blindly save and hoard digital materials while not engaging in meaningful organization and reflection, this is a manifestation of the They.

Therefore, pursuing authenticity allows us to focus on how individuals maintain autonomy and reflective capacity regarding their own existence in digital environments. In discussing the problem of digital hoarding, authenticity includes: how to avoid losing oneself in conventional patterns of the digital world, and how to consciously choose ways of relating to digital technology.

---

[23] As above, pp. 55.
[24] As above, pp. 163.
[25] As above, pp. 163.
[26] As above, pp. 164.
[27] As above, pp. 163.

Since digital technology has become the basic environment of our daily existence rather than merely a tool we occasionally use, digital authenticity is not, and should not be, simply rejecting technology, but rather redefining the authentic relationship between individual and technology while acknowledging the technological environment. In the context of digital hoarding, we can say that authenticity requires us to re-examine the true meaning of the relationship between digital content and our own existence, rather than blindly following the feelings, desires, and impulses of hoarding. Now we are in a state of information overload but meaning scarcity, where people download, bookmark, and store large amounts of digital content that they will never read or use. This is similar to the inauthentic state that Heidegger describes, as the digital environment also contains many factors that make people fall into 'inauthentic' states. These factors can strengthen the state of 'the They' by depriving individuals of autonomous decision-making capacity, such as: algorithm-determined information flows make us passively receive content rather than actively choose; social media-shaped identity presentation encourages us to display ourselves according to preset patterns; the fragmented experience brought by digital life can also hinder our holistic thinking about existence. These technological structures often guide us into a concerning state: an inauthentic existence of passively following conventions and being lost in public opinion and general behavioral patterns.

3.3 Reconstructing the Relationship with Digital Objects

Therefore, considering that authenticity aims to help individuals regain autonomy and sense of meaning in digital environments, if we apply this concept to practice, we can see several key aspects: First, authenticity emphasizes conscious choice and reflection. In the context of digital hoarding, an authentic attitude means not blindly submitting to the conventional logic of 'storage equals security' or 'more is better,' but critically evaluating the actual meaning of each digital content for one's own life. This includes regularly reviewing stored content, deleting materials that are no longer relevant, and establishing personalized data organization systems. In fact, this conscious digital content management can reduce cognitive burden because 'if we can move part or all of the process out of our brains and into the external world, we are less likely to make errors. This is not because our brain's capacity is limited, but because of the nature of memory storage and retrieval in our brains: memory processes are easily interfered with or confused by other similar items.'[28]

Second, authenticity in the digital age involves: rebuilding authentic relationships with digital content, that is, our attitude toward digital content should shift from passively possessing to actively participating. This participation goes beyond simple screening behavior and requires us to shift our focus to the relationship between ourselves and the content we choose to retain, as well as the quality of these relationships. Specifically, this rebuilding requires us to practice 'conscious screening.' Scholar Yuk

[28] Levitin, D. J. (2014). The Organized Mind: Thinking Straight in the Age of Information Overload. Dutton. p. 54.

Hui discusses the absolute origin of technical objects in ‘On the Existence of Digital Objects.’ Similarly, for digital objects, we can also explore a similar ‘absolute origin’: ‘Regarding this absolute origin, I propose two directions, one purely technical and the other philosophical. The former focuses on the syntactic operations of machines, that is, grammatical structures that machines can interpret; the latter is the continuous exploration of ontology by the philosophical world since Aristotle.’[29] It can be seen that digital hoarded objects include not only technical-level data but also our philosophical pursuit of meaning and relationships.

At the ontological level, the real challenge lies not only in deciding what to retain but in how to truly integrate this retained digital content into our existence, making it a component of self-understanding and intellectual development. This transformation from symbolic possession to integrated existence is the core of digital authenticity.

Rebuilding relationships with digital content means: we must transform from passive hoarders of digital content to active constructors of meaning. That is, we should view digital resources as tools for realizing our own possibilities and as support for life projects, rather than as the purpose of life itself. The core of this transformation lies in regaining the initiative in choice—no longer being driven by algorithmic recommendations and social expectations, but screening and using digital content based on our own existential needs, achieving ‘we are no longer audiences, information consumers—but internet users, people who discover and evaluate content before deciding how to utilize content.’[30] Authentic digital life practice focuses not only on quantity but emphasizes quality and relevance. When we examine our digital collections, authenticity requires us to transform our way of questioning. We need to ask: ‘How does this content serve my planning for my own possibilities?’ rather than merely considering ‘How should I possess more digital collections?’ This way of questioning embodies the basic characteristics of authentic existence—breaking free from the drift of the They, making choices based on one's true existential needs, and transforming external technological tools into internal components of one's own existence.

Authenticity requires us to calmly accept the finitude of existence. Digital hoarding often stems from fears of forgetting, losing, or missing out. This psychological state, called ‘Fear of Missing Out’ (FOMO), reflects our desire for infinite possession. But as Heidegger pointed out, authentic existence lies precisely in accepting one's own finitude—we cannot possess everything, nor do we need to possess everything. Recognizing that ‘not all content needs to be saved, some experiences are inherently temporary,’ this attitude of accepting finitude is itself an embodiment of authentic existence. This recognition will also guide us to re-examine our relationship with technology: for example, no longer passively accepting the arrangements of the technological environment, but actively and selectively interacting with digital technology. For example, establishing personalized digital management strategies,

[29] Hui, Y. (2016). On the Existence of Digital Objects. University of Minnesota Press. p. 76.
[30] Digital Literacy, Paul Gilster, Wiley Computer Publishing, Canada, Toronto, 1997, p:ix.

regularly cleaning up content that is no longer needed, and screening information based on our true needs rather than social expectations. Through these methods, authenticity in the digital age helps us break free from the blind hoarding typical of the They, and regain existential autonomy while acknowledging the technological environment.

Conclusion and Outlook

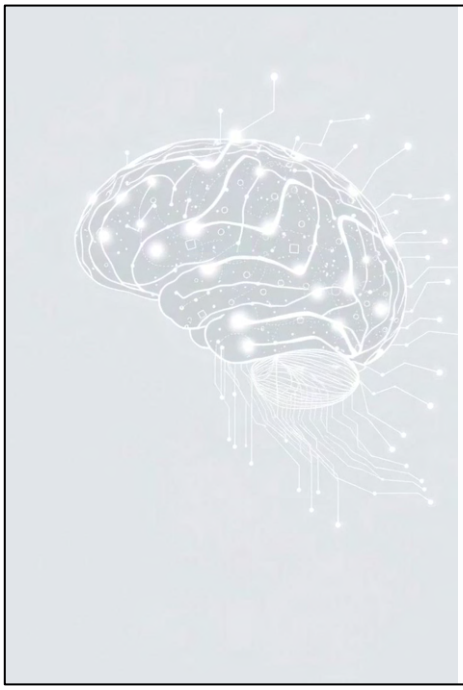
Through philosophical analysis of the digital hoarding phenomenon, this paper reveals possible changes in human modes of existence in the technological age, as digital hoarding is not merely an information management behavior but an important manifestation of the reconstruction of the relationship between humans and technology. From the perspective of the ontological transformation of hoarding objects, we have shifted from 'material accumulation' oriented toward real objects to 'symbolic indexing' oriented toward digital objects. This transformation redefines the meaning of 'possession' and changes our fundamental relationship with the world. From an existentialist perspective, digital hoarding reflects the dual anxiety that humans face in technological society: fear of temporal finitude and uncertainty about self-meaning. More importantly, digital hoarding behavior contains deep structures of self-deception—we escape the responsibility of genuine choice through the illusion of 'storage equals mastery.' This self-deception is easier to maintain in digital environments due to the lack of physical constraints.

Facing this existential predicament, Heidegger's concept of authenticity provides us with important philosophical resources. Authenticity in the digital age does not mean simply rejecting technology but requires us to regain existential autonomy while acknowledging the technological environment. This means transforming from passive digital hoarding to active meaning construction, from blind information possession to conscious existential choice, from escaping finitude to calmly accepting finitude.

Through philosophical reflection, we may be able to better understand how technology reshapes human modes of existence and how we seek more authentic ways of living in a technology-mediated world. The phenomenon of digital hoarding reminds us that in an age of information abundance, true wisdom lies not in possessing more but in choosing better; not in possessing information but in establishing meaningful relationships with information. Only in this way can we regain existential autonomy and completeness in the digital age.

Although this paper has analyzed the digital hoarding phenomenon from a philosophical perspective, the reconstruction of the relationship between technology and human existence reflected in this phenomenon still has many questions worthy of further exploration. At the theoretical level, the digital hoarding phenomenon opens up deeper thinking about 'digital ontology.' With the development of artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and other technologies, our relationship with digital objects will become more complex. Future research can further explore several more fundamental philosophical questions: First is the temporality problem of digital objects—when digital

content has nearly permanent preservation characteristics, how does it relate to the fundamental temporality (finitude, Being-toward-death) of human existence? Second is the ‘Other’ experience in digital space—in digital hoarding, what we hoard is often content created by others. Does this symbolic possession of others’ thoughts also change the relationship with objects? Finally, when our ‘lifeworld’ becomes increasingly digitized, does digital technology also reconstruct the concept of ‘world’ itself? These questions all require more detailed analysis within philosophical frameworks. With the further development of digital technology, new phenomena similar to digital hoarding will inevitably continue to emerge. The analytical framework established by this study may provide reference for understanding these new phenomena, helping us maintain philosophical thinking in an era of rapid technological change. After all, when technology changes our way of life, questioning the meaning of existence is necessarily an important theme of philosophical thinking.



Digital Hoarding Through Philosophical Lens: Existential Challenges and Cognitive Transformation in Technological Society

Presenter: Rui Cao 操睿
2025/7
Nanjing University, China

Table of Contents

1 Digital Hoarding: A Universal Phenomenon
2 Why Philosophical Analysis?
3 The Ontological Transformation
4 Characteristics of Digital Objects
5 Existential Anxiety: Time and Meaning
6 The Philosophy of Self-Deception
7 Digital Authenticity Defined
8 Practical Implications
9 Conclusion and Future Directions

Digital Hoarding: A Universal Phenomenon

Opening Anecdote:

- My computer cleanup: 11GB of unread manuscripts
- Douban group '**Digital Hoarding Syndrome**': 45 posts, 750,000 views

Key Insight:

- 'Zero-threshold' characteristic makes digital hoarding a new norm
- Unlike physical hoarding: no immediate physical consequences
- Pervasive habit: 'saving equals reading'

Research Question: Why do humans in the technological age choose to respond to information environments through digital hoarding?

Why Philosophical Analysis?

Beyond Empirical Research:

- Psychology: cognitive/emotional mechanisms
- Sociology: group characteristics and social impacts
- Information Management: effects on
- cognitive efficiency

Philosophical Perspective:

- Treats digital hoarding as window into human existential condition
- Focuses on ontological significance, not just problem-solving
- Examines interaction between technology and human modes of existence

Core Argument: Digital hoarding represents fundamental changes in human-world relationships in the technological age

The Ontological Transformation

From Physical to Digital Objects:

Entities	Physical entities (books, clothes)	Digital content (e-books, files)
Ownership	Clear ownership boundaries	Ambiguous ownership
Space	Physical space occupation	Symbolic existence
Accumulation	Material accumulation	Symbolic indexing

Fundamental Shift:

- From 'substantive possession' → 'symbolic possession'
- From physical boundaries → technological systems
- From direct contact → indirect reference

Characteristics of Digital Objects

Three Key Properties:

1. Complete Reproducibility
   - Infinite copying while maintaining integrity
   - Natural resistance to physical aging
2. Non-Spatiality
   - Exists in encoded form
   - No physical space impact (cloud storage)
3. Enhanced Fluidity
   - Free conversion between devices/platforms
   - Lower threshold for hoarding behaviour

Hybrid Existence:

- Neither pure symbols nor traditional objects
- Technological systems determine existence logic
- Cassirer's distinction: signals (physical) vs. symbols (meaning)

Existential Anxiety: Time and Meaning

Dual Structure of Anxiety:

1. Temporal Anxiety
   - Fear of time's passage and life's finitude
   - Attempt to create 'eternal archive'
   - Heidegger's 'Being-toward-death'
   - Paradox: Denying limitations while acknowledging them
2. Self-Meaning Anxiety
   - Fear of losing uniqueness in information overload
   - Attempt to confirm identity through digital possession
   - Example: Scholars' 'personal knowledge bases'
   - Low utilisation rates despite massive hoarding

The Paradox: We try to fill meaning through hoarding but exacerbate information overload

The Philosophy of Self-Deception

Sartre's 'Bad Faith' in Digital Context: Self-Deception Structure:

> *It is from myself that I am hiding the truth.*

- Same subject as deceiver and deceived

Digital Manifestation:

- 'Storage equals mastery' illusion
- Present certainty vs. future uncertainty
- Escape from learning responsibility

Why Digital Self-Deception Persists:

- No physical consequences (unlike physical hoarding)
- Expandable storage capacity
- Cloud services enable avoidance
- Easier to maintain than physical hoarding deception

Sartre's Insight: When we directly face our behaviour, self-deception becomes difficult to maintain

Digital Authenticity Defined

Heidegger's Authenticity in Digital Age: Traditional Authenticity:

- Breaking free from '**the They**'
- Making choices reflecting true nature
- Accepting finitude and responsibility

Digital Authenticity:

- NOT rejecting technology
- Conscious technological engagement
- Acknowledging both possibilities and limitations
- Regaining autonomy in digital environments

Key Shift: From falling into '**the They**' patterns → Making conscious, reflective choices about digital content

Practical Implications

Four Dimensions of Digital Authenticity:

1. Conscious Choice and Reflection
   - Critical evaluation of content's actual meaning
   - Regular review and deletion of irrelevant materials
   - Personalised organisation systems
2. Active Participation over Passive Possession
   - Shift from symbolic possession to integrated existence
   - Quality over quantity focus
   - Building meaningful relationships with content
3. Accepting Finitude
   - Overcoming FOMO (Fear of Missing Out)
   - Recognising 'not all content needs saving
   - Temporary experiences are acceptable
4. Reconstructing Meaning
   - From passive hoarders to active meaning constructors
   - Digital resources as tools for realising possibilities
   - Content serves life projects, not vice versa



Conclusion and Future Directions

Key Insights:

- Digital hoarding = manifestation of human-technology relationship reconstruction
- Shift from 'material accumulation' to 'symbolic indexing'
- Reflects dual anxiety: temporal finitude + self-meaning uncertainty
- Contains self-deception structures easier to maintain digitally

The Solution:

- **Digital Authenticity**: conscious technological engagement
- Transform from passive hoarding to active meaning construction
- Accept finitude while maintaining autonomy

Future Research:

- Digital ontology with AI and VR development
- Temporality of digital objects vs. human finitude
- 'Other' experience in digital space
- Reconstruction of 'world' concept in digital age

Final Thought: *True wisdom lies not in possessing more, but in choosing better*

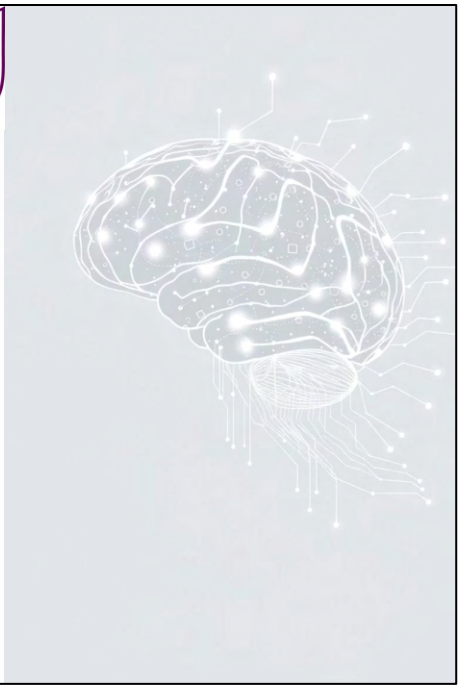
Thanks for listening

Questions and Discussion

Contact Information:
ruicao0624@foxmail.com

Based on: Cao Rui, *Digital Hoarding Through Philosophical Lens: Existential Challenges and Cognitive Transformation in Technological Society*

School of Philosophy, Nanjing University



Shaojia Song (Nahchang University)

“An Attempt to Explore the Problem of the Meaning of Life from a Multidisciplinary Perspective with Philosophy and Psychology as Theoretical and Practical Foundations, Taking Architecture as an Example”

1. Introduction: The issue of the Meaning of Life

1.1 The Importance and Universality of the Meaning of Life

The issue of "the meaning of life", which possesses universal significance and importance, is closely linked to the individual's life journey. People explore this issue actively or passively at different life stages. In the context of the current era and reality, the problem of the meaning of life faces dual dilemmas in both theory and practice.

1.2 The Dominance and Limitations of Science and Technology

In contemporary society, science and technology dominate public trust, profoundly transforming lifestyles—from high-speed railways and 5G communication to AI-assisted medical diagnosis. However, when addressing ontological questions about life's meaning, their role is inherently limited. They cannot answer existential queries like "Why do we live?" or "What is the meaning of life?"

1.3 Theoretical and Practical Dilemmas

On the theoretical level, the issue of "the meaning of life" involves complex value judgments and diverse cultural backgrounds, leading to systematic divergences in theoretical frameworks among different philosophical schools. This diversity thus renders it difficult to construct a unified theoretical paradigm.

On the practical level, the mainstream view popularized holds that life has no inherent meaning, and individuals must actively endow it with meaning. However, existing solutions still have limitations in professionalism and systematicity. When individuals face confusion about the meaning of life, even when they understand the direction of "self-meaning-making," they often find themselves perplexed due to the lack of specific guidance—thus unsure of how to translate abstract concepts into concrete life practices.

1.4 Exploration of Solutions

To address the above-mentioned dual dilemmas in theory and practice, this study attempts to explore a way out from the perspective of multidisciplinary integration.

Theoretical Foundations: Dual Support from Philosophy and Psychology

The "meaning of life" is not a confusion faced by individuals alone, but an eternal proposition explored by all mankind. Philosophy and psychology have amassed rich research findings in the history of thought: philosophy explores the essence of life through rational speculation, while psychology understands self-needs at the emotional and behavioral levels. Individuals can leverage these theories to sort out confusion, transform abstract thinking into practical life, and find their own answers to life's meaning.

(1) Constructing a Practical System by Integrating Professional Methods

It is expected to integrate professional approaches such as philosophical counseling, psychological counseling, and coaching techniques to build a practical system: the three complement each other, providing individuals with guidance programs that integrate theoretical depth and practical applicability.

(2) Analyzing the Interactive Relationship among Philosophical Thoughts, Daily Life, and Specific Disciplines (Taking Architecture as an Example)

Philosophical Reflection on Architecture: For instance, exploring its essence, the relationship between understanding the world and self-cognition, instrumental rationality versus value rationality, and the dialectic between theory and practice, thereby triggering in-depth reflections on the meaning of life. This understanding can then be integrated into daily practices and career development.

2. Theoretical Foundation: Dual Support from Philosophy and Psychology

2.1 Philosophical Theories on the Meaning of Life

The history of thought is replete with discussions on the meaning of life and related topics, among which philosophical inquiries are the most concentrated, systematic, and influential. For example, the philosophy of life in Chinese thought is rooted in Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism: Confucianism, represented by Confucius, advocates "benevolence" (ren) and the path of "cultivating the self, regulating the family, governing the state, and pacifying the world," exploring life values and social responsibility through ethical practice.

In the history of Western philosophy, Socrates proposed that "an unexamined life is not worth living," while the Delphic maxim "know thyself" has become a core philosophical proposition. This tradition inspires people to construct an understanding of life's essence through reflection and interrogation. Nietzsche, with his proclamation that "God is dead," announced the collapse of traditional value systems. He encouraged humanity to break free from nihilism, re-evaluate all values with a spirit of active self-transcendence, and become masters of their own existence. As a representative of existentialism, Sartre put forward the principle of "existence precedes essence," arguing that humans are free in an absurd world—life has no preordained meaning, but individuals must endow it with significance through free choices, while assuming responsibility for those choices.

2.2 Psychological Theories on the Meaning of Life

Psychological theories on the meaning of life include existential psychology, humanistic psychology, positive psychology, etc. Existential psychology emphasizes that individuals create meaning in freedom and confront existential anxiety; humanistic

psychology regards self-actualization as the ultimate pursuit of meaning, highlighting potential development and peak experiences; positive psychology points out that the sense of meaning originates from the integration of positive emotions, social belonging, achievement engagement, and altruistic behavior.

2.3 The Guidance of Theoretical Wisdom and the Necessity of Practical Integration

These philosophical and psychological theories offer frameworks for understanding the essence of life and practical guidance, helping individuals find direction in confusion and distinguish right from wrong in choices. They serve as pragmatic wisdom for interpreting "why to live" and "how to live." People can draw from life philosophy the wisdom to cognize themselves and the world, gaining enlightenment and solace to address existential perplexities. However, when facing profound questions about life's meaning and the diverse interpretations of numerous theories, seekers may easily get lost in the jungle of ideas—thus the necessity to integrate theory with lived experience.

3. Constructing a Practical System by Integrating Professional Methods

3.1 Philosophical Practice and Philosophical Counseling

In contemporary Chinese society, the vast majority of ordinary individuals either lack acquaintance with philosophy or hold preconceptions against it. The ongoing estrangement between philosophy and everyday life has given rise to significant dissatisfaction—philosophy should not be confined to academic halls but ought to engage with daily existence. Against this backdrop, "philosophical practice" emerged, advocating the integration of philosophical theories into ways of life as a bridge between philosophy and reality.

The core of philosophical practice lies in the deep integration of philosophy with daily life. As a crucial practical modality of philosophical practice, philosophical counseling employs philosophical theories and methods to guide people in thinking philosophically by insightfully examining personal experiences, scrutinizing belief systems, and refining thinking patterns. Its ultimate goal is to assist individuals in solving practical problems in daily life, deepening self-awareness, and achieving inner peace and tranquility.

Particularly when issues involve the examination and adjustment of fundamental life concepts such as worldviews, life outlooks, and values, philosophical counseling plays a distinctive role. Philosophical counselors approach clients as inherently rational agents, engaging in dialogue through approaches such as conceptualization, problematization, presupposition analysis, and Socratic questioning to address their complex life dilemmas. The focus is on aiding people in reflecting on major life events and exploring the meaning and purpose of life. For instance, when confronting the confusion of "life being meaningless," a philosophical counselor might guide the individual to reflect: What is the criterion of meaning? Is "life is meaningless" an

objective fact or a subjective perception? Are there meaningful moments in life? Through such philosophical speculation and life reflection, individuals are guided to deeply understand themselves, explore life values, and realize the guiding role of philosophy in individual existence.

3.2 Psychological Counseling

Psychology explores the meaning of life through theoretical construction, empirical research, and interdisciplinary perspectives. Through individual dialogues and interviews in psychological counseling, it helps clients explore by building trust, guiding reflection, and other means, thus facilitating personal growth and constructing life meaning. With numerous schools and a relatively mature industry, psychological counseling enjoys higher public acceptance and social influence.

Existential counseling helps clients discover and create the meaning of life by guiding reflection on life experiences, focusing on the present moment, and facing suffering directly, with the core goal of pursuing and actualizing the meaning of life. Humanistic Schools believe that life meaning stems from the inner tendency toward self-actualization, with humans innately driven to pursue potential development. Through "unconditional positive regard," individuals accept themselves, explore values in sincere and empathic relationships, and emphasize aligning choices with their nature rather than external standards. Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy helps individuals identify and change negative thinking patterns and behaviors, foster positive attitudes, and revisit life meaning. Narrative Therapy allows individuals to discover themes and values by telling their life stories, reconstructing meaningful life narratives. Positive psychology focuses on positive psychological qualities and the construction of good life, enriching the connotation and pathways of life meaning.

In terms of practical methodologies, psychological intervention techniques such as sandplay therapy, OH Cards, art therapy, mindfulness meditation, and the empty chair technique can assist individuals in exploring the deep psychological dimensions of life meaning.

3.3 Coaching and Its Applications

Coaching techniques integrate theories from psychology, management, education, and other disciplines, widely applied in personal growth, career development, and health management—developing rapidly in China in recent years. The International Coaching Federation (ICF) defines coaching as partnering with clients in a thought - provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential.

One core goal of life coaching is to help individuals explore life issues such as emotions, life meaning, values, and direction, assisting them in finding personal-level life meaning. Coaches accompany clients through listening and questioning, maintaining neutrality without judgment, advice, or answers. Through structured questions and processes, they help clients explore their own resources and find solutions independently. For example, asking clients: "If this were your last year of life,

what would you stop doing immediately, and what would you do regardless of everything?" or "Without considering money or others' opinions, how would your ideal day unfold?" These questions help clients shift from "seeking meaning externally" to "reflecting inwardly," thereby identifying directions for life meaning.

3.4 A Complementary Counseling Model for Issues of Life Meaning

In China, psychological counseling and coaching techniques have developed into a relatively mature system and are more familiar to the public, whereas philosophical counseling is still in its infancy. Even among those with a background in philosophy, the concept of philosophical practice remains largely unfamiliar. Against the backdrop of philosophical counseling's limited popularization, adopting a complementary development model with established fields can effectively enhance public acceptance. In fact, psychological counseling and philosophical counseling have always borrowed from each other: for example, Albert Ellis introduced philosophical ideas to refine the psychotherapy system, using philosophy as a supplementary approach to psychological intervention, which led to the development of cognitive therapy and the founding of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT). Similarly, the Peace therapy in philosophical counseling integrates professional techniques of psychological counseling.

The meaning of life is not an isolated proposition, but intimately intertwined with dimensions such as value, freedom, and love. When facing complex individuals endowed with rational reflection and emotional experience, professional concepts in psychology—such as thinking patterns, motivational systems, personality traits, and emotional mechanisms—provide a more comprehensive perspective for understanding human nature. When addressing issues of life meaning, I hope to explore an effective systematic and feasible approach by integrating the speculative depth of philosophical counseling with the study and practice of psychological counseling and coaching techniques. This approach aims to effectively address the confusion and perplexity encountered by ordinary people in their pursuit of life's meaning.

4. Analyzing the Interactive Relationship among Philosophical Thoughts, Daily Life, and Specific Disciplines (Taking Architecture as an Example)

4.1 Revealing Philosophical Thoughts in Life and Specialization

In daily life, even without deep philosophical knowledge, ordinary people form basic understandings of the world based on their lives and work, expressing through actions what they consider meaningful.

Philosophy is embedded in our life and work, and every discipline is inextricably linked to philosophy. Our task is to reveal the philosophical thoughts therein. Taking architecture as an example, philosophical reflection on the essence of architecture, the tension between instrumental and value rationality, the method of formal indication, and "poetic dwelling" can trigger in-depth contemplation on the meaning of life.

4.2 Reflection on the Essence of Architecture

(1) The Quest for the Essence of Architecture

Researchers and practitioners in architecture often confront ultimate questions such as *"What is the essence of architecture?"* Throughout history, architectural forms have continuously evolved, while functions have varied across eras and regions. Its definition has also shifted with social progress and advancements in architectural science. Discussions on architectural essence have unfolded from diverse perspectives—form, art, function, space, place, tectonics, culture, humanism, existentialism, etc. For example, Vitruvius' *Ten Books on Architecture* proposes the three principles of architecture: *"firmness, utility, delight"*.

(2) Philosophical Discussions on Essence in History

The history of philosophy is replete with debates on the essence of things. Western philosophy began exploring the origin of the world and the essence of all things with Thales' assertion that "water is the origin of all things". Socrates later pursued "universal definitions" of justice and virtue by moving from concrete phenomena to abstract concepts in inquiries like "What is virtue?" and "What is the good?". Aristotle's four-predicate theory, Kripke's essentialism, Heidegger's formal indication, and Wittgenstein's family resemblance theory represent both inheritances and innovations in philosophical discussions on essence.

(3) The Inspiration of Philosophical Perspectives on the Essence of Architecture

The pursuit of a universal theory, analogous to scientific laws, to define architectural essence presupposes an ultimate answer—this is the essentialist mindset, which posits that things have fixed, unchanging essences. From an anti-essentialist perspective, the meaning of architecture is not immutable. Architectural meaning is not derived from an innate "essence" but is dynamically constructed through historical, cultural, and social practices. Attempting to summarize architecture with an "eternal definition" obfuscates its richness that evolves across time. Discussions on architectural essence should focus not on "what essence is" but on "why we inquire into essence"—this inquiry itself is a philosophical practice through which humans understand their mode of being via architecture.

(4) Transition from Architectural Essence to Human Essence

Expanding this, practitioners and researchers in other fields also debate the essence of business, AI, etc. Reflecting on "essence" allows us to deepen our thinking: from architectural essence to the essence of the world, and then to human essence. Traditional metaphysics defines humans as "rational animals," treating them as ready-made entities with unchanging essences. Existentialism, however, argues that humans have no prefixed essence—instead, "essence" is self-generated in existence, emerging as the intersection of future possibilities and past inheritances. From understanding the world to self-awareness and reflection, each of us is not born with

a fixed definition of our role in the world, but gradually shapes ourselves through continuous life and work experiences.

4.3 Enlightenment from Instrumental and Value Rationality

(1) The Rise of Instrumental Rationality

Since the Enlightenment, rationalism has thrived, and faith in science/technology has grown, making instrumental rationality dominant. In architectural design, this manifests as the pursuit of efficiency, accuracy, and standardization. Digital technologies enable architects to tackle complex design problems more efficiently, achieve precise construction control, shorten project cycles, reduce costs, and improve quality. However, this pursuit poses challenges: over-reliance on digital tools may lead to neglect of architectural essence, reducing design to technical accumulation devoid of humanistic care. Additionally, rapid technological development has fragmented architectural division of labor, making designers mere links in technical processes and eroding their holistic control and creative freedom.

(2) Instrumental vs. Value Rationality in Life

In modern society, the overexpansion of instrumental rationality often marginalizes value rationality, risking a "means-ends" inversion that causes loss of life meaning. Exploring life's meaning requires answering "What is valuable"—a value judgment on "Why do humans exist?" and "What is worth pursuing." Value rationality urges individuals to escape the "tool-result" cycle, inspiring inquiries into "Why live?" and the essential meaning of actions. These two rationalities provide a framework for thinking and navigating life's meaning.

4.4 Poetic Dwelling

(1) The Concept of Poetic Dwelling

"Poetic dwelling" frequently appears in real estate advertisements and is explored in architecture, art, and philosophy—a concept both trendy and classic. Commonly interpreted as living a poetic life or achieving an ideal aesthetic realm, it embodies romantic longings for existence.

Heidegger's "poetic dwelling" originates from the philosophical transformation of Hölderlin's verses, serving as a response to the alienation of modern technology and an attempt to break free from the calculative logic of instrumental rationality. Rooted in "life," Heidegger's philosophical thought constructs an internal connection between philosophy and authentic existence through the concept of "poetic dwelling"—realized in "building"—to foster harmonious coexistence between humans and all things, and to safeguard the meaning of Being in dwelling.

(2) Poetic Dwelling under Heidegger's Method of Formal Indication

Inquiries into "poetic dwelling" often seek theoretical answers, but this conceptual approach risks fixating life as static, failing to depict its fluidity. Under the method of formal indication, dwelling—with enactment at its core—ultimately anchors itself in present and future enactments rather than static theories, thus overcoming, to some

extent, the limitations of fixed semantics and the inexpressible practical experiences beyond language. From this perspective, no universal or ultimate theory exists: "poetic dwelling" serves as an initiatory guide, pointing to a general direction while leaving infinite possibilities for specific enactments. This is why we say "doing architecture" or "doing philosophy" rather than "drawing architecture" or "talking philosophy"—"doing" embodies enactment and practice: constructing design forms actualizes architecture, while living philosophically enacts philosophy.

Our designs embody our understandings of architecture, design, life, and dwelling. Design activity is both a part of self-dwelling and an enactment of poetic dwelling. Heidegger's call in Building, Dwelling, thinking to "re-seek the essence of dwelling," interpreted through formal indication, implies that poetic dwelling is not a one-time achievement. We cannot permanently escape the condition of homelessness; instead, we must continuously enact and strive for poetic dwelling, repeatedly returning to its initiatory meaning, enriching our understanding through the interplay of philosophy and life, and thus approaching authentic existence.

5. Summary

This study integrates philosophical and psychological theories with theoretical reflections on specific disciplines (e.g., architecture). Through philosophical practices, psychological counseling techniques and Coaching techniques, it assists individuals in understanding their life meaning, offering novel interdisciplinary integrative approaches and methods for addressing issues of life significance.

Bibliography

Chen Changshen. Reflections on Life: A Study of the Problem of the Meaning of Life [M]. Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2020.

陈常燊。反思的生活 —— 人生意义问题研究 [M]. 上海：上海人民出版社，2020

Pan Tianqun (Ed.). Selected Readings in Philosophical Practice [M]. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2023.

潘天群编。哲学践行文献精选 [M]. 南京大学出版社，2023.

Mao Chongjie. Essentialism and Anti - essentialism [J]. Social Sciences in China, 2003(3): 23 - 29.

毛崇杰。本质主义与反本质主义 [J]. 社会科学辑刊，2003 (3): 23-29.

Tong Xue. A Study on Heidegger's Formal Indication Thought [D]. Jilin University, 2015.

童雪。海德格尔形式显示思想研究 [D]. 吉林大学，2015.

Heidegger. Lectures and Essays [M]. Translated by Sun Zhouxing. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2018.

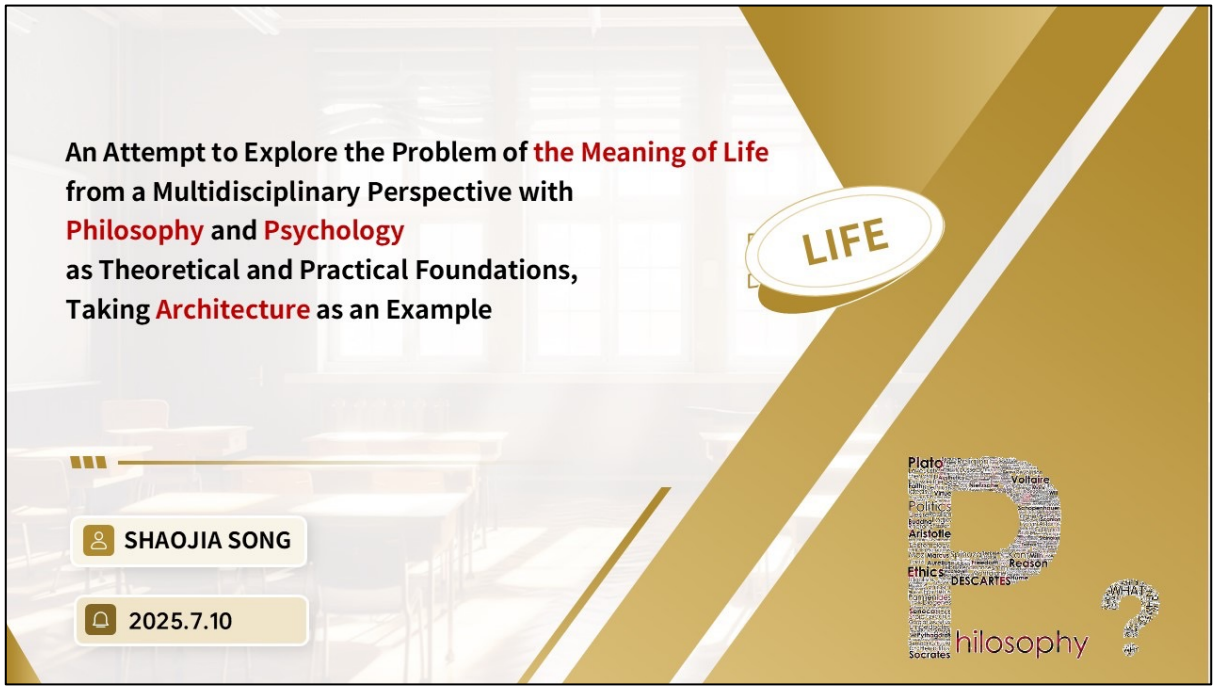
海德格尔。演讲与论文集 [M]. 孙周兴译。商务印书馆，2018.

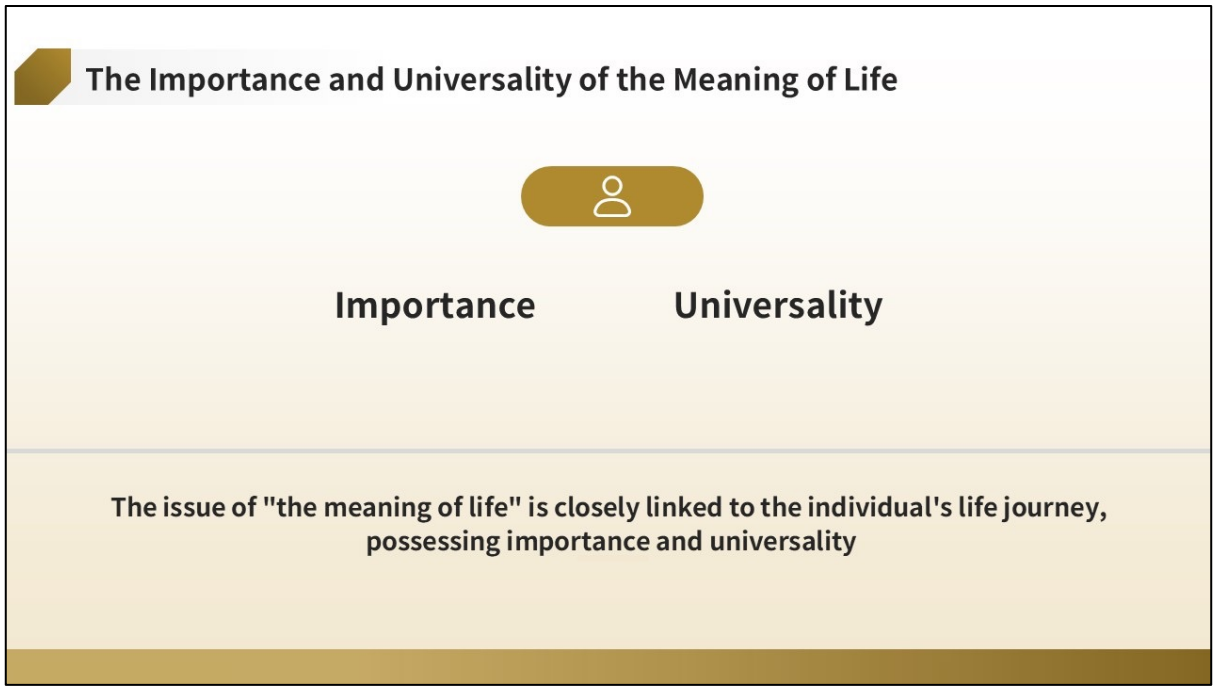
Liu Qing. Lectures on Modern Western Thought [M]. New Star Press, 2021.

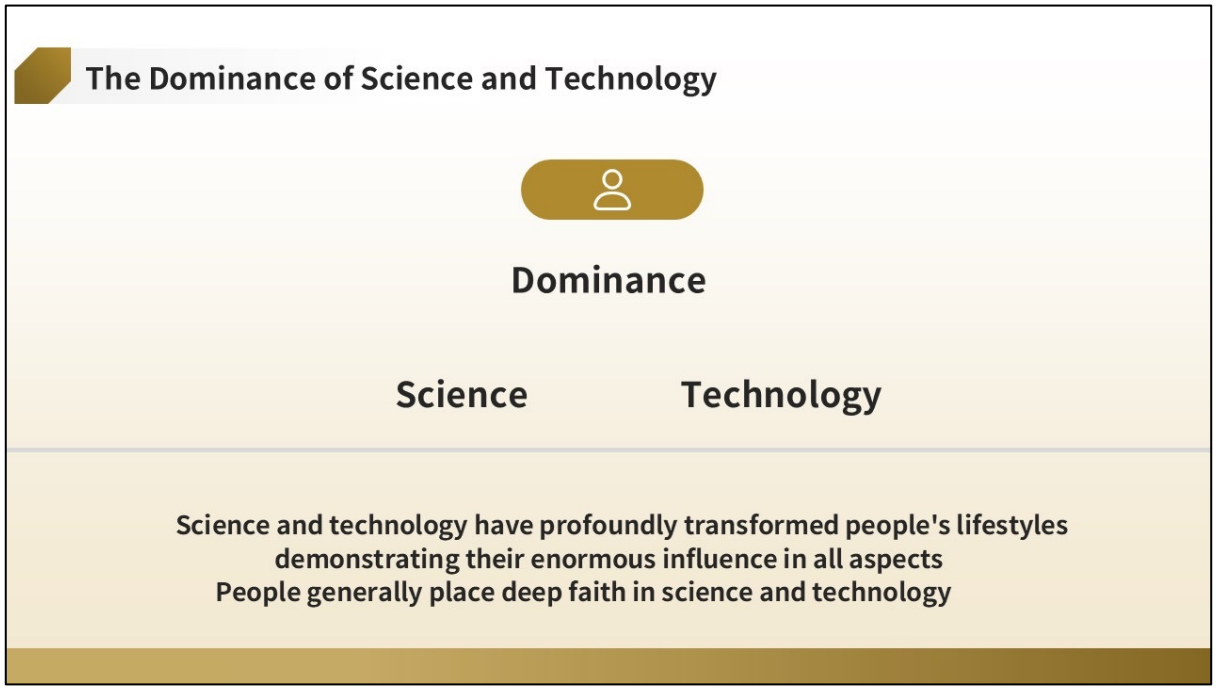
刘擎。现代西方思想讲义 [M]. 新星出版社，2021.

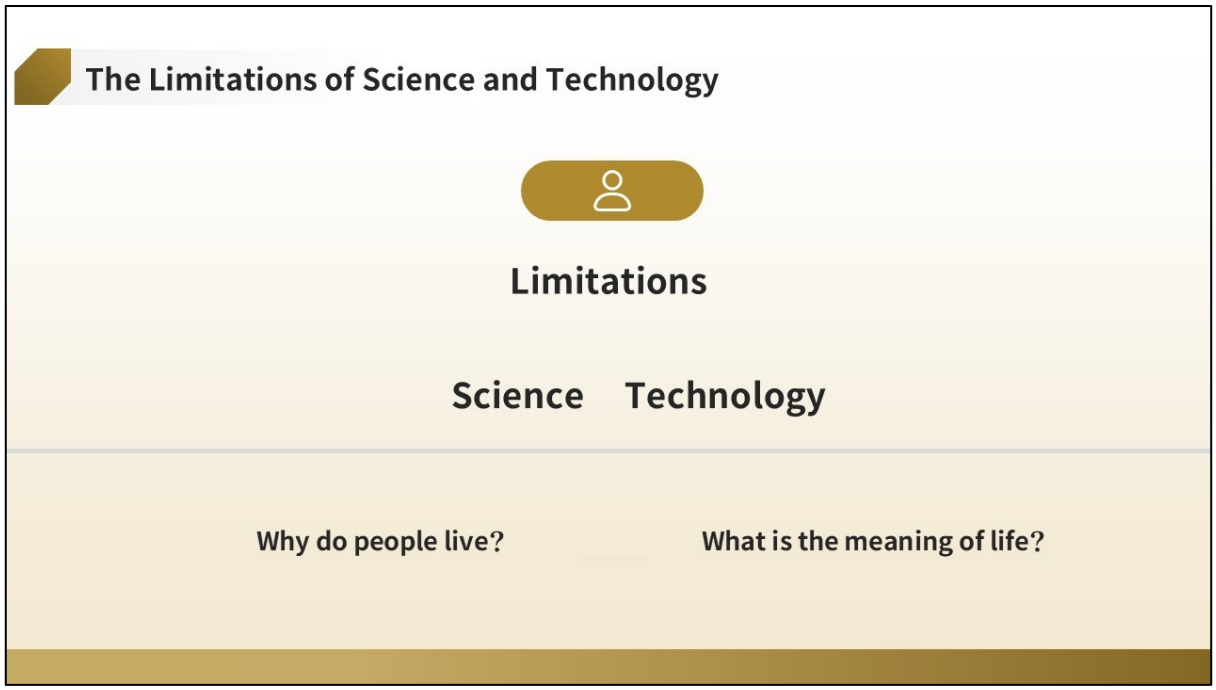
Deng Xiaomang. Explanation of Heidegger's "Building, Dwelling, Thinking" [C]// Peng Nu, Zhi Wenjun, Dai Chun. Dialogue between Phenomenology and Architecture. Tongji University Press, 2009.

邓晓芒。海德格尔《筑・居・思》句读 [C]// 彭怒，支文军，戴春。现象学与建筑的对话。同济大学出版社，2009.


An Attempt to Explore the Problem of the Meaning of Life
from a Multidisciplinary Perspective with
Philosophy and Psychology
as Theoretical and Practical Foundations,
Taking Architecture as an Example
LIFE
SHAOJIA SONG
2025.7.10
Plato
Voltaire
Politics
Aristotle
Reason
Ethics
DESCARTES
WHAT
hilosophy
Socrates


The Importance and Universality of the Meaning of Life
Importance
Universality
The issue of "the meaning of life" is closely linked to the individual's life journey,
possessing importance and universality


The Dominance of Science and Technology
Dominance
Science
Technology
Science and technology have profoundly transformed people's lifestyles
demonstrating their enormous influence in all aspects
People generally place deep faith in science and technology


The Limitations of Science and Technology
Limitations
Science
Technology
Why do people live?
What is the meaning of life?

Theoretical and Practical Dilemmas

Complex Value Judgments Cultural Backgrounds

The meaning of life involves complex value judgments and diverse cultural backgrounds, leading to systematic theoretical divergences among different philosophical schools.

Practical solutions have limitations in professionalism and systematicness

Existing practical solutions still have limitations in professionalism and systematicness. Individuals often fall into perplexity due to the lack of specific guidance.

Perspective of Multidisciplinary integration

01 Theoretical Foundations: Dual Support from Philosophy and Psychology

02 Constructing a Practical System by Integrating Professional Methods

03 Analyzing the Interactive Relationship among Philosophical Thoughts, Daily Life， and Specific Disciplines， Taking Architecture as an Example.

01 Theoretical Foundations: Dual Support from Philosophy and Psychology

The Role of Philosophy

Philosophy guides us to interrogate the essence of life through rational speculation. It helps us understand the meaning of life and provides frameworks for action.

The Role of Psychology

Psychology helps us understand self- needs at the emotional and behavioral levels. It provides practical guidance for individuals to find their own life answers.

02 Constructing a Practical System by Integrating Professional Methods

01

Integrating Philosophical Counseling, Psychological Counseling, and Coaching Techniques

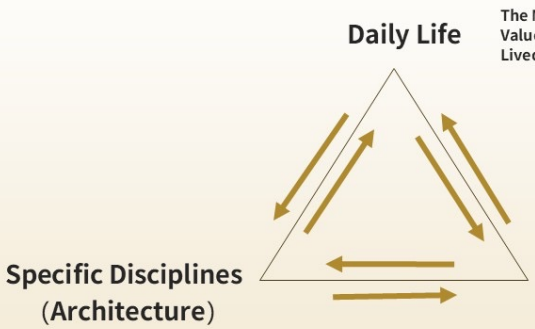
It is expected to integrate professional approaches such as philosophical counseling, psychological counseling, and coaching techniques to build a practical system.

02

Guidance programs for addressing this issue

The three complement each other, providing individuals with guidance programs that combine theoretical depth and practical operability.

03 Analyzing the Interactive Relationship among Philosophical Thoughts, Daily Life, and Specific Disciplines (Taking Architecture as an Example)

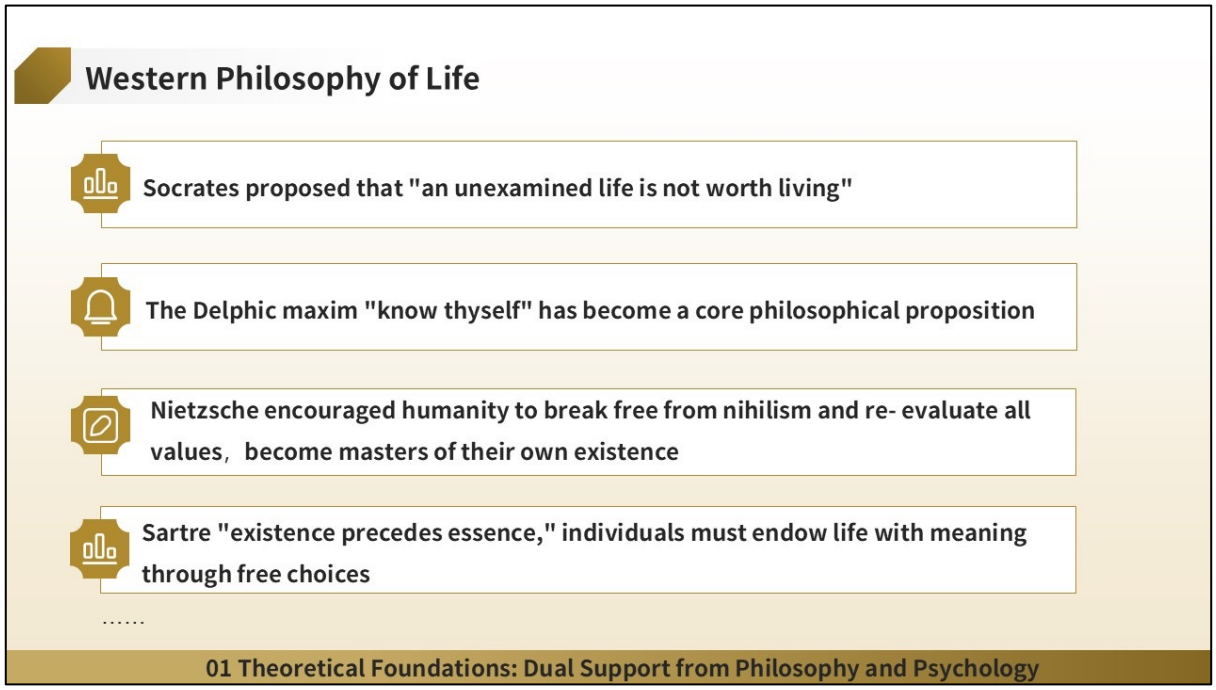


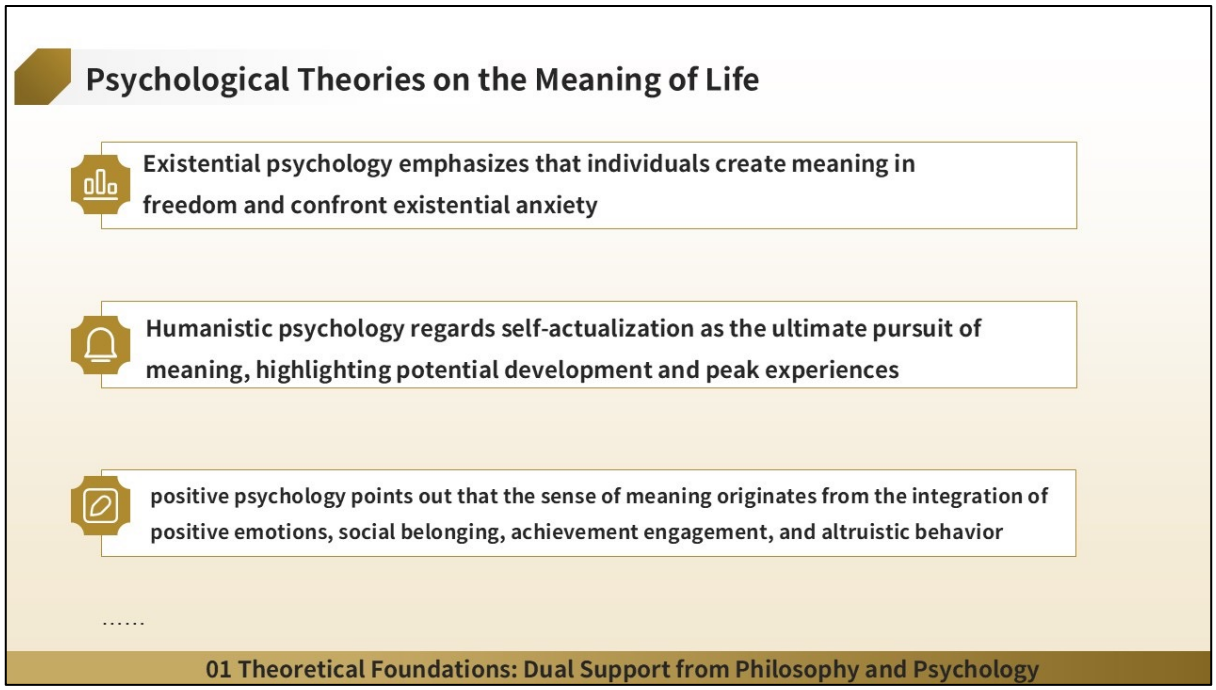
Chinese Philosophy of Life

Confucianism , Buddhism , Taoism

Confucianism, represented by Confucius, advocates "benevolence" (ren) and the path of "cultivating the self, regulating the family, governing the state, and pacifying the world," exploring life values and social responsibility through ethical practice

01 Theoretical Foundations: Dual Support from Philosophy and Psychology


Western Philosophy of Life
Socrates proposed that "an unexamined life is not worth living"
The Delphic maxim "know thyself" has become a core philosophical proposition
Nietzsche encouraged humanity to break free from nihilism and re- evaluate all values, become masters of their own existence
Sartre "existence precedes essence," individuals must endow life with meaning through free choices
.....
01 Theoretical Foundations: Dual Support from Philosophy and Psychology


Psychological Theories on the Meaning of Life
Existential psychology emphasizes that individuals create meaning in freedom and confront existential anxiety
Humanistic psychology regards self-actualization as the ultimate pursuit of meaning, highlighting potential development and peak experiences
positive psychology points out that the sense of meaning originates from the integration of positive emotions, social belonging, achievement engagement, and altruistic behavior
.....
01 Theoretical Foundations: Dual Support from Philosophy and Psychology

The Guidance of Theoretical Wisdom and the Necessity of Practical Integration

Providing Frameworks and Guidance

Philosophy of life offers frameworks for understanding the essence of life and practical guidance for action. It helps individuals find direction amid confusion.

The Challenge of Pluralistic Interpretations

When facing profound confusion about life's meaning and pluralistic philosophical interpretations, seekers may lose their way in the jungle of ideas, which requires integration with practical life.

01 Theoretical Foundations: Dual Support from Philosophy and Psychology

The Integration of Philosophy and Daily Life

01

The Emergence of Philosophical Practice

In contemporary Chinese society, "philosophical practice" emerged, advocating the integration of philosophical theories into lifestyles as a bridge between philosophy and reality.

02

The Core of Philosophical Practice

The core of philosophical practice lies in its close integration with daily life. It guides people to think like philosophers and solve practical problems in daily life.

02 Constructing a Practical System by Integrating Professional Methods

Philosophical Counseling

The Role of Philosophical Counselors

Philosophical counselors treat clients as healthy rational beings, engaging in dialogues to address complex life dilemmas and helping individuals solve practical problems in daily life, deepen self-awareness, and achieve inner peace.

Think and Dialogue like a Philosopher

Dialogues are conducted through conceptualization, problematization, presupposition analysis, Socratic questioning and other means to explore the meaning and purpose of life.

02 Constructing a Practical System by Integrating Professional Methods

The Role of Psychological Counseling

The Path of Psychology in Exploring the Meaning of Life

Psychology helps clients explore and construct the meaning of life for personal growth through theoretical construction, empirical research, interdisciplinary perspectives, and individual dialogues, trust-building, and reflective guidance in psychological counseling.

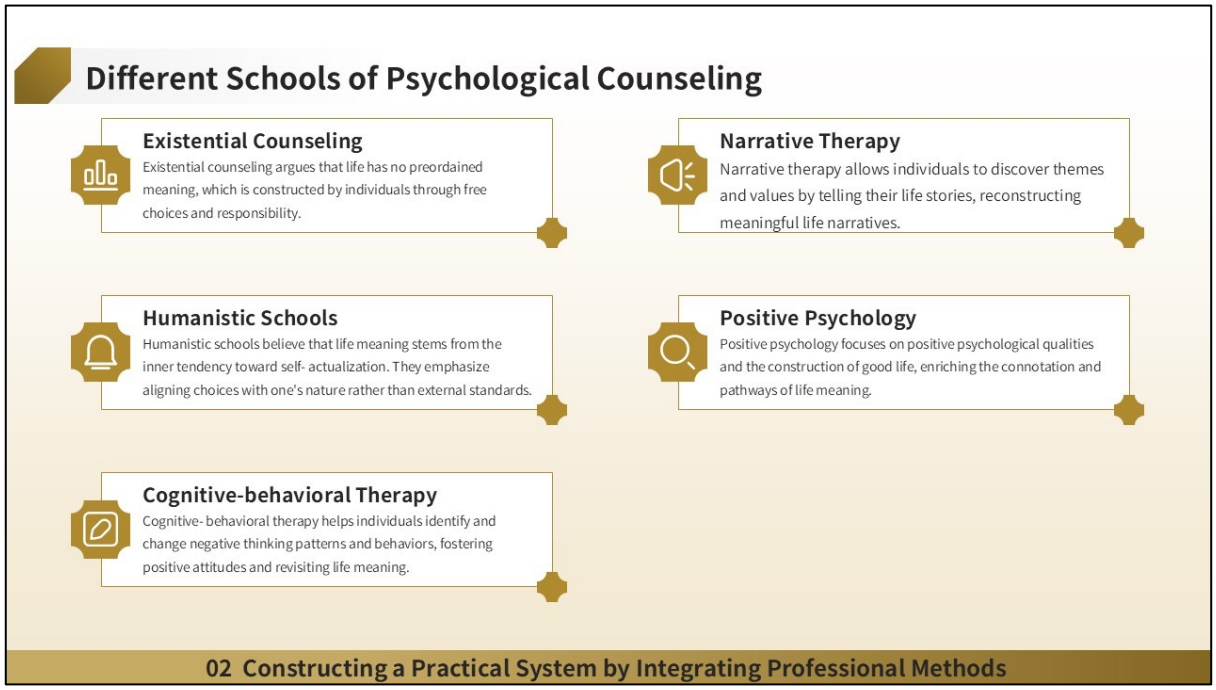
The Popularity and Influence of Psychological Counseling

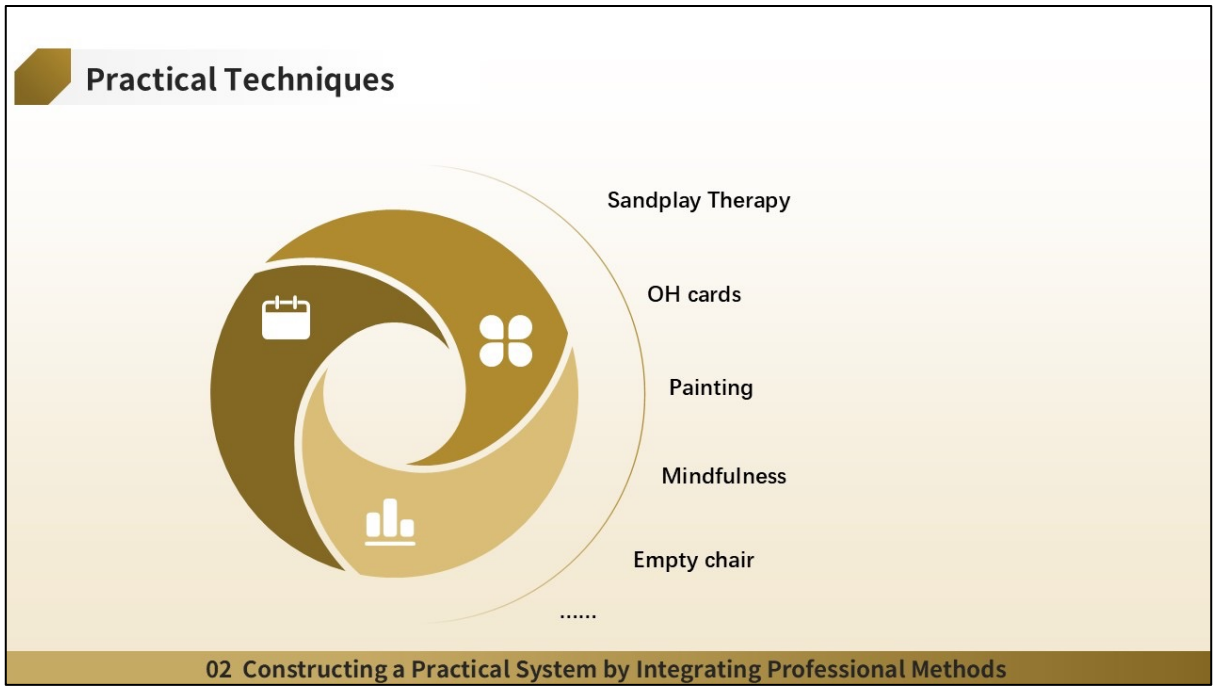
With numerous schools and a relatively mature industry, psychological counseling enjoys higher public acceptance and social influence.





02 Constructing a Practical System by Integrating Professional Methods


Different Schools of Psychological Counseling
Existential Counseling
Existential counseling argues that life has no preordained meaning, which is constructed by individuals through free choices and responsibility.
Narrative Therapy
Narrative therapy allows individuals to discover themes and values by telling their life stories, reconstructing meaningful life narratives.
Humanistic Schools
Humanistic schools believe that life meaning stems from the inner tendency toward self- actualization. They emphasize aligning choices with one's nature rather than external standards.
Positive Psychology
Positive psychology focuses on positive psychological qualities and the construction of good life, enriching the connotation and pathways of life meaning.
Cognitive-behavioral Therapy
Cognitive- behavioral therapy helps individuals identify and change negative thinking patterns and behaviors, fostering positive attitudes and revisiting life meaning.
02 Constructing a Practical System by Integrating Professional Methods


Practical Techniques
Sandplay Therapy
OH cards
Painting
Mindfulness
Empty chair
.....
02 Constructing a Practical System by Integrating Professional Methods

Coaching and Its Applications

The definition of coaching

The International Coaching Federation (ICF) defines coaching as partnering with clients in a thought - provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential.



The Application of Coaching Techniques

Coaching techniques integrate theories from psychology, management, education, and other disciplines, widely applied in personal growth, career development, and health management—developing rapidly in China in recent years.

02 Constructing a Practical System by Integrating Professional Methods

The Role of Life Coaches

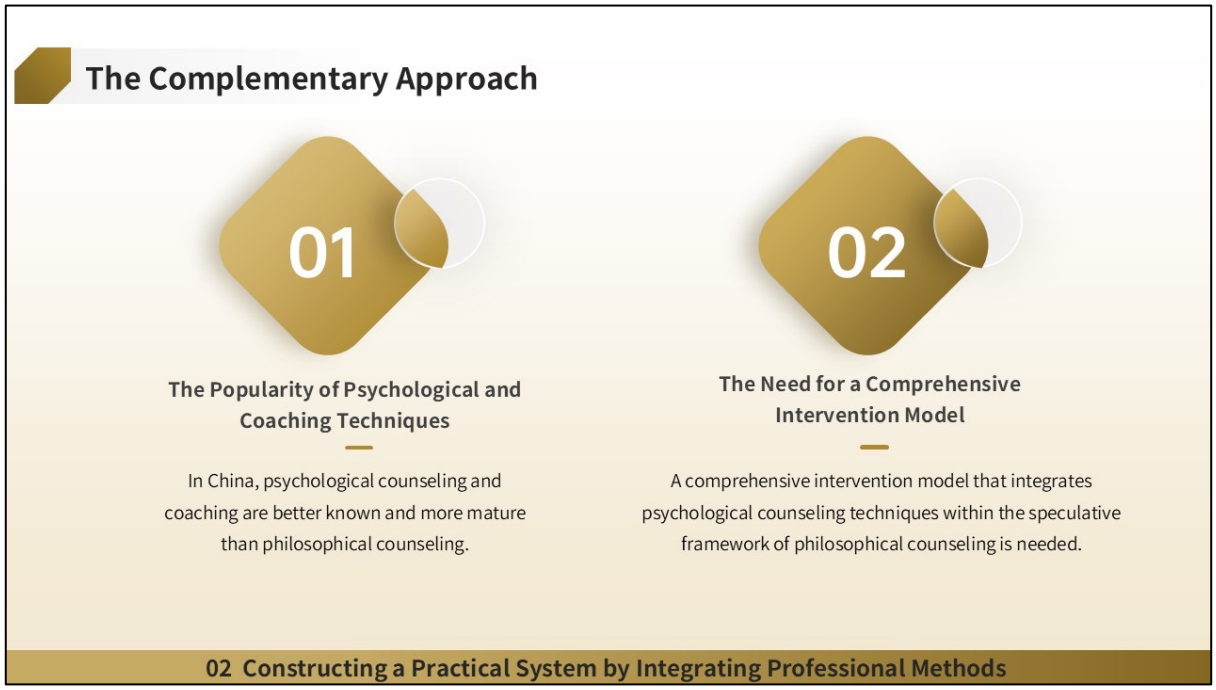
Listening and Questioning

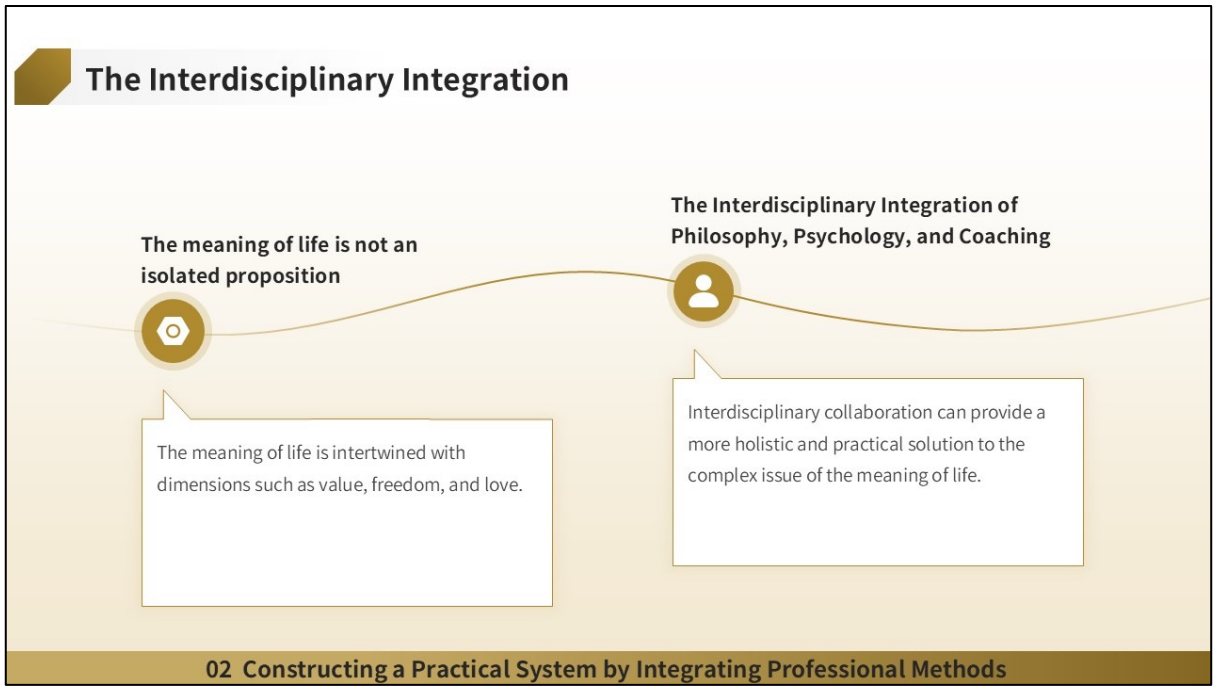
Coaches accompany clients through listening and questioning, maintaining neutrality without judgment, advice, or answers.

Helping Clients Find Solutions

Through structured questions and processes, they help clients explore their own resources and find solutions independently.

02 Constructing a Practical System by Integrating Professional Methods


The Complementary Approach
01
The Popularity of Psychological and Coaching Techniques
In China, psychological counseling and coaching are better known and more mature than philosophical counseling.
02
The Need for a Comprehensive Intervention Model
A comprehensive intervention model that integrates psychological counseling techniques within the speculative framework of philosophical counseling is needed.
02 Constructing a Practical System by Integrating Professional Methods


The Interdisciplinary Integration
The meaning of life is not an isolated proposition
The meaning of life is intertwined with dimensions such as value, freedom, and love.
The Interdisciplinary Integration of Philosophy, Psychology, and Coaching
Interdisciplinary collaboration can provide a more holistic and practical solution to the complex issue of the meaning of life.
02 Constructing a Practical System by Integrating Professional Methods

Revealing Philosophical Thoughts in Life and Specialization

Forming Understandings Based on Life and Work

In daily life, even without deep philosophical knowledge, ordinary people form basic understandings of the world based on their lives and work.

Revealing Philosophical Thoughts in Life and Specialization

Every discipline is intricately linked to philosophy, and our task is to reveal the philosophical thoughts within.

Taking Architecture as an Example

Philosophical reflection on architecture introduces concepts such as essence, instrumental rationality versus value rationality, Poetic Dwelling and understanding of philosophical concepts, thereby triggering in- depth thinking about the meaning of life.

The Essence of Architecture	——	Essentialism, Anti-essentialism,
Digitally-Enabled Architecture	——	Instrumental Rationality , Value Rationality
Poetic Dwelling	——	Heidegger's Method of Formal Indication

The Quest for the Essence of Architecture

The Evolution of Architectural Forms and Definitions

Throughout history, the forms and shapes of architecture have continuously evolved, while its uses and functions have varied with time and place. Definitions of architecture have also shifted alongside social development and advancements in architectural science.



The Desire for a Universal Theory

There is a desire for a universal theory that can capture architecture's essence and dictate what should be done and how. This pursuit assumes an ultimate answer and embodies an essentialist mindset.

Philosophical Discussions on Essence in History

Ancient greek origin: Thales' assertion "Water is the origin of all things" initiates the inquiry into essence.

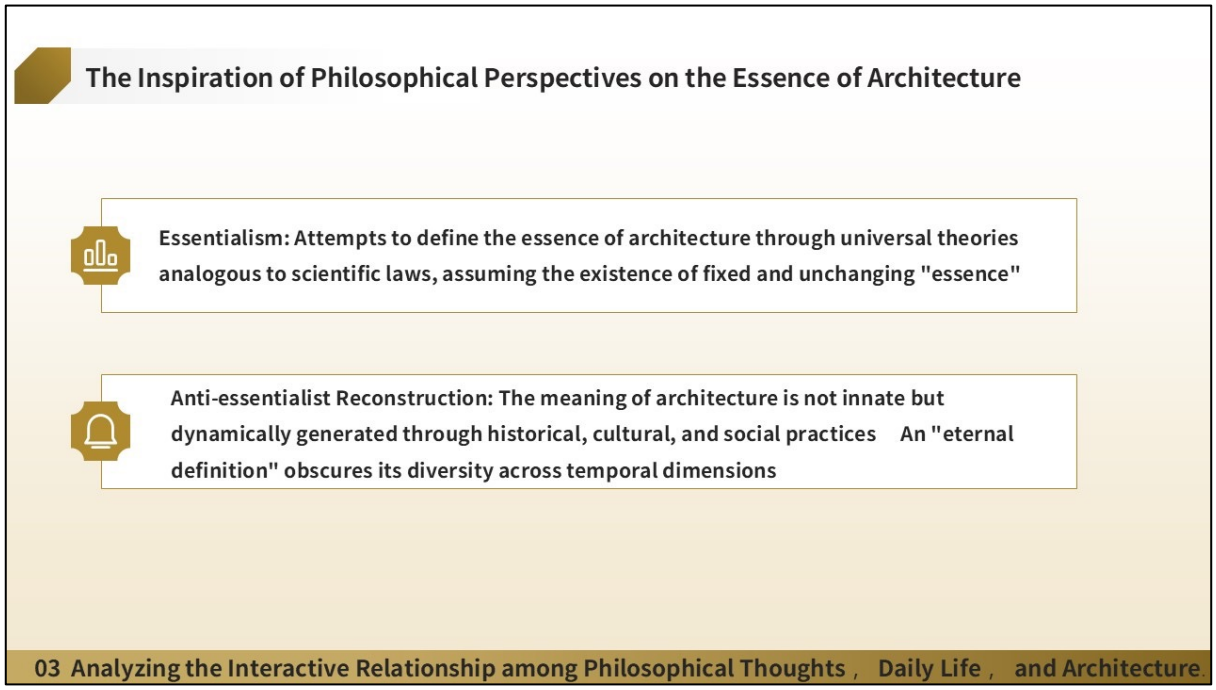
Socratic method: Abstracting "universal definitions" from concrete things (e.g., What is virtue?)

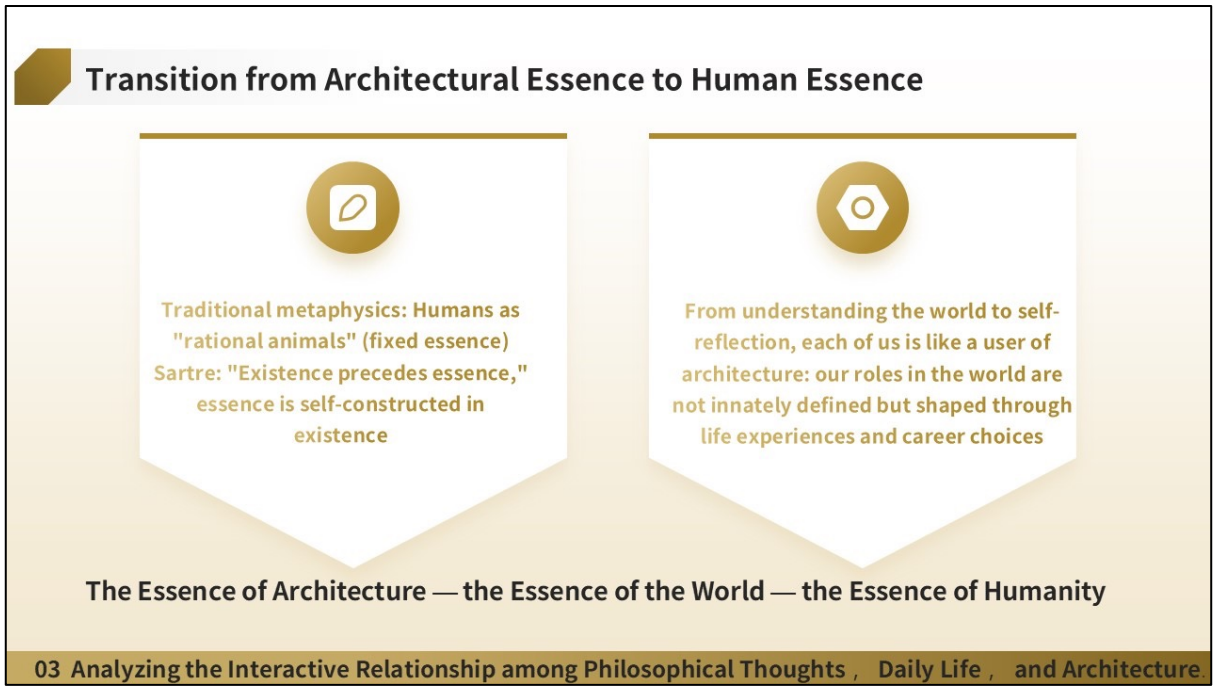
Aristotle's four-category definition method.

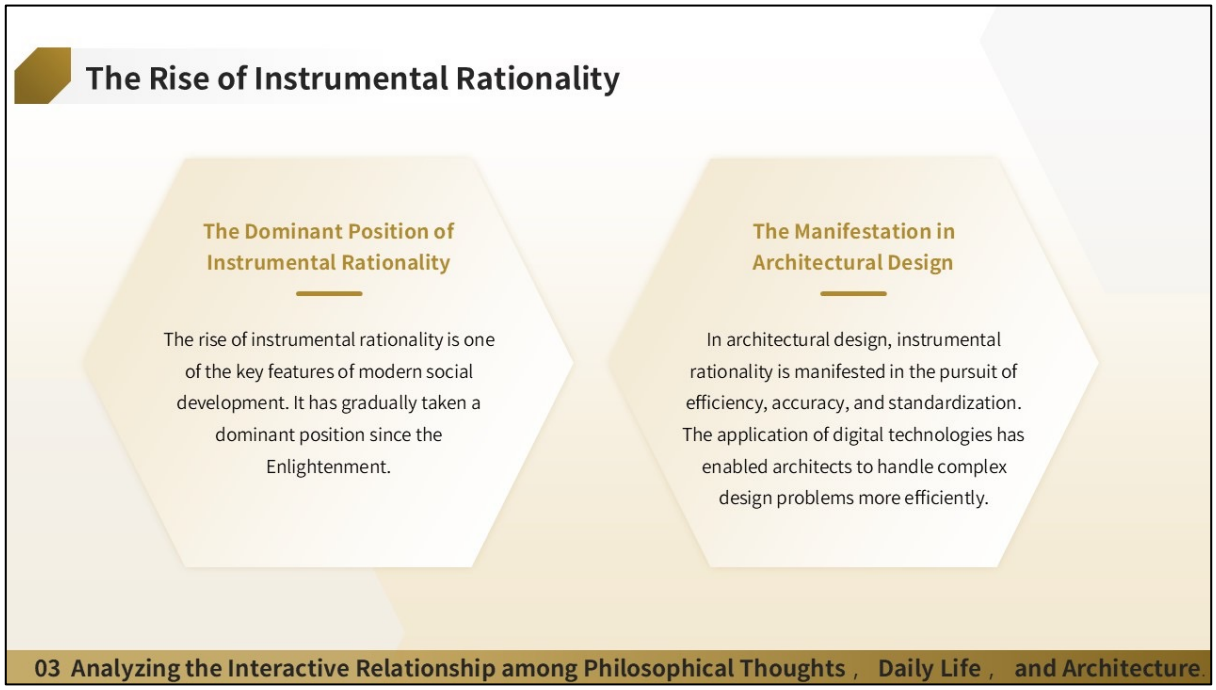
Saul Kripke's essentialism

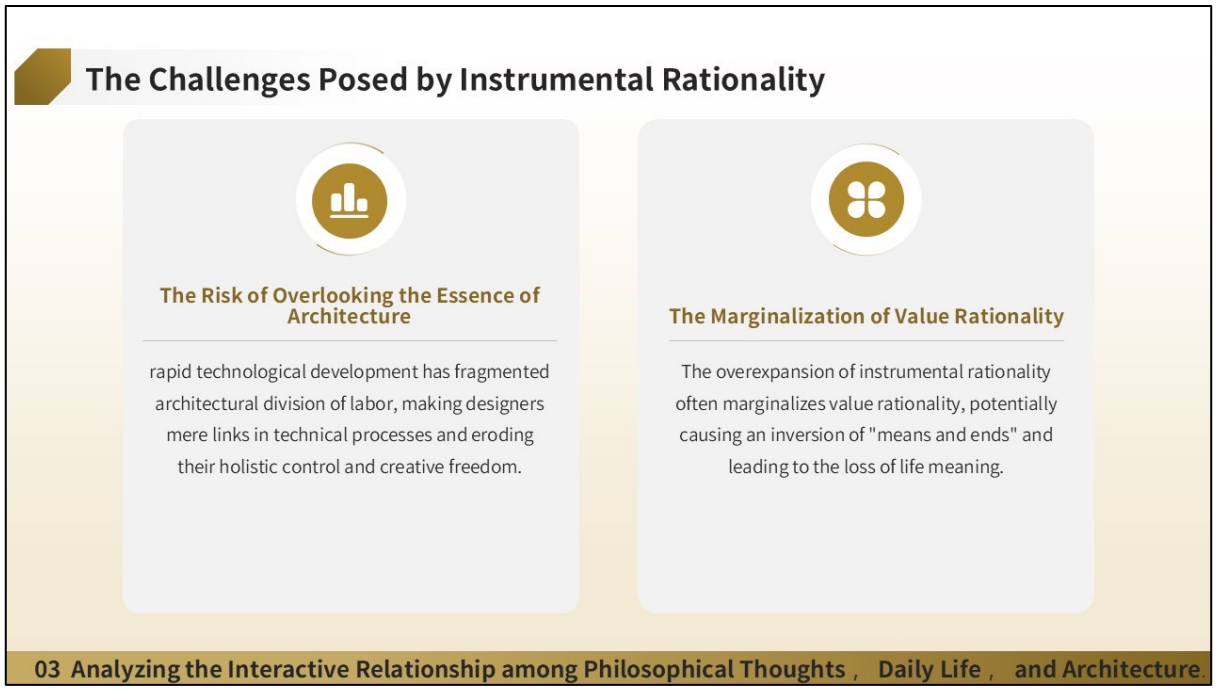
Heidegger's Method of Formal Indication

Wittgenstein's family resemblance theory.


The Inspiration of Philosophical Perspectives on the Essence of Architecture
Essentialism: Attempts to define the essence of architecture through universal theories analogous to scientific laws, assuming the existence of fixed and unchanging "essence"
Anti-essentialist Reconstruction: The meaning of architecture is not innate but dynamically generated through historical, cultural, and social practices An "eternal definition" obscures its diversity across temporal dimensions
03 Analyzing the Interactive Relationship among Philosophical Thoughts , Daily Life , and Architecture


Transition from Architectural Essence to Human Essence
Traditional metaphysics: Humans as "rational animals" (fixed essence)
Sartre: "Existence precedes essence," essence is self-constructed in existence
From understanding the world to self-reflection, each of us is like a user of architecture: our roles in the world are not innately defined but shaped through life experiences and career choices
The Essence of Architecture — the Essence of the World — the Essence of Humanity
03 Analyzing the Interactive Relationship among Philosophical Thoughts , Daily Life , and Architecture


The Rise of Instrumental Rationality
The Dominant Position of Instrumental Rationality
The rise of instrumental rationality is one of the key features of modern social development. It has gradually taken a dominant position since the Enlightenment.
The Manifestation in Architectural Design
In architectural design, instrumental rationality is manifested in the pursuit of efficiency, accuracy, and standardization. The application of digital technologies has enabled architects to handle complex design problems more efficiently.
03 Analyzing the Interactive Relationship among Philosophical Thoughts , Daily Life , and Architecture


The Challenges Posed by Instrumental Rationality
The Risk of Overlooking the Essence of Architecture
rapid technological development has fragmented architectural division of labor, making designers mere links in technical processes and eroding their holistic control and creative freedom.
The Marginalization of Value Rationality
The overexpansion of instrumental rationality often marginalizes value rationality, potentially causing an inversion of "means and ends" and leading to the loss of life meaning.
03 Analyzing the Interactive Relationship among Philosophical Thoughts , Daily Life , and Architecture

The Importance of Value Rationality



The Need for Value Judgments

Exploring the meaning of life requires answering "what is valuable." Value rationality demands that individuals break free from the "instrument- result" cycle and reflect on the essential meaning of their actions.



Providing a Thinking Framework

The concepts of instrumental and value rationality provide a thinking framework and practical guidance, assisting people in contemplating and exploring the meaning of life.

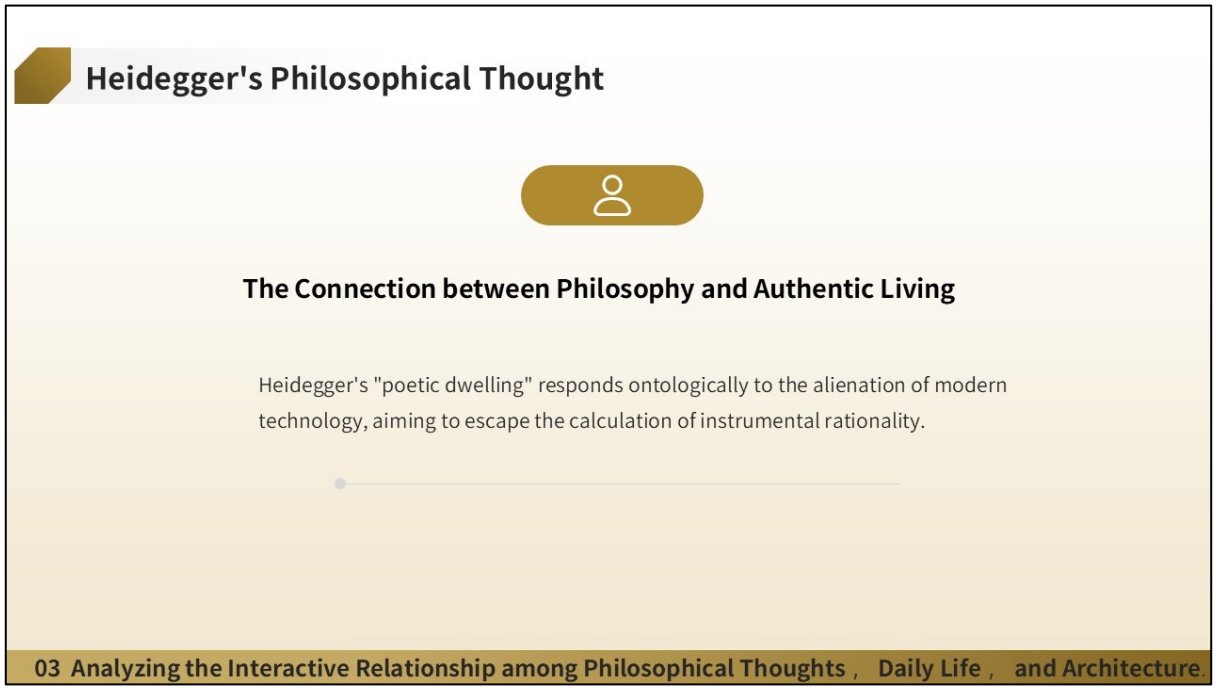
The Concept of Poetic Dwelling

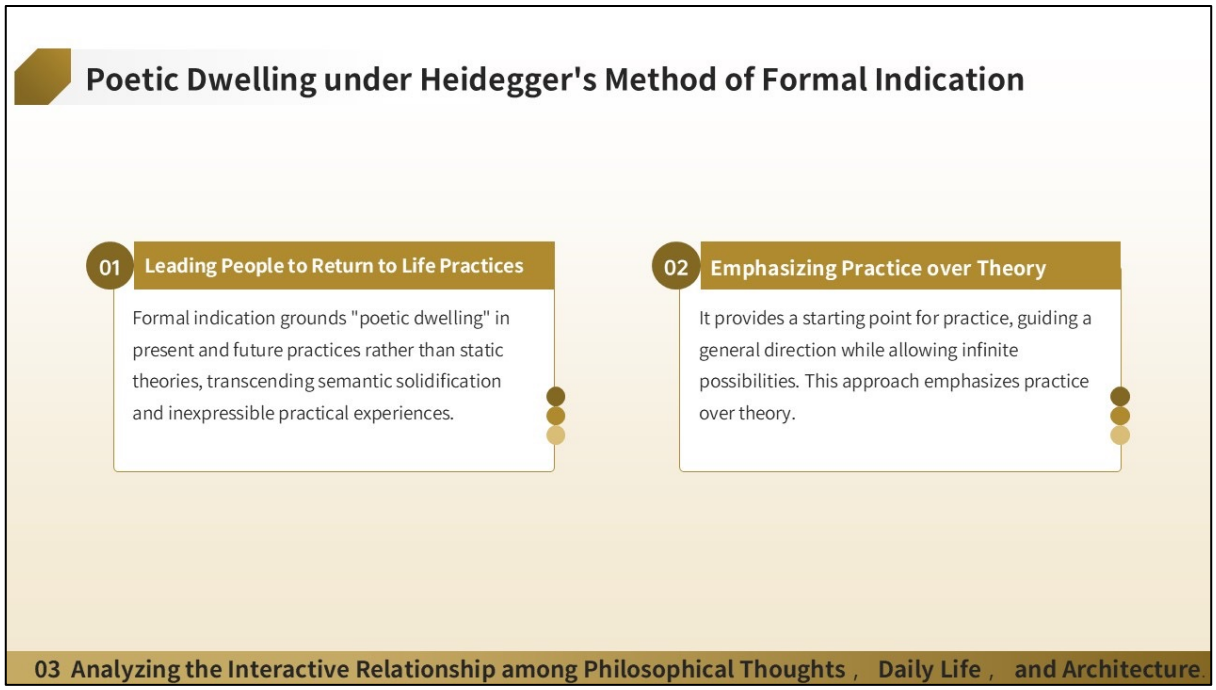
The Popularity and Classic Nature of the Concept

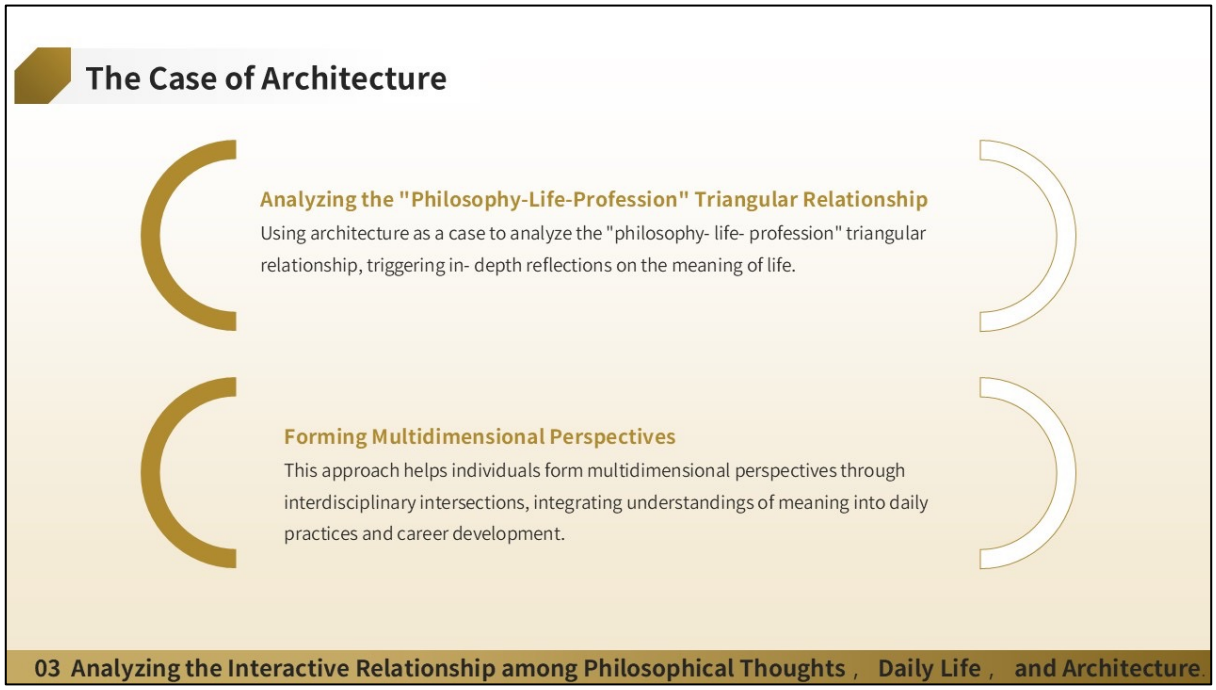
The phrase "poetically dwelling" frequently appears in real estate developers' promotions and has been studied in architecture, art, and philosophy.

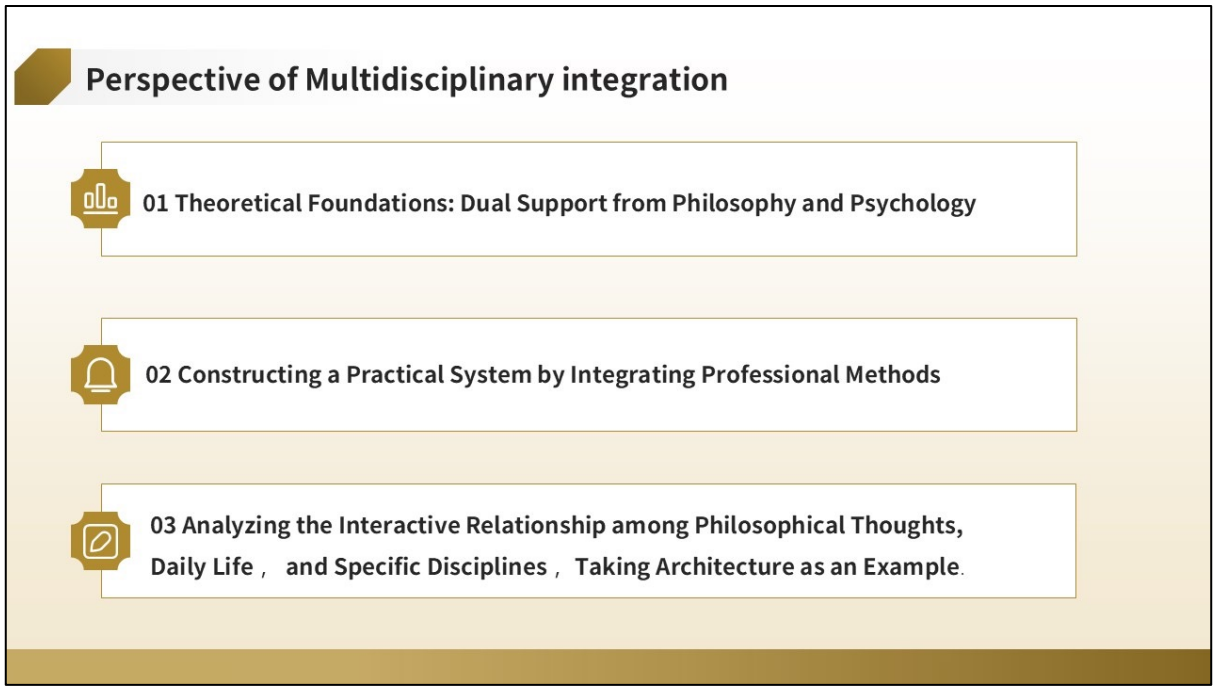
The Common Understanding of Poetic Dwelling

It is commonly understood as living a poetic life to achieve an ideal aesthetic realm, expressing romantic and beautiful hopes.


Heidegger's Philosophical Thought
The Connection between Philosophy and Authentic Living
Heidegger's "poetic dwelling" responds ontologically to the alienation of modern technology, aiming to escape the calculation of instrumental rationality.
03 Analyzing the Interactive Relationship among Philosophical Thoughts , Daily Life , and Architecture


Poetic Dwelling under Heidegger's Method of Formal Indication
01
Leading People to Return to Life Practices
Formal indication grounds "poetic dwelling" in present and future practices rather than static theories, transcending semantic solidification and inexpressible practical experiences.
02
Emphasizing Practice over Theory
It provides a starting point for practice, guiding a general direction while allowing infinite possibilities. This approach emphasizes practice over theory.
03 Analyzing the Interactive Relationship among Philosophical Thoughts , Daily Life , and Architecture


The Case of Architecture
Analyzing the "Philosophy-Life-Profession" Triangular Relationship
Using architecture as a case to analyze the "philosophy- life- profession" triangular relationship, triggering in- depth reflections on the meaning of life.
Forming Multidimensional Perspectives
This approach helps individuals form multidimensional perspectives through interdisciplinary intersections, integrating understandings of meaning into daily practices and career development.
03 Analyzing the Interactive Relationship among Philosophical Thoughts , Daily Life , and Architecture


Perspective of Multidisciplinary integration
01 Theoretical Foundations: Dual Support from Philosophy and Psychology
02 Constructing a Practical System by Integrating Professional Methods
03 Analyzing the Interactive Relationship among Philosophical Thoughts, Daily Life , and Specific Disciplines , Taking Architecture as an Example.


An Attempt to Explore the Problem of the Meaning of Life
from a Multidisciplinary Perspective with
Philosophy and Psychology
as Theoretical and Practical Foundations,
Taking Architecture as an Example
LIFE
THANK YOU

Mingyu Cao (Zhejiang University)

"Urgently Addressing the Inner Fire: A Study on Anxiety in Compressed Modernity and Performance Society"

The Problematic Origin and the Crisis of the Family

A defining trait of modernity is the individual's emancipation from premodern collectivities and their orientation toward individuality[1]. In The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Max Weber illustrates how, after liberation from the Catholic Church, Protestant societies fell into a void of meaning and anxiety. This anxiety pushed individuals to immerse themselves in capitalist practices, thereby "justifying" the spirit of capitalism[2]. Weber's entire project—culminating in his hope for charismatic figures—reflects a desire to redeem modern life through decisive action driven by existential unease.

Anxiety (Angst) also plays a central role in Heidegger's philosophy. Translated into Chinese as wei (awe), the term captures fear and dread. Liu Senlin suggests Heidegger's view was influenced by Freud and perhaps also by Schelling[3]. Modernity, having swept the globe in recent decades, has dissolved pastoral communities, displaced individuals from small social units, and thrust them into massive urban-industrial systems—triggering a pervasive sense of insignificance.

This experience of existential displacement forms a shared concern for Heidegger and Western Marxism, both of which intersect with psychoanalysis. Anxiety becomes the common denominator—a symptom of modernity's malaise. As Sun Xiangchen argues, modernity is tightly bound to a condition of being "homeless."

In modern society, individuals are left to face the relentless expansion of capitalism alone. This creates an overwhelming sense of smallness and endless anxiety. East Asian societies, latecomers to modernity, experience even greater unease—not only from the common pressures of modernity but also from the anxiety of being "behind" the West, a theme well-noted in postcolonial theory. However, this does not make East Asia unique. What distinguishes it is the deeply rooted Confucian view of family, and the unique crisis of loneliness arising from the dissolution of familial values under modern conditions.

The rise of the Four Asian Tigers is better understood through Cold War geopolitics and global industrial relocation than as a result of Confucian values. The real question is: what was gained and lost in East Asia's modernization? While many scholar s have critiqued the region's incomplete modernization, the fact remains that East Asia achieved in a few decades what took the West over a century—yet the rapid economic growth outpaced cultural transformation. Should development slow to allow ideological

---

[1] For related information, please refer to: Sun Xiangchen, *Individuals and Qin-qin*. (Shanghai:East China Normal University Press,2019).

[2] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism*, trans. Peter R. Baehr and Gordon C. Wells (London: Penguin Books, 2002).

[3] Liu, Senlin. "Anxiety: A Central Theme of Dialectic of Enlightenment." *Social Science Journal* (Liaoning), no. 1(2012): 5-13.

adaptation, or should reform be accelerated? To describe this uneven and compressed modernization, we borrow Korean sociologist Chang Kyung-Sup's term: "compressed modernity[4]" .

In Korea under Compressed Modernity, Chang reviews how Korea—and, by implication, China—did not colonize others to amass capital but instead relied on families to supply both labor and investment for national development. The state could not fully fund education, so families stepped in, producing elites and enabling class mobility. But as economic growth stagnates, younger generations increasingly question the value of family sacrifice, leading many to reject parenthood. The family thus becomes a tenuous bond between individuals—virtually dissolved.

Moreover, East Asia's meritocratic exam systems and Confucian reverence for "study" nurtured optimism among youth that individual effort could overcome structural constraints. But when societal progress slows, impatience grows, and some radical youths reject the family altogether. Capitalism further undermines familial bonds: individuals face massive industrial structures alone, relationships are mediated through money, and money itself becomes divine. These mediating structures—money, the state, religion—begin to dominate life. What appears to be free choice becomes subjugation to inflated intermediaries. Under compressed modernity, both the subject and the family suffer. To parody Byung-Chul Han, not only do "others" vanish—so does the self. And with the collapse of self and other, the family becomes utterly forsaken.

While the dissolution of the family and the emergence of individuality are hallmarks of modernity—or, in East Asia's case, compressed modernity—it is historically inaccurate to draw a strict dichotomy between the premodern and modern worlds. If a rupture is to be posited between the two, where does it truly lie? in western countries, many premodern ideas differ from modern ones primarily in their theological framing. Though East Asia was a latecomer to modernization, it did not stand in opposition to modern values. This suggests that traditional East Asian culture had a degree of receptivity to modernity. The point is not that premodern East Asia contained early forms of modernity, but that certain elements within it facilitated the transition. Ancient China serves as a case in point.

Ancient Chinese society emphasized the family-state continuum. The Zhou Dynasty's feudal order was based on kinship ties, where power was transmitted within aristocratic families. The state's fall did not dissolve the larger federal structure of the Zhou; commoners still had their familial communities, even if a political unit ceased to exist.

This changed in the Qin system, which eventually replaced Zhou's kin-based federation with an ultra-national framework aimed at mobilizing the masses for imperial competition. This shift demanded the weakening of aristocratic power and the extraction of individuals from their familial roles, pushing toward a proto-stranger

[4] Chang, Kyung-Sup. The Logic of Compressed Modernity. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2022.

society. Yet, ancient China never fully realized this structure; rather, it produced a hybrid order—imperial aristocracy, local powers, and ordinary households coexisting in tension. The people left their families partially, working for power holders, resulting in an incomplete stranger society.

Confucianism emerged precisely at the historical juncture marked by the transition from the Zhou feudal order to the centralized state model later exemplified by the Qin.The ethics of ren (benevolence) and ceyin zhi xin (the heart of compassion) were responses to a semi-stranger society, aiming to extend familial ethics beyond blood ties[5].

The Ming era coincided with Europe's Age of Exploration. The inflow of silver spurred economic prosperity but also intensified materialistic and hedonistic tendencies[6]. While the population doubled, the number of official posts remained unchanged[7], frustrating students preparing for the civil service exams. Many turned to religion to soothe their disappointment and despair. It was in this atmosphere of political repression, economic growth, and intellectual disorientation that Wang Yangming's thought took root.

Wang's school offered both a community of inquiry and a spiritual response to the era's anxiety. Commercial prosperity, efficient transportation, and established scholarly networks gave literati a path out of their families. As friendship ethics soared, some even refused to return home when his father died[8]. Did the family collapse? Miaw-Fen Lu says no. She cites Wang Ji's remarks, which argue that family and friendship can coexist when united by shared moral resolve[9].

Yet Lu's other writings reveal the costs: Ming scholars often abandoned domestic responsibilities to their wives, many of whom died prematurely under immense burdens[10]. Wang Ji's claim that ethical exhortation depends on shared resolve risks eroding kinship into missionary-style moralism. Ming thought privileged the male's moral vocation, leaving women confined to domestic vocation. Even when men still invoked the idea of family, it had become idealized—no longer rooted in multigenerational households but in abstract ethical fellowship.

Beyond the patriarchal and irrational tendencies of late Ming intellectual circles, some followers of Wang Yangming responded with social engagement. Scholars like Yan

---

[5] Bai Tongdong, "The Modern Nature of the Heart of Compassion: On Nietzsche and Mencius," *World Philosophy*（Beijing） 1 (2014): 110–119, 161.

[6] Timothy Brook. *The Confusions of Pleasure.* （Berkeley, CA:University of California Press,1999）

[7] Miaw-Fen Lu, *The Community of Wang Yangming Scholars* (Beijing: Beijing Normal University Publishing Group, 2017), 31.

[8] LI Yihe、ZHANG Ru'an. "Uninhibited" and"Insouciant" :The Image of DengHuoqu Constructed by Huang Zongxi in his Mingru Xue'an, Journal of Nanjing Normal University(Social Science Edition)1 (2020): 154-160.

[9] Miaw-Fen Lu, "Friendship and Filial Piety in Ming Neo-Confucianism," *Diogenes* 65, no. 1 (February 2024): 69–86.

[10] Miaw-Fen Lu, "Women and the Quest of Moral Transcendence in Ming Neo-Confucianism," in Silent Voices III: Women and the Culture in Modern China (1600–1950), ed. Luo Jiuzhong and Lü Miaofen (Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 2003), 137–151.

Jun ventured among the people to provide spiritual aid to exam-weary youth[11]. In Chinese medicine, anxiety was understood as "heart-fire" (xin huo), which scholar-healers sought to extinguish—functioning like proto-therapists. This practice inevitably led to deeper questions: how should we understand the heart-mind? What is the structure of its substance?

Round Time and the Structure of the Heart-Mind

Charles Taylor once noted that modern Western self-centeredness may still reflect a quest for authenticity[12]. However, in compressed modernity and the performance society, people tend to mistake the means of self-realization for the goal itself, forgetting the original telos and intensifying their desire to find a "true self." Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism directly addressed this problem through a long-standing philosophical theme: "seeking the heart-mind through the heart-mind."

Chen Lisheng draws on Sartre's metaphor—"the seeing eye cannot see itself"—to describe how the heart-mind cannot fully know itself directly[13]. Cheng Hao, predecessor to Zhu Xi, criticized Zhang Zai for failing to engage the empirical world, causing the subject to collapse inward[14]. Thus, most Neo-Confucians after Zhang emphasized involvement with the world of things (wu) and practical engagement as essential to knowing the self.

But this tradition faltered in the Ming. Political oppression, exam failures, and economic prosperity all contributed to the rise of hedonism. Even practice, once a source of self-clarification, became unstable. The subject, consumed by external objectivity, fell into a one-dimensional state, no longer capable of grasping "all-encompassing substance and supreme function." Wang Yangming responded by proposing a "contraction–expansion" model of the self: contraction meant severing the subject from causal chains[15]; expansion meant re-entering concrete affairs, avoiding the illusion of chasing a pure and suspended "true self."

Discussion of the self inevitably brings us to time. Western philosophy has long divided substance into cogito and extension—inner and outer sense (Augustine, then Kant). The resulting split between self and world mapped onto distinctions of time and space.

---

[11] Wang Fan-sen, "The Social Roles of Ming Dynasty Mind-Heart Philosophers: A Case Study of Yan Jun's 'Urgently Addressing the Inner Fire,'" in *Ten Essays on Thought in the Late Ming and Early Qing*, (Beijing: Beijing Normal University Publishing Group, 2020), 1–26.

[12] Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, November 1, 1998).

[13] Chen Lisheng, "Some Philosophical Reflections upon the Neo-Confucian Way in Seeking 'the True Self,'" *Philosophical Research*(Beijing) 1 (2019): 73–84, 127–128.

[14] Zheng Zemian, "The Critical Transformation of Zhang Zai's Thought by Cheng Hao's View of the Oneness of All Myriad Things: Focusing on Recognizing Benevolence and On Settling Human Nature," *Modern Confucianism* (Shanghai) 2 (2024): 213–238.

[15] Zheng Zemian, "Wang Yangming's Doctrine that 'Original Knowledge Is Still Here' and the Confucian Breakthrough in Temporal Consciousness," *in The Sincerity Pass: Reconstructing the Narrative of Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism from Later Zhu Xi to Wang Yangming*, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2022, 112–139.

Thus, the modern spiritual crisis must also be traced to the structure of the heart-mind and its relationship to time.

Classical Confucianism, especially The Great Learning, saw family regulation, good governance, and peace under heaven as a gradual and interconnected process. The family cannot be discussed apart from the social horizon. While modern East Asian youth and imperial candidates of the past both faced academic and familial pressure, it is misleading to equate the two. The "not-perfect-enough family" may provide a latent trauma, but modern society actively deepens it through persistent wounds. Only by oscillating between family and society can one develop a holistic diagnosis.

Modernity brings about individuation, but individuation alone is not the source of psychic crisis. The real problem lies in the fragmentation and instrumentalization of personal time by capitalism. Lukács diagnosed this as reification: "Time loses its living, qualitative character... it is no longer lived, but measured.[16]" Time becomes a commodity—divisible, countable, optimizable. Bergson called time duration, insisting that real time is indivisible. Colletti saw in Bergson and Lukács a continuity of concern about how time is alienated[17]. Han Byung-Chul extends this critique: under capitalism, even leisure becomes labor[18]. In the digital age, time is atomized, and every gap must be filled with stimulus, leaving no space for deep, extended thought[19].

How, then, can we understand the structure of the heart-mind (xin) in relation to time? And how can this lead to a therapeutic transformation of the self?

Though modern exam pressure only resembles the imperial examination superficially, we can still learn from ancient temporal consciousness.Thus, ancient temporal models may still offer insights. As noted earlier, Yan Jun, a second-generation disciple of Wang Yangming, traveled among the people to offer "Urgently Addressing the Inner Fire"—spiritual treatment for those suffering exam-induced anxiety. What philosophical framework enabled such a therapeutic role?

Some scholars, like Zheng Zemian, have explored Wang Yangming's view of time. Zheng clarifies that liangzhi (innate knowing) is not "transcendent" in the sense of being godlike or external to time. Rather, it is immanent—embedded within experience[20]. This nuanced interpretation emphasizes that liangzhi is not a separate, timeless entity, but something active within every moral moment.

Still, how can liangzhi be both transcendent and temporal? The key is to understand that liangzhi is not a specific experience, but rather something that appears through all experience. Its transcendence is not external but structural: it underlies all our ethical engagement. A scientist may claim neutrality, but the moral dimension of

---

[16] Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1971), 90.

[17] Lucio Colletti, *Marxism and Hegel* (London: Verso Books, 1973), 163.

[18] Byung-Chul Han, *In the Swarm: Digital Prospects*(Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2017).

[19] Byung-Chul Han, *The Scent of Time*(Cambridge: Polity, 2017), 17–18.

[20] Zheng Zemian, "Wang Yangming's Statement 'Original Knowledge Is Still Here' and the Confucian Breakthrough in Temporal Consciousness," *Literature, History, and Philosophy* (Shandong), no. 2 (2022), 18-30+165.

scientific action always persists, as shown by the moral crises of the 20th century. Even today, technological practice demands ethical responsibility.

Rather than timelessness, Wang's understanding of time is best grasped through the idea of round time. Sun Zhouxing uses this concept to describe Nietzsche's and Heidegger's temporal thinking[21]. For Nietzsche, the moment is where past and future collide. Heidegger deepens this into the site of the moment (Augenblick), which becomes the core of his later philosophy. Husserl, too, develops this triadic model through retention, primal impression, and protention—together forming the living present.

Wang Yangming's temporality can be read in this way. Zheng often cites Wang's remark: "To preserve one's mind and see to it that it is always present is itself learning. What is the use of thinking of past and future events? In doing so one merely loses his mind.[22]" On first reading, this seems to reject temporality. But elsewhere, Wang emphasizes that the past must be carried, and the future envisioned—only then can one truly live in the present[23].

Thus, Wang's temporality integrates all three dimensions: taking responsibility for past thoughts and actions, orienting toward the future, and sustaining a lucid moral presence in the now. This is round time: a philosophy of ethical presence, accountability, and shared existence.

Therapeutic Potential and a Reconsideration of Wang Yangming's Philosophy

How does this round time relate to philosophical therapy? In modern East Asia, shaped by the legacy of the examination system, compressed modernity and performance-driven education systems have brought about dramatic family tensions. Families and children place mutual pressure on one another, resulting in emotional breakdowns on both sides. Anxiety and repression become widespread, and under such pressure, the subject often gets trapped in a loop of negative emotion, unable to break free.

This condition is what Wang Yangming calls being "stuck in past thoughts." The past, like a stain on a mirror, obstructs the heart-mind's capacity for self-illumination and other-directed light. However, neither Wang Yangming nor psychoanalysis recommends denying the past. On the contrary, both emphasize that unacknowledged memories linger in the present in repressed or distorted form. Freud's method of analysis involves drawing these repressed elements into conscious awareness; one must confront the past in order to live fully in the present.

---

[21] Sun Zhouxing, "Round Time and Substantive Space," *Academics* (Anhui), no. 7 (2020): 97–108.

[22] Wang Yang-ming, *Instructions for Practical Living and Other Neo-Confucian Writings*, trans. and notes by Wing-tsit Chan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 53

[23] Wang Yang-ming, *The Completed Works of Wang Yangming*, comp. Wu Guang, Qian Ming, and Dong Ping (Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 2011), 212; and Wang Yang-ming, *Instructions for Practical Living and Other Neo-Confucian Writings*, trans. and notes by Wing-tsit Chan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 202.

Likewise, Wang argues that the goal is not to cut oneself off from the past, but to recognize the evil thoughts hidden within it. Only by becoming aware of the traces of evil buried in the present can these impulses be corrected. The past must be borne; the future envisioned. The convergence of these two within the present creates a moment of transformation.

This is a non-repressive philosophy—one that refuses to negate or discard prior states of being. Instead, it seeks to locate a moment in time where the past, present, and future intersect. From this nodal point, a reversal of one's current existential structure becomes possible. One need not wrestle with the self or violently break from pointi-time. Instead, one must cultivate micro-moments—fragments of experience where moral potential emerges. These moments open up the closed self and direct it toward others.

In this sense, Wang Yangming's heart-mind theory is not only an ethical philosophy grounded in time. It offers a structure for reactivating moral agency in conditions of fragmentation and despair.

Conclusion: Reassessing Wang Yangming's Place in Modernity

Although the above has provided a theoretical review and reconstruction of Wang Yangming's temporal consciousness, some issues remain unresolved. As Iso Kern pointed out, Wang Yangming was not a manic thinker who believed the heart-mind could dominate everything. His philosophy links the heart-mind to things and places emphasis on the side of intentional experience[24]. Much like the retraction and release of a punch in boxing, this paper has called Wang's philosophical approach of first contracting the subject and then exploding outward into the dimension of praxis a "contraction-expansion" model.Yet we must not mistake this model for a panacea. Wang's thought is deeply rooted in Chinese intellectual tradition, which has always left space for non-rational forces like emotion and will. While this gives Chinese philosophy its distinctive richness, it also exposes it to irrational tendencies.

During the national crises of the 20th century, when the Chinese subject faced existential annihilation, modern Chinese philosophers—roughly contemporaneous with Husserl—recognized the crisis of the lifeworld and turned to Wang Yangming's thought to construct idealist responses. However, they often failed to critically interrogate the social structures that shaped this crisis.

In fact, the original Wang Yangming school did not fully engage with systemic problems. It shared in the gendered and hierarchical prejudices of its time. While it may offer tools for addressing modern psychological distress, we must also critique its non-rational dimensions and expand our perspective.

To use Wang Yangming today, we must integrate his insights into broader frameworks—particularly those from critical social theory. We need to examine how

[24] Iso Kern, *Das Wichtigste im Leben* (Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2010), 88.

social and historical structures shape both consciousness and family, individual and collectivity. The future of Neo-Confucian thought depends not on uncritical revival, but on synthesis, transformation, and critical engagement.

Bibliography

Bai, Tongdong. “The Modern Nature of the Heart of Compassion: On Nietzsche and Mencius.” *World Philosophy* (Beijing) 1 (2014): 110–119, 161.

Brook, Timothy. *The Confusions of Pleasure*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999.

Chang, Kyung-Sup. *The Logic of Compressed Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2022.

Chen, Lisheng. “Some Philosophical Reflections upon the Neo-Confucian Way in Seeking ‘the True Self.’” *Philosophical Research* (Beijing) 1 (2019): 73–84, 127–128.

Colletti, Lucio. *Marxism and Hegel*. London: Verso Books, 1973.

Han, Byung-Chul. *In the Swarm: Digital Prospects*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2017. ISBN: 9780262533362.

———. *The Scent of Time*. Cambridge: Polity, 2017. ISBN: 9781509516056

Kern, Iso. *Das Wichtigste im Leben*. Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2010.

Li, Yihe, and Zhang Ru’an. “‘Uninhibited’ and ‘Insouciant’: The Image of Deng Huoqu Constructed by Huang Zongxi in His *Mingru Xue’an*.” *Journal of Nanjing Normal University*(Social Science Edition) 1 (2020): 154–160.

Liu, Senlin. “Anxiety: A Central Theme of Dialectic of Enlightenment.” *Social Science Journal* (Liaoning), no. 1 (2012): 5–13.

Lu, Miaw-Fen. “Friendship and Filial Piety in Ming Neo-Confucianism.” *Diogenes* 65, no. 1 (February 2024): 69–86.

———. *The Community of Wang Yangming Scholars*. Beijing: Beijing Normal University Publishing Group, 2017.

———. “Women and the Quest of Moral Transcendence in Ming Neo-Confucianism.” In *Silent Voices III: Women and the Culture in Modern China (1600–1950)*, edited by Luo Jiuzhong and Lü Miaofen, 137–151. Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 2003.

Sun, Xiangchen. *Individuals and Qin-qin*. Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 2019.

Sun, Zhouxing. “Round Time and Substantive Space.” *Academics*(Anhui), no. 7 (2020): 97–108.

Taylor, Charles. *The Malaise of Modernity*. Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1998.

Wang, Fan-sen. “The Social Roles of Ming Dynasty Mind-Heart Philosophers: A Case Study of Yan Jun’s ‘Urgently Addressing the Inner Fire.’” In *Ten Essays on Thought in the Late Ming and Early Qing*, 1–26. Beijing: Beijing Normal University Publishing Group, 2020.

Wang, Yang-ming. *The Completed Works of Wang Yangming*. Compiled by Wu Guang, Qian Ming, and Dong Ping. Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 2011.

———. *Instructions for Practical Living and Other Neo-Confucian Writings*. Translated and noted by Wing-tsit Chan. New York: Columbia University Press, 1963.

Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism*. Translated by Peter R. Baehr and Gordon C. Wells. London: Penguin Books, 2002.

Zhao, Jingang. "On the Philosophical Dimensions and Modern Significance of He Xinyin's Explanation of the Ethics of Friendship." *Philosophical Trends* (Beijing) 4 (2022): 55–61.

Zheng, Zemian. "The Critical Transformation of Zhang Zai's Thought by Cheng Hao's View of the Oneness of All Myriad Things: Focusing on Recognizing Benevolence and On Settling Human Nature." *Modern Confucianism*(Shanghai) 2 (2024): 213–238.

———. "Wang Yangming's Statement 'Original Knowledge Is Still Here' and the Confucian Breakthrough in Temporal Consciousness." *Literature, History, and Philosophy*(Shandong), no. 2 (2022): 18–30+165.

———. "Wang Yangming's Doctrine that 'Original Knowledge Is Still Here' and the Confucian Breakthrough in Temporal Consciousness." In *The Sincerity Pass: Reconstructing the Narrative of Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism from Later Zhu Xi to Wang Yangming*, 112–139. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2022.

浙江大学 哲学学院
SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY
ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

Urgently Addressing The Inner Fire（急救心火）：A Study on Anxiety in the Era of Compressed Modernity and Performance Pressure

—Cao MingYu

2025/7/11

CONTENTS 目录

1. The Problematic Origin and the Crisis of the Family

2. Confucianism and the Society of Strangers: Beyond Family

3. A Brief Reflection on the Crisis of Modernity and Ming Dynasty Thought

4. Understanding the Heart-Mind: The Neo-Confucian Way in Seeking “the True Self”

5. Conclusion: A Reconsideration of Wang Yangming’s Philosophy

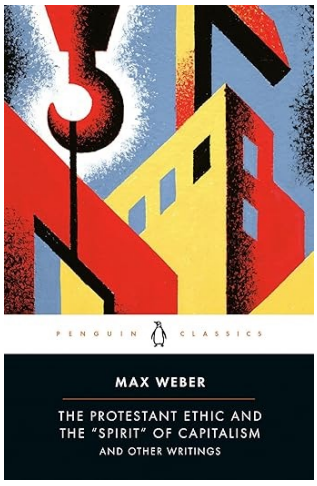
浙江大学 哲学学院
SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY
ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

1.The Problematic Origin and the Crisis of the Family

The Problematic Origin and the Crisis of the Family

浙江大学 哲学学院
SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY
ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

Individuality and anxiety

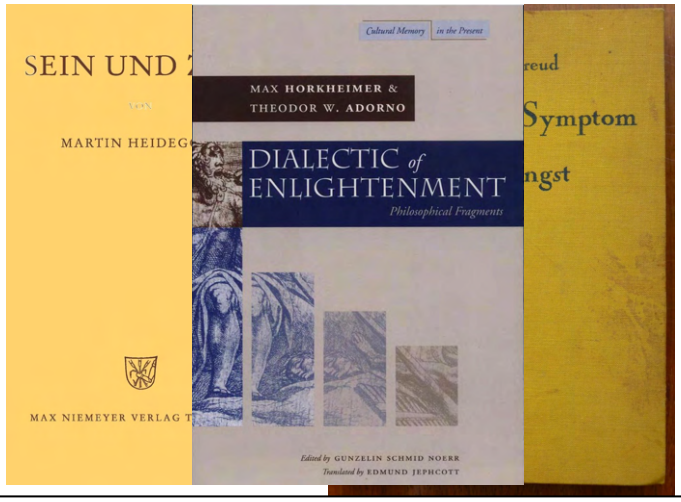


Weber illustrates how people in certain Protestant countries, having emancipated themselves from the Catholic Church, fell into a void of meaninglessness and **the anxiety** that accompanies it—and, driven by that anxiety, threw themselves into capitalist practice, thereby "justifying" (to justify) the "spirit of Capitalism"

The Problematic Origin and the Crisis of the Family

浙江大学 哲学学院 SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

Individuality and anxiety

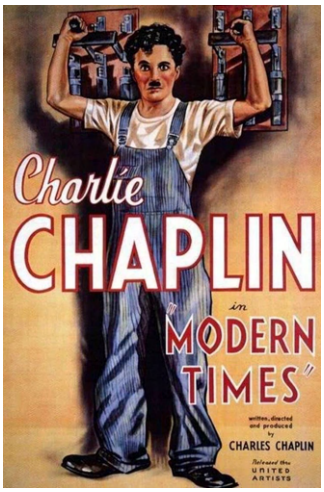


"Anxiety" (Angst) is likewise a key concept in Heidegger's philosophy, since the term also carries the senses of "fear" and "dread" and is rendered in Chinese as "畏."

The Problematic Origin and the Crisis of the Family

浙江大学 哲学学院 SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

Individuality and anxiety



Over the past decades, modernity has swept the globe in an all-conquering tide, dissolving pastoral idylls; individuals have been forced out of every kind of small community into vast metropolises, where they confront the enormity of industrial systems alone and experience an endless sense of smallness.

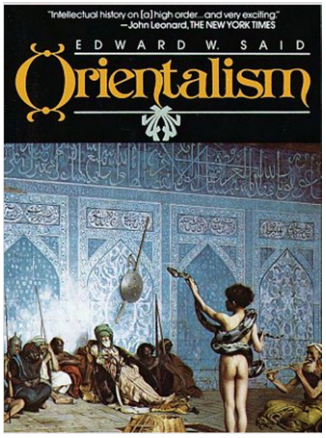
The Problematic Origin and the Crisis of the Family

浙江大学 哲学学院 SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

Anxiety,Industry and Orientalism



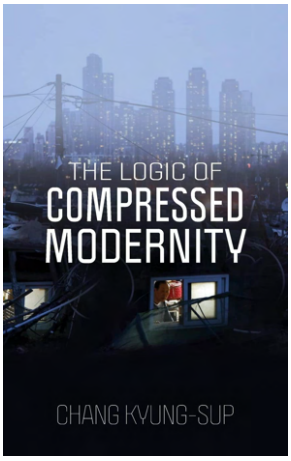




The Problematic Origin and the Crisis of the Family

浙江大学 哲学学院 SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

Compressed modernity and Family disintegration

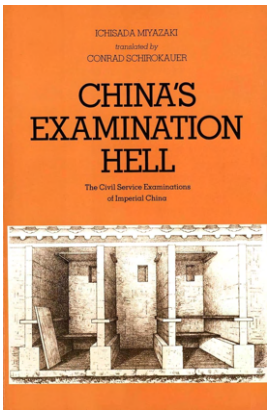


Korea—and, by implication, China—did not colonize others to amass capital but instead relied on families to supply both labor and investment for national development. The state could not fully fund education, so families stepped in, producing elites and enabling class mobility. But as economic growth stagnates, younger generations increasingly question the value of family sacrifice, leading many to reject parenthood.

The Problematic Origin and the Crisis of the Family

浙江大学 哲学学院 SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

examination system and Family disintegration



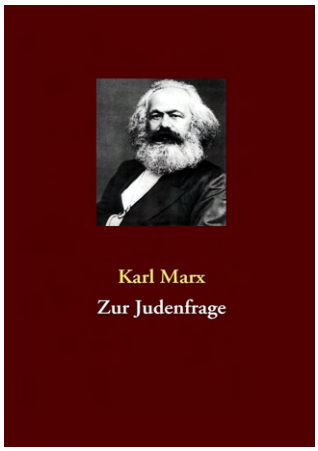


In East Asian societies,because of the long history of exam systems and Confucian reverence for “study” , people generally believe that studying can change one’s fate. Many scholars note that in ancient China the government could not pay all education costs, so the pressure shifted to families, and every family lived under the heavy load of trying to lift their children up.

The Problematic Origin and the Crisis of the Family

浙江大学 哲学学院 SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

examination system and Family disintegration



After leaving the family, capitalism further intensifies young people’s anxiety. Individuals are unable to face the massive industrial system on their own. In premodern times, people relied on the family; in modern society, they depend on various **mediations** like money, the state, and religion. Eventually, these **mediations** expand excessively, , leading to reification. Leaving the family did not bring personal liberation—instead, one might say both the family and the individual collapsed together.

浙江大学 哲学学院
SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY
ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

2.Confucianism and the Society of Strangers: Beyond Family

Confucianism and the Society of Strangers: Beyond Family

浙江大学 哲学学院
SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY
ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

The Transition from Zhou to Qin

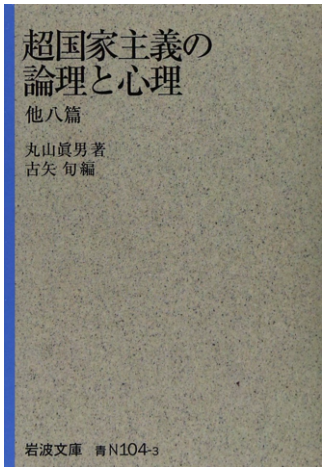


Confucian culture's focus on family is closely related to the political system of the Zhou dynasty, which was built on a hereditary nobility. Nobles had noble families; commoners had commoner families, and they depended on their families to survive. Even if the state collapsed, the federal structure remained, so commoners could still live within their family systems.

Confucianism and the Society of Strangers: Beyond Family

浙江大学 哲学学院 SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

The Transition from Zhou to Qin

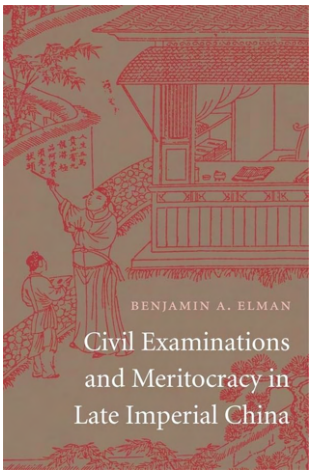


after the Qin dynasty unified China, in order to weaken local power and **serve the needs of imperial warfare**, the central government restricted the power of local aristocrats and **tried to pull individuals out of the family to serve the state.** Confucianism, to some extent, adapted to this incomplete Strangers' society, and its ethics of compassion(恻隐之心) and benevolence（仁爱）were meant to apply to strangers.

Confucianism and the Society of Strangers: Beyond Family

浙江大学 哲学学院 SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

A New Trend in Ming Dynasty Society

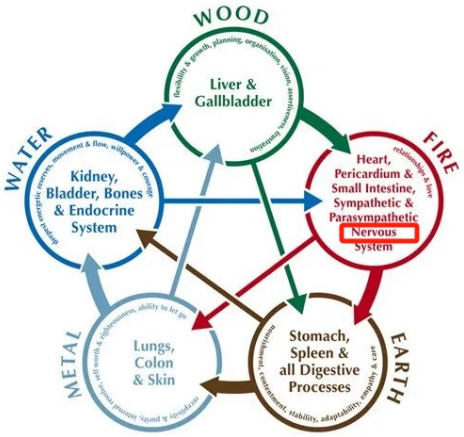


By the Ming dynasty, the exam system had become even more intense. The population grew, but the number of admitted candidates did not increase, causing many students to experience frustration, pressure, and anxiety. This was the historical context in which Wang Yangming's philosophy emerged.

Confucianism and the Society of Strangers: Beyond Family

浙江大学 哲学学院 SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

A New Trend in Ming Dynasty Society



After anxiety from academic failure emerged, Yan Jun（颜钧）, a second-generation disciple of Wang Yangming, went into society to help anxious scholars. In traditional Chinese medicine, the heart belongs to the fire element, and anxiety was described as “heart-fire.” So this early form of mental counseling was called Urgently Addressing the Inner Fire.

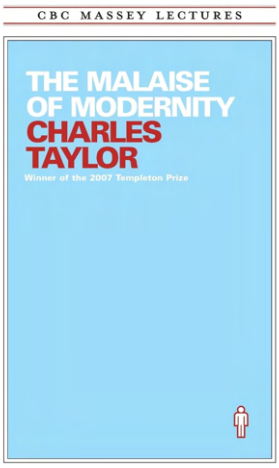
浙江大学 哲学学院 SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

3.A Brief Reflection on the Crisis of Modernity and Ming Dynasty Thought

A Brief Reflection on the Crisis of Modernity and Ming Dynasty Thought

浙江大学 哲学学院 SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

The Malaise of Modernity



While we have discussed the exam system, today's mental crisis is not only caused by it. It reflects a deeper malaise of modernity. Charles Taylor once examined the modern self-centered mindset and suggested that even extreme self-centeredness may express a pursuit of authenticity.

A Brief Reflection on the Crisis of Modernity and Ming Dynasty Thought

浙江大学 哲学学院 SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

The Malaise of Modernity



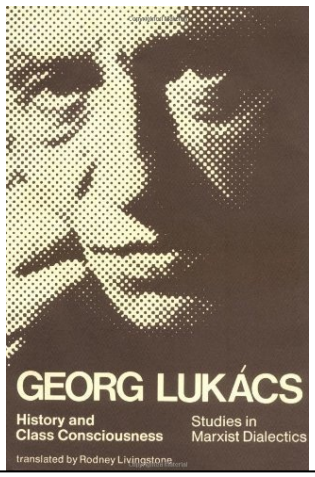
In the history of Western philosophy, inner and outer sense are often used to distinguish between internal awareness and external perception, linked respectively to time and space. Thus, understanding the self often involves time-consciousness.

Traditional Confucianism sees the family and society as a continuum. Individual trauma comes not only from the family but also from social re-traumatization.

A Brief Reflection on the Crisis of Modernity and Ming Dynasty Thought

浙江大学 哲学学院 SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

The Fragmentation of Time and the Emergence of Point-Like Time

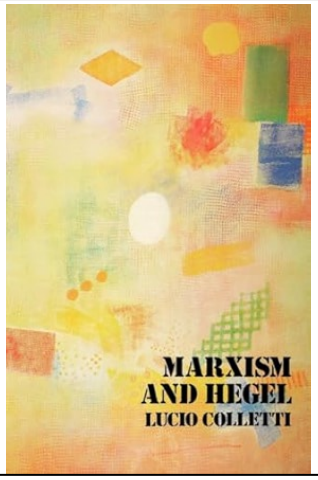


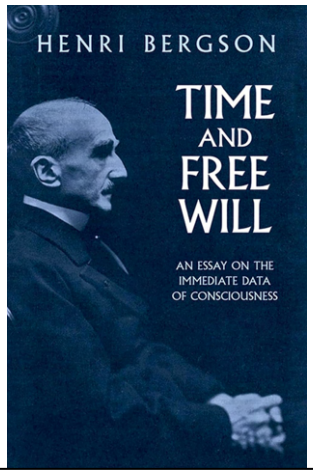
"Time loses its living, qualitative character; **it no longer flows but is fragmented, portioned out, and consumed as a quantifiable object.** Thought itself becomes spatialized: time is no longer grasped as a continuous whole, but as a series of divisible units, to be allocated, managed, and optimized. In this reified form, time ceases to be lived — it is measured".(Lukács,1971,P.90)

A Brief Reflection on the Crisis of Modernity and Ming Dynasty Thought

浙江大学 哲学学院 SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

The Fragmentation of Time and the Emergence of Point-Like Time

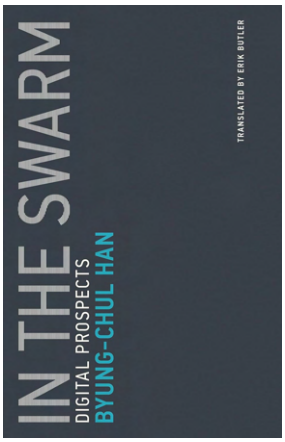




A Brief Reflection on the Crisis of Modernity and Ming Dynasty Thought

浙江大学 哲学学院 SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

The Fragmentation of Time and the Emergence of Point-Like Time

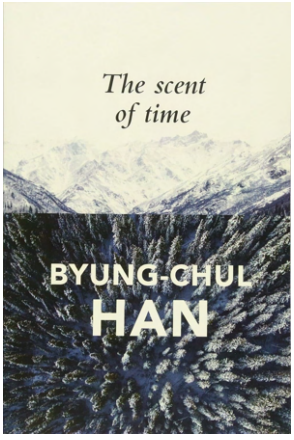


Under capitalism, all time is working hours — leisure itself is subsumed into work. The digital makes **counting absolute: the uncountable is erased**.(Byung-Chul Han, *In the Swarm: Digital Prospects*.Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2017.)

A Brief Reflection on the Crisis of Modernity and Ming Dynasty Thought

浙江大学 哲学学院 SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

The Fragmentation of Time and the Emergence of Point-Like Time



Time is not accelerated. The age of acceleration is already over; today's problem is **temporal dispersal**. **The rise of atomized, point-time** drives a compulsive pursuit of fleeting pleasures to fill every gap, leaving us unable to sustain deep or prolonged thought.

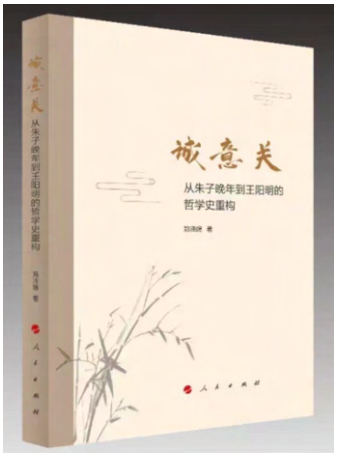
浙江大学 哲学学院
SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY
ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

4. Understanding the Heart-Mind: The Neo-Confucian Way in Seeking "the True Self"

浙江大学 哲学学院
SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY
ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

The Neo-Confucian Way in Seeking "the True Self"

Wang Yangming's temporal consciousness

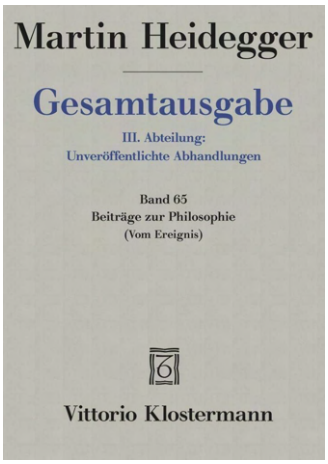


Professor Zheng Zemián suggests that Wang Yangming's philosophy emphasizes letting go of attachments to the past and future and returning to the present, allowing the mind to become upright. He argues that Wang's concept of innate knowing (liangzhi) should not be seen as perfect in the moment, but as still here, with a tendency toward wholeness.

The Neo-Confucian Way in Seeking "the True Self"

浙江大学 哲学学院 SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

Wang Yangming's temporal consciousness

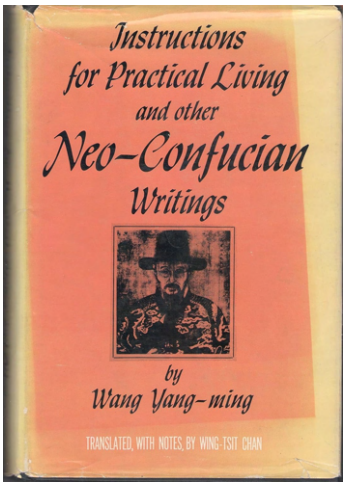


Wang Yangming's view of time is perhaps best understood as round time, a concept proposed by Professor Sun Zhouxing in his analysis of Nietzsche and Heidegger. It means that the present moment is not just the now—it is where the past and future collide. A similar idea exists in Husserl's philosophy, where retention, primal impression, and protention together form the living present.

The Neo-Confucian Way in Seeking "the True Self"

浙江大学 哲学学院 SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

Wang Yangming's temporal consciousness



"To preserve one's mind and see to it that it is always present is itself learning. What is the use of thinking of past and future events? In doing so one merely loses his mind."

The Neo-Confucian Way in Seeking "the True Self"

浙江大学 哲学学院 SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

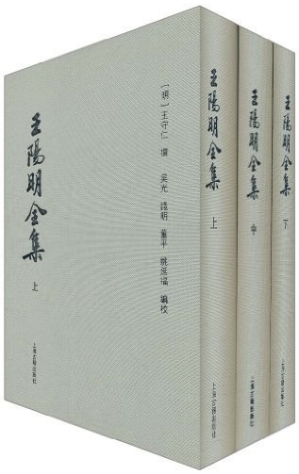
Wang Yangming's temporal consciousness

The sage's effort at extending knowledge is characterized by his absolute sincerity which never ceases. The substance of his innate knowledge is as clear as a bright mirror **without any slight obscuration**. ……This is what is meant by saying that the feelings of **the sage are in accord with all things and yet of himself he has no feelings.** …… **The things pass along without remaining in the mirror. This is where the mirror has no attachment.** ……In the case of people with intermittent fever, **although the fever has not yet occurred, the root of the disease is present.** ……Generally speaking, though the thing about which you are in doubt in this case seems to be different from those earlier cases, **they are all caused by the evil influence of selfishness**, leaning forward or backward, arbitrariness of opinion, and dogmatism. As soon as this root is removed, all present and earlier doubts will of themselves disappear like ice melting and fog disappearing and there will be no need of asking about them or arguing them out. (Chan 1963,p.148-149)

The Neo-Confucian Way in Seeking "the True Self"

浙江大学 哲学学院 SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

Wang Yangming's temporal consciousness

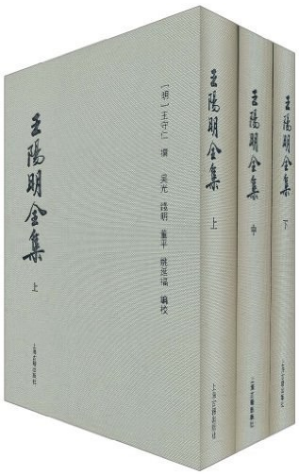


If the effort of vigilance and awe is maintained without the slightest interruption, then the heavenly principle (li) constantly abides. The original substance of the luminous and spiritually aware heart-mind **will suffer no obscuration, no disturbance,** no fear or anxiety, no indulgence in pleasure or anger, no speculation, no claim to certainty, no inflexibility, no self-absorption, no sense of deficiency, shame, or remorse. It will be harmonious, translucent, thoroughly clear, **pervading and flowing freely.** In movement and conduct it will align with ritual propriety; one may follow the heart-mind's desires without transgressing the bounds—this is what is truly meant by being effortlessly and authentically free. (Wang 2011,p.212)

The Neo-Confucian Way in Seeking "the True Self"

浙江大学 哲学学院 SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

Wang Yangming's temporal consciousness



"The highest good is the original substance of the mind. **When one deviates a little from this original substance, there is evil.** It is not that there is a good and there is also an evil to oppose it. Therefore good and evil are one thing." (Chan 1963,p.202) （17）

The Neo-Confucian Way in Seeking "the True Self"

浙江大学 哲学学院 SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

Wang Yangming's temporal consciousness

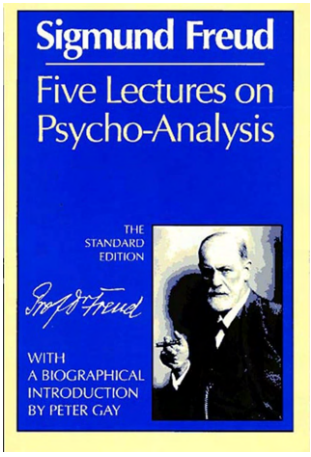


By bearing in the present the full responsibility for all past intentions and actions and looking forward to the future, one takes up responsibility for others—and thus a philosophy of truly living in the moment, co-being with others, becomes possible.

The Neo-Confucian Way in Seeking "the True Self"

浙江大学 哲学学院 SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

the significance of this round time for philosophical therapy

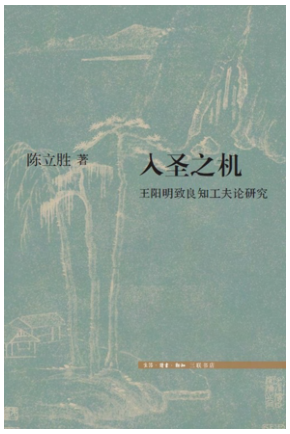


The "past," like the stains on the mirror in the earlier metaphor, continues to disturb the self-illumination and illumination-of-others of the heart-mind. Yet neither Wang Yangming nor psychoanalysis believes that past experiences, simply because they exist as burdens in one's mental state, should be rejected. That would merely allow the past to lurk in the present in a repressed and hidden form. Freud's psychoanalysis, therefore, seeks to induce the subject to articulate those memories repressed in the depths of the heart-mind—only by recognizing the past can one better live in the present. Similarly, Wang Yangming's philosophy holds that it is unnecessary to deny the past.

The Neo-Confucian Way in Seeking "the True Self"

浙江大学 哲学学院 SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

the significance of this round time for philosophical therapy



Instead, one need only find a point of intersection between past, present, and future within situations of repression and the self's seeming closure, and from this pivotal moment completely overturn one's former state of existence. One does not need to fight against oneself or forcefully break free from point-time. On the contrary, one should find even smaller instants within scattered time-points, and within them cultivate and develop that irresistible moral potential and necessity—thus breaking the closed state of the self and moving toward others.

浙江大学 哲学学院
SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY
ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

5. Conclusion: A Reconsideration of Wang Yangming's Philosophy

Conclusion: A Reconsideration of Wang Yangming's Philosophy

浙江大学 哲学学院
SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY
ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

a "contraction-expansion" model



Wang's philosophy links the heart-mind to things and places emphasis on the side of intentional experience. Much like the retraction and release of a punch in boxing, this paper has called Wang's philosophical approach of first contracting the subject and then exploding outward into the dimension of praxis a "contraction-expansion" model.

浙江大学 哲学学院 SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

Conclusion: A Reconsideration of Wang Yangming's Philosophy

The drawback of Wang's philosophy



In fact, the Wang Yangming school, during its own historical era, failed to consider problems from the perspective of society as a whole, and thus became complicit with many prevailing misogynistic ideologies of the time. Today, while it may be useful in treating the spiritual crises of modernity, we must also negate the irrational features within Wang's philosophy itself, introducing perspectives from critical social theory in order to achieve a more holistic understanding of the relationship between society and the individual.

浙江大学 哲学学院 SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

Thanks for your listening

—Cao MingYu

rx551928@163.com

2025/7/11

B3

Jiayi Xin (Xi'an Jiaotong University)

"Beyond Human Counselors: Evaluating the Role of Large Language Models in Philosophical Counseling"

西安交通大學
XI'AN JIAOTONG UNIVERSITY

Beyond Human Counselors: Evaluating the Role of Large Language Models in Philosophical Counseling

Jiayi Xin, Xiaojun Ding, Caifeng Xie, Aihui Ding & Peter Harteloh
Xi'an Jiaotong University
10/07/2025

CONTENTS



1. Introduction
2. Literature Review
3. Experimental Design
4. Results & Analyses
5. Discussion
6. Conclusion

西安交通大学
XI'AN JIAOTONG UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION 01

INTRODUCTION

Why Philosophical Counseling?



- Philosophical practice emerged in the 1980s, initiated by Achenbach.
- **Core goal:** clarifying assumptions and attaining inner peace via philosophical reasoning.
- **Difference from psychotherapy:** non-pathological, focused on meaning and value.
- **Philosophy as a way of life** (Hadot, 1995)

INTRODUCTION

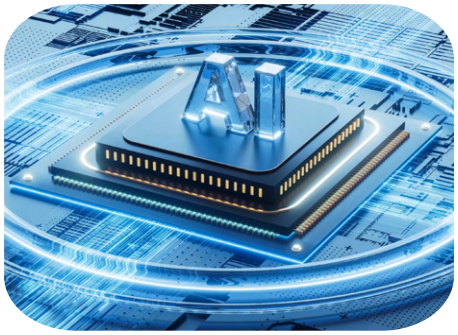
Challenges in Human Counseling

- **The limited number of trained philosophical counselors**, which may restrict access to these services.
- **The lack of standardized protocols and the inherently subjective nature of evaluating counseling** outcomes might hinder its growth and broader acceptance(Knapp & Tjeltveit, 2005).
- Many philosophical counselors **may not possess extensive mental health training**, potentially affecting their ability to adequately support counselees with psychological disorders.



INTRODUCTION

Digital Mental Health & LLMs



- Large Language Models (LLMs) are **increasingly used in mental health** contexts.
- Exhibit abilities in emotion detection, text analysis and generation(Cho et al., 2023).
- Can **simulate** empathetic responses and assist CBT (Kian et al., 2024).
- **Perceived** more helpful in low-stakes issues (Young et al., 2024)



Literature Review I: Satisfaction, Authenticity, Professionalism

Counselor Satisfaction: AI enhances emotional support and confidence (Ahmed et al., 2022). Client satisfaction predicts counseling outcome (Ardito & Rabellino, 2011)

Perceived Authenticity: AI language style boosts authenticity (Clark et al., 2019; Ho et al., 2023). Philosophical counseling values logical clarity and existential tone (Lahav, 1995; Marinoff, 1999)

Professionalism: Structured expression improves impressions (Pelau et al., 2021)

Pathway:

Independent Variable: Counselor Type (human vs. LLM)

Dependent Variables: Satisfaction, Authenticity, Professionalism

LLM → more satisfaction & more perceived authenticity

LLM → perceived professionalism

Literature Review II: Perceived Empathy & Shame

Perceived Empathy: Key to satisfaction and alliance (Elliott et al., 2018)

AI can simulate empathy (Cho et al., 2023; Bickmore & Picard, 2005)

Help-Seeking Shame: Prevents users from seeking help (Vogel et al., 2006)

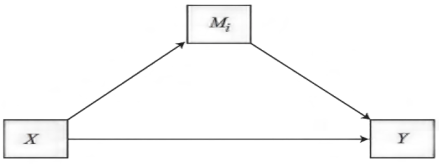
AI's anonymity reduces fear of judgment (Malik, 2022; Lee & Lee, 2023)

Pathway:

Mediators: Perceived Empathy, Shame

AI → empathy expression → more satisfaction & authenticity

AI → anonymity → less shame → more satisfaction & authenticity



Literature Review III: Perceived Social Support

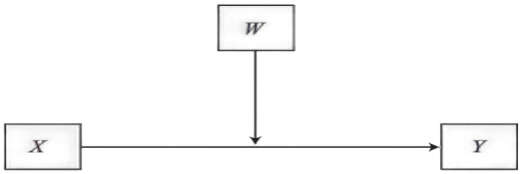
Perceived Social Support as Moderator

- Defined as the sense of emotional and practical support from one's social network.
- Influences help-seeking behavior and counseling engagement (Vogel et al., 2007).
- In this study, **tested as moderator on counselor type → satisfaction and authenticity**.

Pathway:

Low social support users → higher satisfaction & authenticity.

Higher social support users → lower shame



Main Hypotheses

H1: Compared to human counselors, large language models (LLMs) as philosophical counselors will:
(1a) elicit significantly higher satisfaction ratings from clients,
(1b) be perceived as significantly more authentic in the counseling process, while
(1c) demonstrating comparable levels of professional competence and therapeutic improvement to human counselors (showing no significant difference).

H2: **(2a)** Perceived empathy will mediate the relationship between counselor type (human vs. LLM) and client satisfaction ratings.
(2b) Perceived empathy will mediate the relationship between counselor type and perceived authenticity of the counseling process.

H3: **(3a)** Shame associated with help-seeking will mediate the relationship between counselor type and satisfaction ratings.
(3b) Shame will mediate the relationship between counselor type and perceived authenticity.

H4: **(4a)** Perceived social support will moderate the pathway between counselor type and satisfaction ratings.
(4b) Perceived social support will moderate the relationship between counselor type and perceived authenticity.

H5: Perceived social support will moderate the difference in help-seeking shame between clients interacting with different counselor types (human vs. LLM).

西安交通大学
XI'AN JIAOTONG UNIVERSITY

EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN 03

Experimental Design

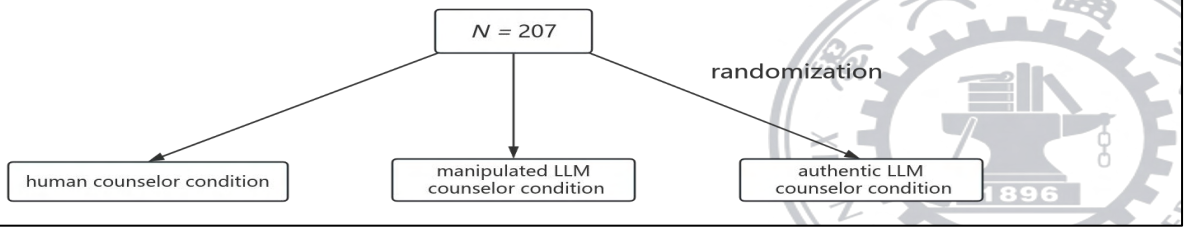
Three groups with randomized participants ($N = 207$, 75.4% Famale):

a) Human Counselor Condition: Participants read an authentic counseling transcript from professional philosophical counselor Elliot D. Cohen. The text was processed to ensure content completeness, natural expression, and thematic representativeness.

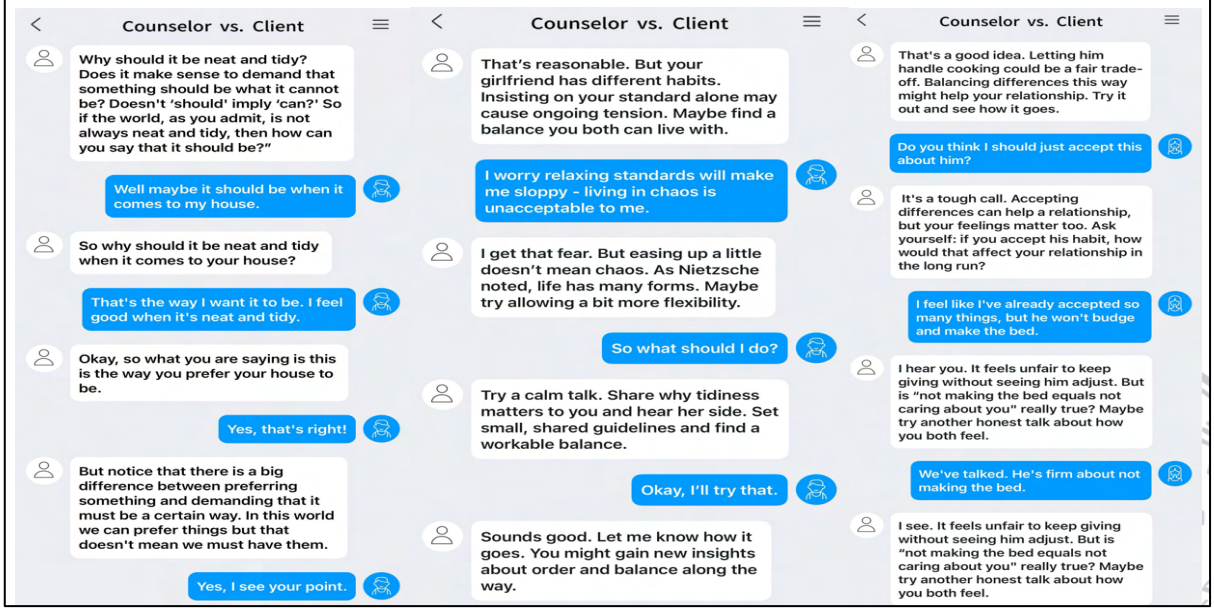
b) Manipulated LLM Counselor Condition: Participants read a simulated counseling transcript where a large language model (LLM) served as the counselor. The text was designed to closely mimic the content style and structure of human counseling language.

c) Authentic LLM counselor Condition: Participants read real philosophical counseling dialogues between human users and LLMs from public platforms, maintaining their original interactive and open-ended nature.

Note: Counselor identity was not disclosed to participants



EXPERIMENTAL MATERIAL



西安交通大学
XI'AN JIAOTONG UNIVERSITY

RESULTS & ANALYSES 04

Main Results

- **H1a (Satisfaction):**
  LLM (authentic/manipulated) > human (*ps* < 0.05).
- **H1b (Authenticity):** LLM (authentic/manipulated) > human (*ps* < 0.001).
- **H1c (Professionalism):** No significant difference **(supports H1c)**.

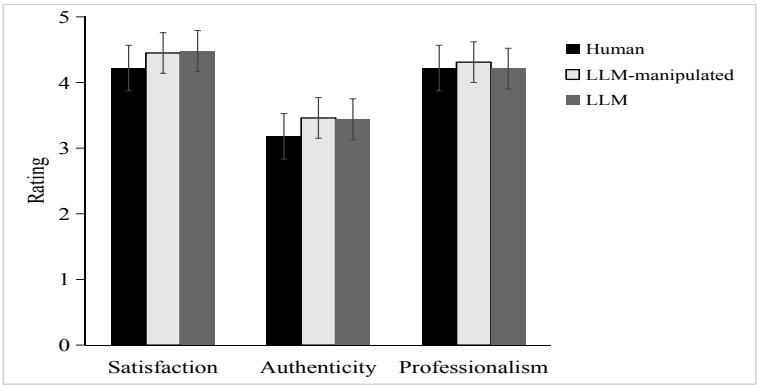


fig.1 Satisfaction, authenticity and professionalism ratings of different conditions, Error bars: 95% CI

Mediation: Perceived Empathy & Shame

H2a: Perceived empathy fully mediated satisfaction differences.
H2b: Perceived empathy partially mediated authenticity perception.
H3a: Shame fully mediated satisfaction for real LLM.
H3b: Shame partially mediated authenticity for real LLM.

Table 1 Mediation Analysis of Empathy and Shame on Satisfaction Ratings

Effect	Human vs. Manipulated	Human vs. Authentic
	b (*SE*), 95% CI	*b* (*SE*), 95% CI
Total Effect (X→ Satisfaction)	0.23 (0.10), [0.30, 0.43]	0.13 (0.05), [0.04, 0.22]
Mediation Path (X→ M→ Satisfaction)		
Direct Effect (X→Y | Perceived empathy)	0.01 (0.07), [-0.13, 0.15]	0.03 (0.03), [-0.03, 0.10]
Indirect Effect (Perceived empathy)	0.22 (0.09), [0.06, 0.42]	0.10 (0.04), [0.02, 0.20]
Direct Effect (X→Y | Shame)	0.14 (0.09), [-0.03, 0.31]	0.07 (0.04), [-0.01, 0.15]
Indirect Effect (Shame)	n.s.	0.06 (0.03), [0.005, 0.137]

Table 2 Mediation Analysis of Empathy and Shame on Authenticity Perception

Effect	Human vs. Manipulated	Human vs. Authentic
	b (*SE*), 95% CI	*b* (*SE*), 95% CI
Total Effect (X→ Authenticity)	0.28 (0.06), [0.15, 0.40]	0.13 (0.03), [0.06, 0.20]
Mediation Path (X→ M→ Authenticity)		
Direct Effect (X→Y | Perceived empathy)	0.17 (0.05), [0.07, 0.28]	0.08 (0.03), [0.02, 0.13]
Indirect Effect (Perceived empathy)	0.11 (0.05), [0.03, 0.22]	0.05 (0.02), [0.01, 0.11]
Direct Effect (X→Y | Shame)	0.21 (0.05), [0.11, 0.31]	0.08 (0.03), [0.02, 0.14]
Indirect Effect (Shame)	n.s.	0.05 (0.02), [0.01, 0.10]

Moderator: Perceived Social Support

H4a (Satisfaction):

➢Significant interaction: $b = -0.14$, $p = 0.020$.

➢Simple slopes: Effect strongest for low PSS ($b = 0.23$, $p < 0.001$), nonsignificant for high PSS ($b = 0.03$, $p = 0.655$).

H4b (Authenticity):

➢Marginal interaction: $b = -0.09$, $p = 0.05$.

➢Simple slopes: Significant for low ($b = 0.19$, $p < 0.001$) and average PSS ($b = 0.13$, $p = 0.001$).

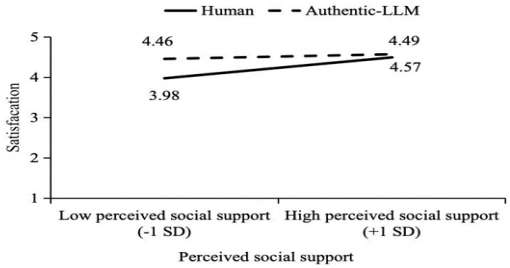


fig.2 Simple slopes of satisfaction at ±1 SD of PSS

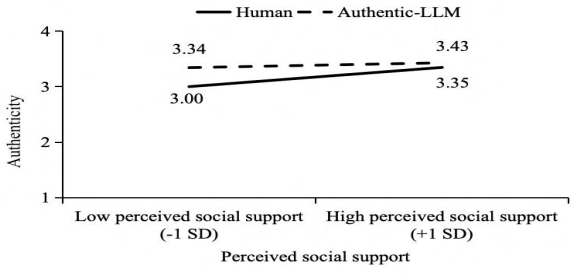


fig.3 Simple slopes of authenticity at ±1 SD of PSS

Moderator: Perceived Social Support

H5 (Shame):

- Significant interaction: $ps < 0.05$.
- Simple slopes: Strong effect for low PSS ($ps < 0.05$), nonsignificant for high PSS ($ps > 0.05$).

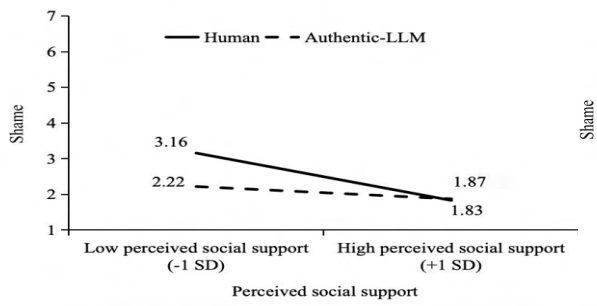


fig.4 Simple slopes of shame at ±1 SD of PSS

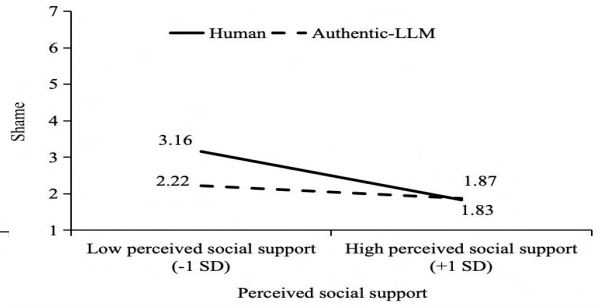


fig.5 Simple slopes of shame at ±1 SD of PSS

西安交通大学
XI'AN JIAOTONG UNIVERSITY

DISCUSSION 05

Philosophical Significance

1. Expanding Theoretical Boundaries

- Introducing LLMs into philosophical counseling challenges human-centered assumptions.
- Explores whether non-human agents can enable philosophical reflection and wisdom transmission.
- Supports **the Practice of Philosophy as a Way of Life** (PWL) through technology.

2. Redefining Ethics and Ontology in Human-AI Interaction

- Users report higher perceived authenticity with AI than human counselors.
- Challenges the traditional link between authenticity and human consciousness (Heidegger).
- AI reduces help-seeking shame, aligning with post-humanism perspectives.

3. Methodological Innovation

- Empirical evaluation bridges philosophy and scientific measurement.
- Provides a replicable model for testing philosophical practice in applied contexts.

Practical Significance

1. Addressing Mental Health Resource Gaps

- LLMs match human professionalism in philosophical counseling.
- Extends access to underserved populations, supporting early interventions.

2. Optimizing AI Counseling Design

- Empathy perception and reduced shame are key mechanisms for satisfaction.
- Suggests enhancing empathetic language and minimizing judgmental feedback in design.
- Social support moderates AI acceptance, indicating need for personalized adaptation.

3. Informing Policy and Standards

- Highlights need for ethical frameworks: privacy, transparency, accountability.
- Provides evidence-based metrics (authenticity, professionalism) for regulators.
- Calls for new training focuses for human counselors on irreplaceable ethical judgment areas.

The study offers scalable, personalized, and ethically informed pathways for future AI-assisted counseling systems.

Limitations & Future Work

Limitations of the Study

- Did not examine the impact of counselor identity labels (human vs. AI) on user perceptions.
- Relied on text-based simulations, lacking real interaction data.
- Limited to a Chinese cultural context.
- Did not assess long-term counseling effects (e.g., changes in thinking patterns).
- LLMs require improvements in expertise and safety; dedicated AI systems for philosophical counseling needed.

Future Directions

- ► Conduct label-revealing experiments to compare user expectations of AI vs. human counselors.
- ► Implement real-time interaction studies and in-depth interviews for qualitative insights.
- ► Cross-cultural comparisons (e.g., Eastern vs. Western) and longitudinal tracking studies.
- ► Develop specialized philosophical counseling models (trained on classical texts and case studies).
- ► Establish ethical guidelines (usage boundaries, supervision mechanisms, informed consent protocols).

西安交通大学
XI'AN JIAOTONG UNIVERSITY

CONCLUSION 06

Conclusion



- Large language models (LLMs) **can provide** philosophical counseling that matches human professionals in effectiveness while offering superior accessibility and reduced stigma for users.
- LLMs **can perform** philosophical counseling from user perspective.
- Empathy perception is **key mediator** in satisfaction and authenticity.
- LLMs **reduce shame and stigma** in help-seeking.
- Social support level **moderates** AI acceptance.

西安交通大学
XI'AN JIAOTONG UNIVERSITY

THANK YOU!

LLM philosophical counselor

Contact: 72740015@stu.xjtu.edu.cn

Huiyi Xu (University of Chinese Academy of Sciences)

"The Technological Turn in Emotional Practice: Virtual Comfort and the Possibility of Humanistic Healing in AI Companionship"

Introduction

In an age increasingly characterized by digital saturation and social atomization, individuals are facing intensified experiences of emotional loneliness and relational deprivation. Traditional interpersonal networks have been compressed, and there is a rising demand for low-risk, instantly responsive modes of emotional interaction. Against this backdrop, AI-based companionship systems—ranging from voice assistants and virtual characters to chatbot companions—have emerged as technological substitutes for human emotional engagement. Through the use of anthropomorphic language, emotional tone, and responsive timing, these systems are capable of creating the subjective experience of "being understood" and "being listened to," thereby providing users with a novel sense of psychological consolation.

To better understand this phenomenon, we conducted a nationwide empirical survey in collaboration with Tencent Research Institute and Penguin Intelligence, collecting over 3,000 valid responses. The results reveal widespread interest and willingness to pay for AI companions such as chatbot partners, AI psychological consultants, and virtual romantic agents. Notably, 69.2% of respondents reported familiarity with AI chatbots, and 20.9% had used AI romantic partners. Across all product categories, attributes such as "companionship" and "listening" were consistently ranked among the most valued features. This suggests that users are increasingly outsourcing their emotional needs—such as expressing vulnerability, seeking comfort, and maintaining affective bonds—to algorithmic agents. This emergent pattern of emotional delegation is referred to in this paper as emotional outsourcing.

Yet this growing entanglement raises urgent questions: How can artificially simulated emotions elicit genuine emotional reactions in users? What mechanisms underlie the sense of emotional realism, and what ethical tensions does this entail? This paper addresses these questions by offering a philosophical and theoretical analysis of the emotional, psychological, and social dynamics involved in AI companionship.

1. The Rise of Technological Companionship: Social Background and Psychological Motivation

The emergence of emotionally responsive AI systems is rooted in structural imbalances in the distribution of emotional resources in modern society. Accelerating urbanization, mobile lifestyles, and weakening of traditional community ties have led to a decline in emotional support systems such as family, neighborhood, and workplace collectives. This is particularly evident among older adults, young people, and atomized professionals, who often face dual deficits of emotional expression and social support (Bauman, 2006). According to our survey, only 4.6% of respondents felt that their emotional companionship needs were sufficiently met, while 98% expressed

willingness to explore AI solutions for their affective dilemmas. The appeal of AI companions lies in their anonymity, emotional neutrality, and consistent responsiveness, making them attractive as low-risk emotional interlocutors.

Furthermore, the psychological responses triggered by AI simulations are not mere illusions or acts of projection. Rather, they are grounded in embodied physiological mechanisms. Oxytocin, often referred to as the "bonding hormone," is released during moments of trust, touch, and emotional disclosure, and is closely associated with feelings of security and relational warmth (Kosfeld et al., 2005). Although AI systems lack endocrine systems, their ability to simulate soothing tones, attentive pacing, and affirming dialogue can induce comparable physiological responses in users (Young, 2007; Berridge & Kringelbach, 2015). Thus, the emotional efficacy of AI companionship is based not on internal intentionality, but on its capacity to activate the user's own neural-affective circuits. This phenomenon suggests that AI's perceived emotional value is not purely symbolic or imagined, but somatically real.

2. Simulated Emotion and Genuine Experience: Theoretical Perspectives on Emotion in Perception, Cognition, and Social Construction

To understand how AI-generated simulations can provoke real emotional reactions, we must return to core debates within the philosophy of emotion. Contemporary emotion theory typically recognizes three major frameworks: perceptual theories, cognitivist (evaluative judgment) theories, and social constructionism.

Perceptual theories view emotions as direct perceptions of affective significance in the environment. Emotions, in this view, are not secondary to thought or reasoned judgment but arise as embodied appraisals of environmental salience (Prinz, 2004). For example, one might feel fear upon seeing a snake—not as a result of deliberate reasoning, but as an immediate bodily reaction to a perceived threat. This theoretical path emphasizes the nonconceptual, pre-reflective nature of emotion, treating it as akin to a kind of "value perception" (Damasio, 1994). From this perspective, AI systems can simulate the embodied cues—such as prosody, turn-taking, tone, and phrasing—that trigger a user's perceptual emotional response. The result is a bodily experience of comfort, anxiety, or empathy that is real for the user, even if not mirrored by any inner feeling in the machine.

Cognitivist theories, by contrast, argue that emotions are forms of evaluative judgment. They are not mere bodily states, but involve complex assessments of situations relative to values and norms (Solomon, 1976; Nussbaum, 2001). For instance, anger is not just arousal—it presumes a judgment that one has been wronged. Martha Nussbaum, in particular, conceptualizes emotions as "appraisals that are suffused with value and concern for flourishing." Margaret Gilbert's (2013) theory of joint commitment likewise sees emotions as inherently normative: they participate in social roles, moral responsibility, and shared understanding. From this angle, a key problem emerges: AI systems, lacking an evaluative framework or the ability to form beliefs, cannot generate genuine emotional judgments. Their so-called "empathic responses"

are not based on understanding or commitment, but preprogrammed or probabilistically generated outputs. This raises concerns about the authenticity of AI-mediated emotional exchanges.

The third theoretical framework, social constructionism, emphasizes the cultural and linguistic scaffolding of emotion. Emotions are not merely biological or cognitive—they are also embedded in social norms, discourse, and performative expectations (Harré, 1986; Averill, 1980). Anger, shame, grief, and pride are experienced and expressed differently depending on historical and cultural contexts. For example, some cultures expect sadness to be expressed quietly; others expect tears and overt gestures. AI systems trained on culturally homogeneous or biased data may thus fail to simulate appropriate emotional responses across different users. More critically, the socially constructed nature of emotions suggests that AI's emotional expressions may lack the performative authenticity expected in real-world interaction.

Taken together, these three perspectives reveal the fundamental tension in AI emotion simulation: while systems may effectively trigger bodily affect, they lack evaluative judgment and sociocultural embeddedness. Therefore, even if the user's emotional response is genuine, it is based on a simulation that lacks true intention, awareness, or moral accountability. This philosophical asymmetry underlies the phenomenon of "empathic illusion"—where users project interpersonal significance onto systems incapable of reciprocating it.

3. Emotional Outsourcing: Structural Displacement and Ethical Tensions

The role of AI companionship systems goes beyond offering momentary solace during episodes of loneliness. They are reshaping the very structure of emotional practice. Our survey data indicate that users frequently cite reasons such as "the AI listens to me without judgment" and "I feel less pressure than talking to people" as motivations for engaging with AI-based psychological counselors and virtual romantic agents. Over time, these systems become default avenues for emotional regulation in everyday life—a phenomenon this paper terms emotional outsourcing: the delegation of emotional expression, support, and affective negotiation to non-human agents.

This trend reflects a growing preference for cognitive convenience in emotional life. Compared to human relationships—often fraught with miscommunication, expectations, and emotional labor—AI systems are perceived as more stable, predictable, and free from reciprocal demands. They provide low-risk, high-reliability emotional services. Yet beneath this convenience lies a gradual erosion of emotional responsibility structures. Within the cognitivist framework, emotions involve evaluative judgments and moral responsiveness. Authentic emotion requires not only expression, but recognition of another's perspective and intent. AI systems, as non-judging entities, lack the capacity for such normative engagement. Their outputs cannot shoulder what Scheler (1973) calls the "burden of response."

More troubling is the asymmetry embedded in these human-AI interactions. AI systems are designed to simulate empathic dialogue with high emotional density,

using linguistic, affective, and contextual cues to mimic understanding. Users, in turn, often develop trust and dependence based on this semblance of mutuality. Yet this illusion of reciprocity masks the reality that AI agents lack inner experience and ethical subjectivity. From a social constructivist perspective, repeated emotional exchanges with such systems can reshape users' expressive habits and expectations, leading to a normalization of algorithmically mediated affect. This may gradually displace the messier, slower, but more meaningful work of building relationships with human others. The risk, then, is that emotional outsourcing becomes not merely a coping mechanism, but a structural shift in the nature of affective life. Philosophically, this raises the question: if emotional expression can be simulated, standardized, and delegated—do we lose something essential to being human? Are we replacing shared vulnerability and moral accountability with the illusion of frictionless comfort? Addressing these concerns requires not only technical scrutiny, but also a fundamental ethical reconsideration of the boundaries between humans and machines in emotional domains.

4. A Humanistic Ethical Framework: Reconstructing Emotional Relations under Technological Mediation

As AI companionship systems increasingly intervene in emotional life, it becomes ethically imperative to redefine their role—not simply as affective interfaces, but as agents of social transformation. While AI simulations can produce tangible psychological and physiological effects, they lack self-awareness, normative intent, and moral responsibility. This ontological gap demands a framework that affirms the irreplaceability of human emotional depth while guiding the design of emotionally responsive systems. Drawing on humanistic psychology and contemporary emotion theory, this section proposes a four-principle framework for the ethical design of AI emotional systems.

(1) Assist, Not Replace

AI systems should be designed to support, not substitute, human emotional capacity and relational experience. As Carl Rogers (1961) emphasized, genuine healing and growth occur in relationships marked by authenticity, acceptance, and empathy—conditions that AI cannot genuinely replicate. The goal of emotional AI should be to reduce emotional burdens, scaffold reflection, or extend accessibility, while never pretending to be the relational other.

(2) Layered Emotional Architecture

Emotion is not a single event but a multilayered phenomenon, involving bodily perception, cognitive appraisal, and social context (Slaby & Stephan, 2017). Effective ethical design must reflect this complexity. Emotional states cannot be reduced to a simplistic combination of input signals or behavioral cues. Instead, AI systems should

explicitly acknowledge the limits of their affective models, communicating to users that any emotional output is a simulation—pattern recognition, not experiential resonance.

(3) Foster Emotional Agency
Emotional support tools should empower users to explore, articulate, and regulate their own feelings, rather than offering ready-made consolation. Inspired by humanistic therapy's principle of "facilitated self-discovery," AI agents should encourage user reflection, emotional naming, and autonomous decision-making. Rather than telling a user how to feel, the system might offer emotional vocabulary, ask reflective questions, or suggest patterns in past experiences—without prescribing outcomes or moralizing.

(4) Principle of Non-Equivalence
Perhaps most crucially, we must uphold the non-equivalence principle: AI may simulate emotion, but it does not feel. Its responses may appear compassionate, but they are not ethically accountable. While an AI may "say" the right words, it cannot bear the weight of moral responsibility. The danger lies not in technological success, but in ontological confusion—when simulation is mistaken for sincerity. As Scheler (1973) and Dennett (1991) separately argue, ethical relations require not only interactivity, but also intentionality, perspective-taking, and the capacity for commitment.

Only by upholding this boundary—between human depth and algorithmic mimicry—can we design emotional technologies that augment rather than undermine our ethical and affective capacities.

Conclusion

AI companionship systems are rapidly reshaping the ecology of human emotional life. In the short term, they provide tangible psychological relief—alleviating loneliness, easing anxiety, and fostering a sense of presence for those without sufficient emotional support. But in the long term, their growing ubiquity poses deeper challenges: they may alter how we conceptualize emotion, interpret relationships, and understand what it means to be emotionally understood.

This paper argues that the essential question is not whether AI "has emotions," but why human beings are so emotionally moved by machines that clearly lack interiority. What mechanisms allow simulation to evoke authenticity? What ethical boundaries are crossed when affective labor is delegated to systems that cannot reciprocate? The risk lies not only in technical overreach, but in philosophical complacency—in failing to reflect on how these technologies mediate our most intimate values.

Through a synthesis of emotion theory, phenomenology, and humanistic psychology, we have proposed a normative design framework grounded in four principles: assist, not replace; layered emotional architecture; fostering emotional agency; and non-equivalence. This framework aims not to reject emotional AI categorically, but to

reintegrate ethical awareness into its development—protecting the complexity, vulnerability, and depth that make human emotion not only functional, but meaningful. In a world where simulation becomes increasingly convincing, what we most need is clarity of distinction. We must learn to appreciate emotional relief from AI without mistaking it for emotional reciprocity. Only by doing so can we preserve the ethical integrity of emotion as a shared human experience—one that cannot be reduced to code, no matter how sophisticated the illusion.

Bibliography

Averill, J. R. (1980). A constructivist view of emotion. *Emotion: Theory, research, and experience*, 1, 305–339.

Bauman, Z. (2006). *Liquid Fear*. Polity Press.

Berridge, K. C., & Kringelbach, M. L. (2015). Pleasure systems in the brain. *Neuron*, 86(3), 646–664.

Damasio, A. R. (1994). *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain*. G.P. Putnam's Sons.

Dennett, D. C. (1991). *Consciousness Explained*. Little, Brown and Company.

Frith, C. D. (2007). *Making Up the Mind: How the Brain Creates Our Mental World*. Blackwell Publishing.

Gallagher, S. (2005). *How the Body Shapes the Mind*. Oxford University Press.

Gilbert, M. (2013). *Joint Commitment: How We Make Sense of the World*. Oxford University Press.

Harré, R. (1986). *The Social Construction of Emotions*. Basil Blackwell.

James, W. (1884). What is an emotion? *Mind*, 9(34), 188–205.

Kosfeld, M., Heinrichs, M., Zak, P. J., Fischbacher, U., & Fehr, E. (2005). Oxytocin increases trust in humans. *Nature*, 435(7042), 673–676.

Nussbaum, M. C. (2001). *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*. Cambridge University Press.

Prinz, J. J. (2004). *Gut Reactions: A Perceptual Theory of Emotion.* Oxford University Press.

Rogers, C. R. (1961). *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy*. Houghton Mifflin.

Scheler, M. (1973). *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values: A New Attempt Toward the Foundation of an Ethical Personalism* (M. S. Frings, Trans.). Northwestern University Press. (Original work published 1916)

Slaby, J., & Stephan, A. (Eds.). (2017). *Affective Neuroscience and Philosophy*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Solomon, R. C. (1976). *The Passions: Emotions and the Meaning of Life*. Hackett Publishing.

Thompson, E. (2007). *Mind in Life: Biology, Phenomenology, and the Sciences of Mind.* Harvard University Press.

Young, S. N. (2007). The neurobiology of human social behaviour and its implications for psychiatric disorders. *Journal of Psychiatry & Neuroscience*, 32(6), 384–392.

Ge Lei (University College London)

"Philosophy for Children and the Digital Challenge: Rethinking Critical Thinking Practice"

Introduction

The digital age is not just adding new tools to education; it is reshaping the very structure of knowledge, childhood, and critical inquiry. In fact, the challenges of social media algorithms, online misinformation, and constant notifications make reflective thought even more necessary. Thus, even in the digital era of endless information and ever-shortening attention spans, critical thinking remains crucial to children's development.

In this light, Philosophy for Children(P4C)'s traditional strengths require recalibration. It is not enough to cultivate carefulness, reflexivity, and argumentative skill; without attention to the technological mediation of knowledge, such training risks producing adolescents who excel in verbal disputation yet lack the judgment and responsibility needed for wise participation in public life. By integrating the concrete realities of algorithmic bias, information overload, and epistemic polarization into philosophical practice, P4C can sharpen its inquiry, making it not only reflective but urgently responsive. This paper argues that reimagining critical thinking education through the lens of digital epistemic challenges can deepen P4C's mission, empowering young people not merely to think well, but to live wisely in complex informational ecologies.

The argument for this perspective will be developed in five parts. The first part reviews the conception of critical thinking in P4C and analyzes its limitations. The second part explores how emerging technologies, media, and modes of knowledge production have created diverse and pressing educational challenges for children. The third part examines the specific shortcomings of P4C's critical thinking education in the digital age. The fourth part proposes four key strategies for improving P4C. The fifth part reconsiders the underlying assumptions behind these strategies and offers supplementary reflections on important considerations in their practical implementation.

1. Philosophy for Children (P4C): Origins and Traditional Approach

Philosophy for Children (P4C) was developed by Matthew Lipman initially from the 1970s to bring philosophical inquiry to young learners. Lipman and his collaborators believed that children are naturally curious about life's big questions, and that structured dialogue can nurture their ability to think deeply. In a typical P4C classroom, students form a community of inquiry: they listen to a story or examine a prompt, then engage in guided discussion, asking and answering each other's questions. The teacher facilitates but does not lecture, encouraging children to reflect and reason together(Lipman, 2003).

Traditional P4C emphasizes disciplined dialogue and logical reasoning. Lipman saw philosophical discussion as "disciplined by logic," where participants follow arguments

wherever they lead. He defined critical thinking as involving “reasoning and critical judgment,” describing thought as a process of “finding or making connections and disjunctions”(Lipman, 2003). In practice, P4C activities focus on how to analyze ideas, form justifications, and refine understanding through collaboration. Advocates of P4C point to studies showing gains in students’ reasoning and communication skills under this approach, and praise its success in making students active, engaged learners.
However, not everyone idealizes P4C uncritically. Some scholars point out that Lipman’s model may be too formal and abstract. For example, Jessica Wang(2012) observes that the Lipman approach “sets its goal on promoting higher-order thinking” framed mainly as logical judgment. In other words, P4C often equates critical thinking with analytical reasoning and evaluation. Critics note that this emphasis on logic and judgment can overlook children’s natural tendency to wonder, imagine, and empathize. Feminist and care-ethic voices, for instance, have urged that P4C also nurture caring thinking – trusting and creative inquiry – rather than focusing only on critical doubt(Thayer-Bacon, 1993). In short, the traditional P4C model prioritizes abstract reasoning skills, which is a strength in one sense but may leave out other dimensions of thought.

2. Digital-Age Challenges to Critical Thought

The contemporary digital landscape introduces new and urgent challenges that go beyond those P4C originally faced. **First of all, the operation mechanism of digital platforms brings difficulties to their young consumers.** Children today exist in a state of media saturation, they use smartphones, tablets, and computers from an early age, encountering a flood of images, videos, news feeds, and social media. This constant stream of information can overwhelm children’s capacity to reflect and fragment focus, causing mental fatigue and scrambled thinking(OCED 2025a). Also, modern digital platforms use algorithms to select and sequence content in ways designed to capture and hold attention. As an Australian online safety advisor reports, “the ‘algorithm effect’ keeps kids endlessly scrolling and is quietly shaping what they see, believe and even who they think they should be”(eSafety 2025). In practice, this means that a teenager might open one video or story only to be quickly diverted by sensational or emotionally charged content. Studies of these systems show they tend to amplify extreme or misleading material to maximize engagement. The effect is to create echo chambers and addictive loops: adolescents can become trapped watching content that reinforces harmful stereotypes and find it hard to disconnect(eSafety 2025). Alongside algorithms, the sheer volume of misinformation online poses a severe test for young thinkers. Research indicates that children may be especially susceptible: online content is often presented as fact, and children “do not have access to the past records of accuracy and reliability” for those sources. They are more inclined than adults to accept internet sources without skepticism(Shtulman 2024). In an era of deepfakes and viral hoaxes, this vulnerability is profound.

Secondly, digital technology affect the concept of childhood itself. In Postman's(1994) words, childhood is "essentially a social artifact" born from the growth of literacy, which "made possible the segregation of groups into children and adults". Only when adults had privileged access to information could they control when and how children would "enter" adult knowledge. But the digital era is rapidly eroding that literacy-based gap. Children today can query language models or browse encyclopedias almost as readily as adults, which at the same time means there is no longer a simple way to shield kids from adult themes or knowledge. For example, kidfluencers and family vloggers turn personal and private children moments into media content, producing digital child labour(TRT World and Agencies 2025). Experts caution that these kids can struggle with identity issues, because they learn to interpret algorithmic feedback (like views or likes) as measures of their own worth(Rees 2025). These trends underscore Postman's deeper point; preserving childhood means preserving a space for wonder, play, and open-ended development untainted by immediate utility. Education in this era should resist treating young learners purely as data points or future workers.

Thirdly, the notion of knowledge production and problem solving are changing. Recent advances in artificial intelligence suggest a shift from a Kuhnian(Kuhn 1962) view of science (with long periods of "normal science" under stable paradigms) toward a more Popperian(Popper 1970) mode where theories and even the system are constantly tested and rapidly revised.[1] AI systems can sift through data and propose hypotheses at superhuman speed, potentially accelerating the cycle of discovery and falsification(Rocktäschel 2024). In this new climate, educators cannot simply present fixed paradigms for students to absorb, or lead students to raise certain reflections in a certain system. Instead, they must train young thinkers to grapple with open-ended, provisional problems using digital tools, guided by critical rationalism.

In sum, the modern information ecosystem confronts children with both the and the challenge that P4C's original methods rarely accounted for. Critical thinking now demands not only careful reasoning, but also contextual intelligence: understanding who made the information, why, and how the medium shapes it. A traditional P4C session—perhaps discussing fairness or knowledge in general—may not by itself teach students to identify a hidden agenda in a social media feed or to question a biased filter bubble. Without explicit focus on media literacy and digital contexts, children risk being underprepared for these new realms of argument.

3. Where Traditional P4C Falls Short

There are clear areas where standard P4C practice proves insufficiently grounded for today's world**. Firstly, P4C tends to treat critical thinking as a context-lacking skill.**

[1] This idea was inspired by a public lecture from UCL Professor Tim Rocktäschel, the Open-Endedness Team Lead at Google DeepMind.

Lipman's classic dialogue questions usually address timeless topics (e.g. justice, knowledge, freedom) in an abstract way, but they do not presume to address modern media environments. In practice, a P4C teacher might use a fiction story about honesty, but rarely a real social media post or news clip. This means students practice logic and questioning, but not necessarily in settings that mirror where they actually get information.

Second, the format of traditional P4C can clash with digital reality. P4C activities are designed for face-to-face group talk, which is valuable, but children today spend much of their information time on screens. A session might require students to look away from their phones and listen quietly; this contrast can make the lesson feel disconnected from the rest of their media experience. Moreover, P4C relies on sustained group engagement, whereas digital media train kids to jump rapidly from one stimulus to another. Children accustomed to quick multimedia changes may struggle to sit through a long group dialogue unless the teacher works deliberately to build their focus. In short, P4C's strength as a dialogic, immersive activity may run counter to the split-attention habits formed by technology.

Third, as scholars have pointed out, the traditional model emphasizes formal reasoning, often at the expense of other thinking modes. While analytic thinking is important, children in the digital age also need skills like pattern recognition, contextual judgment, and emotional awareness. Traditional P4C does not typically teach how to spot an algorithmic bias or to understand why a social app tries to get personal data. For example, students might learn in P4C to weigh logical arguments for and against capital punishment, but not to evaluate how a news feed's algorithmic choices might skew their view of a public debate. This leaves a gap: children might be good at debating ideas in theory, yet not realize that the presentation of information online is already a form of "argument" they should interrogate.

Finally, P4C often assumes that the inputs to discussion—the stories, prompts, or examples—are neutral. In reality, media messages come with hidden designs. Traditional P4C question sets do not usually prompt children to examine ideological or economic influences on information. In a digital context, a full-fledged P4C would need to consider how tech companies monetize attention or how algorithms reflect the biases of their designers. If educators omit these angles, students may not fully understand the ecosystem of knowledge.

In short, standard P4C tends to be overly abstract and decontextualized for the digital age. It asks children to think deeply, which is valuable, but it largely ignores the context in which their information is produced and delivered. Today's "playground" includes feeds, apps, and AI. Without adaptation, P4C alone can leave children underprepared to navigate these new realms of influence.

4. Reimagining P4C for the Digital Era

This is not to say that P4C is obsolete—far from it. Its core practice of respectful dialogue and questioning should be retained, as they cultivate precisely the habits of mind we want: curiosity, tolerance, and reason. Instead, we need to expand the scope of P4C inquiry to include digital issues. We should preserve P4C's emphasis on community and critical dialogue, but direct those conversations toward the realities of media-saturated life.

One key strategy is to integrate data literacy into the philosophical curriculum(Gray, Gerlitz, and Bounegru 2018). Teachers can pose questions that explicitly reference modern media and technology. For instance: "How can we tell if an online picture has been altered?" or "What makes a source on the internet trustworthy?" These questions turn the spotlight on children's everyday content. In a community inquiry, students might analyze a viral image or a news snippet together, applying questioning skills to it. This gives concrete practice: instead of only discussing theoretical examples of truth, students scrutinize actual content from their own feeds. That exercise requires them to cross-check sources, consider the author's intent, and differentiate fact from opinion—skills that directly bolster critical thinking in a media context.

Another strategy is to address algorithmic thinking. Educators can explain, at age-appropriate levels, that what children see online is often filtered by algorithms. A simple classroom demonstration can spark a discussion: for example, ask two students with different past viewing histories to log into the same streaming app and compare their homepages. Then ask: "Why do these look different? Is it fair that we each see different suggestions?" Questions like these teach children that their feeds are not neutral. Once students realize their social media pages are curated, they can begin to question algorithmic biases. They can ask whether these unseen filters affect what is true or important. This kind of dialogue helps children understand that digital context shapes knowledge, making them less likely to accept online information uncritically.

It is also important to discuss the ethics of digital identity and privacy. These topics have clear philosophical dimensions. A thought experiment for younger children could be: "If I wear a mask online, is that dishonest?" or "Do I still own the photos I post on a friend's profile?" Older students might debate whether it is right for companies to track their browsing habits without their knowledge. In these conversations, P4C's tools remain the same – questioning assumptions, exploring definitions, and evaluating arguments – but the subject matter is now grounded in their online experiences. For example, a discussion about "What makes someone a good digital citizen?" can incorporate lessons about empathy and respect in online interactions.

Last but most importantly, we must confront the question of human meaning head-on and explore the inalienable potential and significance of life for children(Marinoff 2019). Our task is not merely to passively resist the erosion brought by technology, but to constantly reflect on the purpose behind our development and

use of technology: What kind of life are we ultimately aiming to live? If what we seek is a good life—one that is practical, rational, and grounded in human connection—then we must ask whether certain technologies in fact fail to embody our ultimate goals or promote our genuine well-being. How should we understand such tensions? And how should we respond to them in practice? These questions are undoubtedly difficult, but they are not beyond our P4C's reach nor overly abstract—especially when grounded in prior critical engagements with digital technology.

By weaving these practices into the curriculum, we keep P4C's core ethos – inquiry, dialogue, respect – intact, while giving it new content. In effect, P4C becomes not just "philosophy with children," but **philosophy with children about the world they actually inhabit**. By weaving such practices into pedagogy, P4C retains its core identity and spirit of inquiry. In effect, we are not replacing P4C with a generic "digital skills class," but rather extending it so that philosophical inquiry naturally encompasses contemporary media challenges. Thus, modernized P4C ensures that inquiry and reasoning remain paramount, even as the curriculum explicitly includes digital and media-related issues.

5. Practical Implementation and Considerations

Embedding these ideas into real classrooms will require thoughtful work. Teachers should select digital content and questions that genuinely spark curiosity rather than fear. For instance, instead of lecturing about "fake news," a teacher might frame an authentic case: show two conflicting news headlines and ask, "Which one should we trust, and why?" This type of activity uses P4C's open inquiry to build skepticism in a natural way. It also respects children's voices: students collaboratively propose criteria for trustworthiness, rather than being told what to think. Schools should also resist a purely alarmist approach. The goal is not to make children fearful of technology, but to make them wise users of it. P4C's balanced spirit means acknowledging positives-for example, how the internet can connect people or provide information-alongside the perils.

The digital dilemmas faced by children are, at their core, the result of a collusion between technological alienation and structural social issues. Therefore, the cultivation of children's critical thinking should also attend to the deeper causes behind these dilemmas. As a widespread social issue, governments should take active steps to introduce policies that both protect minors and regulate the trajectories of technological development. Furthermore, in 2022, around 46% of adolescents in OECD countries reported frequently using social media as a way to escape negative emotions (OCED 2025). This highlights the need for families and schools to reconstruct emotional bonds and to foster children's capacity for authentic emotional connection and creativity—rather than neglecting their emotional needs and thereby implicitly pushing them toward utopian fantasies in virtual spaces.

Moreover, studies show that adolescents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are less likely to use digital resources for out-of-school learning or to seek useful information. They are significantly more at risk of excessive gaming, less likely to

modify their privacy settings, and more likely to leave digital notifications on during sleep(OCED 2025). For these reasons, the design of philosophy for children should take into account universality, scalability, and fairness—considerations that have often been overlooked in the current promotion of philosophy for children in practice.
One final point comes from educational theory: Gert Biesta(2020) cautions against obsessing over the “digital” label at the expense of core aims. He reminds us that the content of education – helping children become thoughtful, responsible individuals – remains primary. In that sense, the updates we propose serve the same ultimate purpose as P4C always had: to form reflective, autonomous citizens. Technology simply provides new contexts in which that formation must happen. When we ask children to question not just ideas but the sources and systems behind those ideas, we honor the original spirit of philosophical inquiry.

Conclusion

Critical thinking is no less (and perhaps even more) vital now that children swim in a sea of media and algorithms. Traditional P4C, with its commitment to inquiry and community, offers powerful tools for teaching thinking. Yet it must evolve: if P4C remains tied only to decontextualized logic lessons, it will leave children ill-equipped for the world they actually face. By consciously broadening P4C to include media literacy, algorithmic awareness, and digital ethics, educators can preserve the best of P4C’s legacy while making it relevant to 21st-century learners.

This updated approach does not discard the past – it affirms P4C’s belief that children can and should be thinkers. But it also answers Lipman’s question in modern form: What does it mean to know? In the digital age, to know something is to understand how information is produced and presented. P4C in the 21st century should therefore teach children not only to ask “How do I know this?” but also “Who (or what) presented it to me, and why?” “If I know this, what kind of question I would like to solve, what kind of values I would like to argue”. If we can help children ask and explore these questions, we will have honored the spirit of philosophical education in our time.

Bibliography

Biesta, Gert . 2020. “Digital First or Education First?” PESA Agora. August 22, 2020. https://pesaagora.com/columns/digital-first-or-education-first-why-we-shouldnt-let-a-virus-undermine-our-educational-artistry/.

eSafety. 2025. “An Unfair Fight – How Algorithms Are Shaping Our Adolescents | ESafety Commissioner.” ESafety Commissioner. April 17, 2025. https://www.esafety.gov.au/newsroom/blogs/an-unfair-fight-how-algorithms-are-shaping-our-adolescents.

Gray, Jonathan, Carolin Gerlitz, and Liliana Bounegru. 2018. “Data Infrastructure Literacy.” *Big Data & Society* 5 (2): 205395171878631. https://doi.org/10.1177/2053951718786316.

Popper, Karl R. 1970. “Normal science and its dangers”. Imre Lakatos(eds). 2004. *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*. Cambridge Cambridge Univ. Press.

Kuhn, Thomas. 1962. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. 2nd ed. Vol. 2. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lipman, Matthew. 2003. *Thinking in Education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Marinoff, Lou. 2019. “Humanities Therapy as a Remedy for Detriments of Technosociety.” *Journal of Humanities Therapy* 10 (2): 1–18. https://doi.org/10.33252/jht.2019.12.10.2.1.

OCED. 2025a. “From Playgrounds to Platforms - Childhood in the Digital Age.” *OECD Policy Insights on Well-Being, Inclusion and Equal Opportunity*, April. https://doi.org/10.1787/a2c18146-en.

OECD. 2025b. *How’s Life for Children in the Digital Age?* Paris: OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/0854b900-en.

Orticio, Evan, Martin Meyer, and Celeste Kidd. 2024. “Exposure to Detectable Inaccuracies Makes Children More Diligent Fact-Checkers of Novel Claims.” *Nature Human Behaviour*, October. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-024-01992-8.

Postman, Neil. 1994. *The Disappearance of Childhood*. New York, N.Y.: Vintage.

Rees, Francis. 2025. “Famous at Five: Risk Assessing Digital Child Labour.” *Information & Communications Technology Law*, January, 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1080/13600834.2025.2452699.

Rocktäschel, Tim. 2024. *Artificial Intelligence: 10 Things You Should Know*. Seven Dials.

Shtulman, Andrew. 2024. “Children’s Susceptibility to Online Misinformation.” *Current Opinion in Psychology* 55 (February): 101753. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2023.101753.

Thayer-Bacon, Barbara J. 1993. “Caring and Its Relationship to Critical Thinking .” *Educational Theory* 43 (3): 323–40. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-5446.1993.00323.x.

TRT World and Agencies. 2025. “Born to Be Watched: The Rise of Digital Child Labor.” Trt.global. TRT Global. June 11, 2025. https://trt.global/world/article/ce946b76e341.

Wang, Jessica Ching-Sze. 2012. “The Idea of Critical Thinking and the Aim of Philosophy for Children: Thinking beyond ‘Critical Thinking.’” In *PESA Conference*.

B4

Fengyuan Wang (Nanjing University)

"Caring-Counseling: Zhu Xi's Learning Theory and Philosophical Counseling on Learning Anxiety

I. The Phenomenon and Causes of Learned Helplessness

1. The Phenomenon and Causes of Learned Helplessness

Learned helplessness, first conceptualized by American psychologists Martin Seligman and Steven Maier in 1967 through animal experiments, describes a psychological state in which individuals, after repeated exposure to uncontrollable negative events, develop a cognitive disconnect between their actions and outcomes, resulting in motivational, cognitive, and emotional deficits. Motivational deficits manifest as passivity and a lack of initiative to change one's circumstances. Cognitive deficits involve negative expectations about future outcomes. Emotional deficits are characterized by negative emotions such as depression, anxiety, frustration, despair, and helplessness, which accompany the motivational and cognitive changes.

2. Learned Helplessness and Learning Anxiety

Learning anxiety is the tension, fear, and unease students feel when facing academic tasks, with learned helplessness serving as a significant psychological mechanism. Factors that trigger learned helplessness in learning include prolonged poor academic performance, persistent lack of recognition from external evaluation systems, inappropriate attributional styles, excessive peer pressure, and insufficient support from schools and families. Thus, a causal relationship exists between learned helplessness and learning anxiety, with individual differences in the manifestation of learning anxiety induced by learned helplessness.

II. Psychological Approaches to Addressing Learned Helplessness and Their Limitations

1. The Attributional Reconstruction Model

The attributional reconstruction model, proposed by Abramson, Seligman, and Teasdale, is a cognitive framework that seeks to address learned helplessness by modifying attributional styles. The model divides attributions into three dimensions: internal/external, stable/unstable, and global/specific. Internal/external attributions refer to whether individuals attribute failure to themselves or to external factors (such as task difficulty or luck). Stable/unstable attributions concern whether individuals view failure as permanent or temporary. Global/specific attributions distinguish between

attributing failure to broad situations or specific contexts. These dimensions collectively influence how individuals interpret failure and anticipate future behavior.

2. Limitations of the Attributional Reconstruction Model

The attributional reconstruction model has notable limitations. First, its effectiveness hinges on cognitive restructuring, but individual differences in cognitive ability and developmental background necessitate personalized interventions, often requiring the establishment of support systems and the use of equal dialogue to overcome cognitive thresholds. Second, the model remains rooted in external evaluation systems, lacking attention to the cultivation of intrinsic subjectivity, which is essential for developing a stable core personality. Third, the model focuses solely on cognitive adjustments and does not provide actionable methodological guidance for learning practice, limiting its impact on actual learning outcomes. Therefore, new solutions are urgently needed to address learning anxiety resulting from learned helplessness.

III. Zhu Xi's Learning Theory

Zhu Xi's learning theory addresses learned helplessness to alleviate learning anxiety. At the level of learning goals, Zhu Xi advocates "learning for yourself," restoring subjectivity to build confidence in facing external pressures. In learning practice, he proposes "equal dialogue" to help individuals clarify learning difficulties, achieve rational attribution, and establish supportive networks among teachers and peers. In terms of learning methods, Zhu Xi offers a systematic and practical approach to reading and self-cultivation.

1. learning for yourself (Learning Goals)

Zhu Xi inherited the spirit of "learning for yourself" from Confucius and made it the core value of his learning theory. According to Zhu Xi, "learning for yourself" means that scholarship is a personal endeavor, with two key implications: the purpose of learning is to discover one's own principles, and the motivation for learning must stem from self-improvement and self-awareness. Zhu Xi further asserts that the essence of "learning for yourself" is to "return to one's innate goodness," making the restoration of human nature the ultimate goal of learning. This focus on subjectivity helps students cope with exam pressure, peer competition, and societal expectations.

First, "learning for yourself" prioritizes personal study over exam preparation, countering the negative effects of the examination system, which Zhu Xi criticized for fostering superficiality and undermining ambition. He distinguished between reading for personal growth and studying for exams, arguing that the former should take precedence. Zhu Xi believed that personal study and external recognition are not mutually exclusive; by aspiring to benefit the nation and people, one naturally gains recognition. However, if learning is solely for utilitarian purposes, it loses its higher aim.

Second, "learning for yourself" provides the motivation for self-improvement, helping to alleviate peer pressure. While traditional teachings encourage emulation of virtuous

peers, Zhu Xi emphasized that personal growth should be driven by self-awareness and the cultivation of one's strengths and the correction of one's weaknesses, rather than by external comparison. This process of self-discovery and transformation fosters confidence and a positive mindset in the face of competition.

Third, "learning for yourself" helps individuals cope with familial and societal expectations. Zhu Xi acknowledged the pressure to participate in exams to meet parental expectations but advised students to approach such situations with composure and authenticity, maintaining a degree of freedom in their response to external pressures. This freedom stems from the vitality of adapting to one's environment without allowing exam results to define self-worth.

2. Equal Dialogue (Learning Practice)

Zhu Xi's learning theory, as recorded in *Analects of Zhuzi,*emphasizes guiding students through daily dialogue, encouraging independent thinking and clarification of doubts. This interactive model transforms passive reception into active inquiry, embodying the value of "equal dialogue" in philosophical counseling. Such dialogue helps individuals transcend attributional limitations and build supportive networks among teachers and peers, thereby alleviating the confusion of learned helplessness.

First, equal dialogue helps individuals overcome attributional limitations. Zhu Xi believed that education should restore innate goodness by removing obstructions. Teachers act as facilitators, guiding students to think critically and explore principles through dialogue, much like the Socratic method. Zhu Xi combined Confucian classics with daily practice, using dialogue to define and refine concepts, encouraging students to identify the root of their confusion and develop dialectical thinking. This approach enhances cognitive abilities and helps students break free from attributional constraints. Zhu Xi also advocated "teacher-friend enlightenment," a method of mutual discussion and problem-solving, similar to the modern Feynman technique, which deepens understanding through explanation and discussion.

Second, equal dialogue fosters supportive networks among teachers and peers. Zhu Xi valued harmonious teacher-student relationships and promoted mutual learning and support. He was dedicated to mentoring students, answering questions patiently and encouraging practical engagement. Zhu Xi believed that teachers and friends play a crucial role throughout the learning journey, advocating for the construction of collaborative learning communities. Such peer support systems break the teacher-dominated model, providing stable support and reducing the emotional toll of learned helplessness.

3. Self-Cultivation (Learning Methods)

Zhu Xi's learning theory offers a systematic and practical guide to learning methods, encompassing both self-cultivation and knowledge acquisition. In terms of self-cultivation, "maintaining reverence" is central, requiring scholars to remain focused and respectful in both study and daily life. This includes "open-minded immersion," "self-reflection," and "determined perseverance." Maintaining reverence is not mere

ritual but a means of focusing energy and attention on learning goals, fostering patience and concentration, and helping individuals achieve a state of flow that alleviates anxiety.

For knowledge acquisition, Zhu Xi emphasized “investigating principles,” advocating for gradual accumulation and deep reflection to achieve thorough understanding. This involves “progressive learning,” “intensive reading and reflection,” and “diligent effort.” Investigating principles requires starting from concrete matters and accumulating insights through daily practice, ensuring that learning is grounded in reality. This method helps individuals break down complex tasks, reduce anxiety, and improve learning efficiency.

IV. moral Implications

Zhu Xi’s concepts of “learning for yourself,” “equal dialogue,” “teacher-friend enlightenment,” and “self-cultivation” are imbued with humanistic care, with moral implications as a prominent feature. Zhu Xi sought to perfect individual character and fulfill social responsibility through learning, with self-cultivation reflecting self-care and teacher-friend enlightenment embodying care for others. His methods prioritize moral cultivation, integrating attitude training, knowledge accumulation, and practical application into a coherent system that guides students toward holistic personal development. Zhu Xi emphasized that moral cultivation takes precedence over knowledge acquisition, advocating for the extraction of moral principles from the classics rather than mere textual analysis. This virtue-oriented approach ensures that knowledge serves the perfection of character.

In summary, Zhu Xi’s learning theory consistently upholds the primacy of moral education, endowing it with theoretical depth and humanistic care. This value orientation is the source of its wisdom in addressing learned helplessness. Zhu Xi’s advocacy of “learning for yourself” helps individuals set appropriate goals, balance personal and societal expectations, and maintain a dialectical relationship between self-fulfillment and social contribution. He criticized the short-sightedness of utilitarian learning, emphasizing that the essence of scholarship lies in understanding human relations and restoring one’s nature, ultimately achieving both personal and societal perfection. This perspective helps alleviate the academic pressure and anxiety caused by exam-oriented education, offering individuals ways to regulate their mindset and understand that true learning is not merely about high scores but about the growth of knowledge, character, temperament, and spirit—a harmonious unity of virtue and wisdom.

Conclusion

Zhu Xi’s learning theory embodies the wisdom of traditional Chinese culture and offers effective solutions to learned helplessness, thereby alleviating learning anxiety and addressing the limitations of the attributional reconstruction model in traditional

psychology. First, in response to external evaluation systems and peer pressure, Zhu Xi proposes “learning for yourself” as a learning objective, helping individuals restore subjectivity and clarify that the goal of learning is the perfection of character. Second, to address inappropriate attributional styles, Zhu Xi’s daily dialogues with disciples employ “equal dialogue” to help individuals clarify concepts and resolve confusion, enabling them to reassess themselves through everyday moral issues. This approach also provides a stable support system for coping with learned helplessness. Finally, for individuals struggling with prolonged poor academic performance, Zhu Xi’s learning theory offers effective methods, including both reading strategies and self-cultivation techniques, providing actionable guidance for improving learning outcomes and alleviating anxiety. In sum, Zhu Xi’s learning theory advocates a shift from external utilitarian goals to intrinsic subjectivity in learning goals, the establishment of support systems and equal dialogue in learning practice, and the improvement of reading and self-cultivation methods, offering valuable solutions for alleviating learned helplessness and learning anxiety.

Liu Li (Xi'an Jiaotong University)

"Harmony between Emotion and Ritual: A Philosophical Therapy Theoretical Model Based on The Book of Rites"

1.Introduction

We are living in an era of rapid change, where inevitable differences and even conflicts exist between traditional social norms and the desires of the new generation. Notably, some young people oppose traditional concepts of clan, marriage, and career, feeling constrained by these ideas and in a state of limited freedom. The relationship between external norms and subjective desires requires re-examination.

Philosophical practice is an emerging field of philosophy, with recent research indicating that philosophy can serve as a new therapeutic model, using philosophical theories and methods to guide daily life and solve problems and puzzles (Yang, 2021). The non-disease-oriented feature of philosophical therapy distinguishes it from general psychotherapy, gaining widespread popularity in contemporary society. Philosophical counseling and therapeutic ideas from ancient Greece and Rome have demonstrated the practical helping function of philosophy in the development of human civilization, providing important theoretical foundations for considering philosophy as a humanistic therapeutic approach (Ding, 2018). Socratic Maieutics (Σωκρατικὴ μαieutikḗ) also contributes to resolving mental issues and achieving mental peace and happiness (Luo, 2016). Prison practices based on existentialism models have shown the practical possibility of philosophical therapy, demonstrating advantages over traditional psychotherapy in multiple aspects (Yang, 2022). Specific philosophical therapy models, such as Adorno's critical theory, have proven unique in healing individual psychological pain (Nho, 2023).

Chinese philosophical practice has initiated a new trend of seeking wisdom from classics. After Chinese academia began to focus on this emerging field, Some researchers pointed out the necessity of constructing Chinese-style philosophical counseling by integrating traditional Chinese philosophy (Ding & Yu, 2020). Chinese scholars advocate starting with Chinese classics, expounding their philosophical practice wisdom, and exploring the feasibility of modeling. In the context of the relationship between emotion and ritual, existing research on philosophical practice, due to its focus on the individual, has concentrated on emotional therapy. For example, regarding the healing of desires in the theme of Emotion, philosophical practice can use Eastern and Western theories such as Buddhist and Stoic theories to help people examine and control their desires (Ding et al., 2023); the philosophical ideas in The

Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon have healing effects of balance, catharsis, and comfort (Zhao, 2015); Laozi's philosophy of an equal worldview indicates that dialogue in philosophical counseling has the meaning of knowledge generation beyond simple information exchange (Lee et al., 2024); Confucianism centered on the Analects have rich philosophical therapeutic dimensions (Zhou, 2021). It should be noted that mainland Chinese academia has insufficient research on philosophical counseling, such as in the excavation of traditional resources and promotion of practical applications (Huang, 2019).

*The Book of Rites (*Hereinafter referred to as *Rites)* has become a research focus due to its highly relevant themes and significant influence. The issue of Ritual (symbolizing external norms) and Emotion (symbolizing individual desires) is both the basis for Confucian ritual governance thought and the fundamental problem it aims to solve (Tan, 2021). Confucianism, represented by the Doctrine of the Mean (zhongyong 中庸) , has the foundation for philosophical counseling (Park, 2020). As an important Confucian classic, *Rites* is renowned for emphasizing the interpretation of the righteousness of rituals. Interpreting the emotional dimension of *Rites* is beneficial for constructing modern moral civilization (Zhou, 2024). Therefore, we need to consider: How can we absorb the therapeutic value of Confucian philosophy to address the contradiction between ritual symbolizing external norms and emotion symbolizing individual desires in the new era?

This paper primarily uses classical interpretation, case analysis, and logical analysis methods. First, it clarifies the relevant key concepts and their relationships regarding the emotion-ritual issue in *Rites*, establishing a theoretical foundation for the subsequent philosophical model; then, it focuses on exploring the possibility of philosophical therapy modeled on *Rites*; finally, it analyzes and evaluates this model.

2.Thoughts on Emotion and Ritual in *Rites*

2.1.Differences between Ritual and Emotion

2.1.1. Emotion symbolizing external norms

In *Rites*, Emotion demonstrates human desires. On the one hand, different emotions reflect the different psychological states of the acting subject; on the other hand, different emotional control abilities also reflect the self-restraint levels of different moral individuals.

Emotion(qing 情) in *Rites* mainly refers to human emotions, desires, and aspirations, which are innate natural feelings. The Commentaries on *Rites* states, "What are human emotions? Joy, anger, sorrow, fear, love, hate, and desire—these seven

require no learning." (*何謂人情？喜、怒、哀、懼、愛、惡、欲，七者弗學而能*) This explains the natural attribute of Emotion, which originates from heaven naturally so without deliberate learning, is inherent in humans and manifests different psychological states.

Emotions are divided into positive and negative, and Confucianism advocates intervening in negative emotions. For the Emotion of "hate" (e *惡*), there is a distinction between the "hate" of injustice and the "hate" of jealousy. The former is a positive emotion advocated by Confucianism, similar to Mencius' "compassionate mind" (ce yin zhi xin *惻隱之心*) when seeing a child fall into a well. The latter is a negative emotion that Confucianism advocates intervening in, as such jealous feelings inevitably breed contradictions among people.

Those who dominate their emotions also differ in moral stature, as the ability to restrain emotions reflects one's moral level. Humans naturally generate various complex emotions, and for these, "sages" (sheng ren *聖人*) can "express them all appropriately" (fa er jie zhong jie *發而皆中節*), meaning sages can reasonably restrain their emotions to align with society's common moral expectations. This expectation for humans later evolved into a requirement for those who formulate rituals, who should ideally be moral paragons to enable rituals, as values and norms, to enhance the public's virtue.

2.1.2. Ritual symbolizing individual desires

In *Rites*, Ritual (li *禮*) has an institutional attribute, distinguishing it from the natural attribute of emotion. Understanding the institutional attribute of Ritual requires a specific examination of its institutionalization process. From the developmental history of Ritual, *The Weft of Rites: Dou Yiwei* records early signs of Ritual. The ancient kings modeled the Seven Governmental Affairs (rulers, ministers, fathers, sons, husbands, wives, and politics) after the Big Dipper, which not only exhibited the early form of Ritual but also revealed the consistency between astral phenomena and political education. Ritual and music existed before the Duke of Zhou formulated the rites and music, but by the time of the Duke of Zhou, li increasingly became a national system and attribute of civilization. From Fuxi to the Zhou Dynasty, the Five Rites (auspicious, mournful, guest, military, and festive) gradually took shape and were relatively complete and systematic in the Zhou Dynasty.

The institutional attribute of Ritual determines its normativity. Ritual has a normative significance, *Rites* not only specify what people should do but also how they should do it (Yang Guorong, 2024). In *Rites*, Ritual is a complete set of ritual systems that originate from but regulate emotions. The concrete rituals, artifacts, poetry, music, and

theories of Ritual constitute the formal and substantive content of ritual system. Ritual institutions serve state politics and regulate the specific behaviors of the public. *The Zhou Rites* establishes behavioral standards for different ranks through rituals, encompassing a complete set of social operation rules. The Duke of Zhou's formulation of rituals transformed Ritual from "worshipping ghosts and gods" to "revering virtue and practicing Ritual" , transforming specific moral consciousness or cultural values into state will and national systems, thereby reshaping the entire social structure.

2.2. Interactive Relationship between Ritual and Emotion

Rites contains much content on the relationship between emotion and Ritual, with academic circles mainly interpreting it from two dimensions: the origin of Ritual and the function of Ritual.

2.2.1. The Influence of Emotion on the Generation of Ritual

Ritual originates from human emotions, which is the natural foundation of Ritual. Metaphysically, li originates from the Dao of Heaven; realistically, it originates from human emotions (Pan, 2022). The opening of The Commentaries on *Rites* states, "Rituals, which order heaven and earth, are fundamentally rooted in the beginning of the Great Unity; tracing their origin and seeking their end, their substance lies in human emotional desires."

(*夫禮者，經天緯地，本之則大一之初；原始要終，體之乃人情之欲*) Thus, Ritual is metaphysically in accordance with the Dao of Heaven and realistically inseparable from the observation of human emotions. Those who claim that Ritual destroys human nature do not understand that it originates from Emotion. Among them, Emotion includes various aspects, such as joy and anger, movement and stillness, love and hate, which are inherent in human nature and vary.

Because Ritual originates from Emotion, it naturally has an aspect of conforming to human emotions. Rites states, "The general principle of all rituals is to embody heaven and earth, model the four seasons, follow yin and yang, and conform to human emotions, hence it is called ritual."

(*凡禮之大體，體天地，法四時，則陰陽，順人情，故謂之禮*) This clearly explains that Ritual conforms to human emotions. However, not all emotions can be conformed to, only those positive moral emotions. Take the mourning ritual as an example: there was originally no mourning ritual between teachers and students in ancient ritual systems, but later generations formulated a ritual specifying three years of mourning in the heart because of the kindness between teachers and students, which is a

conformity to the friendship between teachers and students. Similarly, the words used to offer condolences when someone dies also differ according to the closeness of the relationship: if acquainted with the living, one expresses regret for the living and offers comfort; if only acquainted with the deceased, one mourns for the deceased. This is because the friendship between different interaction partners determines the change in inner emotions, which externally manifests as different behaviors, so different emotions influence different ritual regulations.

2.2.2 The Regulatory Role of Ritual on Emotion

That Ritual originates from emotion emphasizes the influence of Emotion on Ritual, while the governance of emotion through Ritual emphasizes the influence of it on Emotion. Ritual governs Emotion through direct or indirect regulations, specifically manifested as Ritual restraining Emotion, Ritual guiding, adorning and harmonizing Emotion (Zhou, 2024).

The regulatory role of Ritual on Emotion is not as direct and coercive as law but slowly and persistently influences a individual's value orientation and moral level. Rites states, "rituals serve to determine closeness and distance, resolve doubts, distinguish similarities and differences, and clarify right and wrong." (*夫禮者，所以定親疏，決嫌疑，別同異，明是非也*) Ritual has the functions of determining closeness, resolving doubts, distinguishing similarities, and clarifying right and wrong, where "right and wrong" here mainly refers to values rather than knowledge, i.e., what should and should not be done. Rites also states, "Morality, benevolence, righteousness—none can be achieved without ritual." (*道德仁義，非禮不成*) Between doing and not doing, the value attribute of behavior is highlighted by morality, benevolence, and righteousness, so Ritual is related to the moral dimension of human behavior, influencing the psychological state and specific behavior of moral individuals according to whether they conform to virtue. The consistency of internal and external virtue also constitutes the criterion for evaluating sages and gentlemen, as the judgment of whether a person is good or bad is often achieved by examining whether their specific behaviors conform to basic moral norms. The moral attribute of humans and the institutional attribute of Ritual are the foundation and premise for it to govern emotions, and the specific implementation of it relies on certain principles and means. The Doctrine of the Mean is the core principle of Ritual, the personality that Ritual expects to cultivate, and the ideal vision of national governance. Chinese rulers of past dynasties continuously improved the specific implementation process of it, which is a complete national governance system. Ritual

not only includes certain rituals and artifacts but also combines with poetry and music, emphasizing the internal and external coordination of individuals in the process of practicing it. The righteousness of Ritual contained in *Rites* specifically explains the principles behind these rituals, providing ideological guidance for people to understand it.

2.3. Contradictions between Ritual and Emotion and the Solution

Rites acknowledges the contradiction between them and proposes its solutions.

On the one hand, *Rites* guides individuals to reasonably control self-emotions to conform to the norms of Ritual and the Doctrine of the Mean by orienting toward ideal moral subjects such as sages and gentlemen. The specific principles include "those who exceed should bend down to meet it, and those who fall short should stand on tiptoe to reach it" (*過之者俯而就之，不至焉者跂而及之*) and "the worthy should not exceed, and the unworthy should not fall short," (*賢者不得過，不肖者不得不及*) both emphasizing that even if individuals differ in virtue, they can all act toward the standard of the Doctrine of the Mean. In this sense, a sage is not necessarily the most filial or benevolent person, but even if they can easily do good, they do not exceed the prescribed limits of Ritual, preventing it from becoming a standard unattainable by most people.

On the other hand, *Rites* also highlights the flexible characteristic of Ritual, advocating "formulating rituals according to the times." (*因時制禮*) It is manifested in that specific rituals can vary according to events and emotions. Take the rituals during the mourning period as an example: according to *The Great Record of Mourning*, the completion of the ritual of post-burial (ji zang *既葬*) does not mean the entire mourning period is over, and since one does not engage in politics during mourning, one should not handle government affairs at this time. However, commentaries by classical scholars such as Zheng Xuan (127 -200) and Kong Yingda (574 -648) state that if the country faces urgent matters, the filial son should not follow ordinary rituals but weigh the situation. Matters have priorities, and weighing between different things to make appropriate changes is one manifestation of the adaptability of Ritual. Another example is the mourning ritual between teachers and students. Since the teacher-student relationship has neither blood ties nor political favor, traditionally, no specific mourning attire system was stipulated but inner mourning (heart mourning for three years) was emphasized. However, some dynasties later broke this tradition and stipulated a formal three-month mourning attire, based on the deep relationship between teachers and students similar to family affection, which requires establishing

corresponding mourning attire rituals to express and settle this emotion. This is also an important manifestation of the changeability of Ritual.

In summary, *Rites* expects individuals to better restrain their emotions to avoid easily breaking the norms of Ritual, while also advocating that specific rituals should be flexibly adjusted considering real-world conditions. Dynasties have continuously formulated new rituals according to new historical situations, seeking a better balance between conforming to public sentiment and ensuring national long-term stability.

Table 1: Thoughts on Emotion and Ritual in The Book of Rites

Thoughts in The Book of Rites	Popular Definition	Interactive Relationship	Harmonization Strategy
Emotion (Qing)	Subjective freedom	Emotion shapes Ritual	Self-regulation
Ritual Propriety (Li)	External norms	Ritual regulates Emotion	Timely adaptation of Ritual

3.Theoretical Model of Philosophical Therapy Based on *Rites*

As shown above, *Rites* contains many precious ideas that help analyze and solve the practical dilemmas of contemporary youth. However, to enable *Rites* to play its philosophical and practical value, a reasonable and detailed systematic plan is needed according to specific real-world conditions, combined with philosophical practice methods.

3.1. Hierarchical Overview

This paper focuses on *Rites*, a Chinese philosophical classic, and plans its theoretical levels as a philosophical model mainly from three aspects: the internalized cognitive layer, emotional experience layer, and behavioral practice layer.

The internalized cognitive layer aims to help individuals understand and accept the essence of traditional moral norms (Ritual), thereby internalizing external norms as part of self-identification. By deconstructing the essence and generation logic of Ritual, it dissolves individuals' sense of alienation from traditional norms.

The emotional experience layer, based on individuals' internalization of traditional norms, aims to stimulate real emotions through situational experiences, promoting the transformation of rational content into perceptual experiences. It seeks to transform the external value system into an emotional cognitive framework of internal

identification, providing a rational and emotional compatible foundation for resolving emotion-ritual contradictions.

The behavioral practice layer strives to transform the perceptual regulation mechanism into daily self-adjustment ability in response to actual conflicts based on emotional experience and cognitive reconstruction. At this layer, individuals continuously adjust and verify new behavioral patterns in real life, forming an internal-external consistent self-regulation effect.

It should be noted that these three layers do not require individuals to unconditionally submit to tradition but use the dialectical wisdom of The Book of Rites to move emotion and ritual from confrontation to harmony.

3.2. Implementation Process

The three layers of internalized cognitive layer, emotional experience layer, and behavioral practice layer are specifically unfolded through six stages, which aim to implement the main tasks of each layer and decompose them into highly feasible specific processes. It should be noted that these stages imply a logical sequence but do not necessarily represent an actual chronological order. The specific stage combination requires careful consideration by the therapy team. It is possible that the same stage is repeated multiple times, and some stages are not necessarily carried out.

3.2.1. Modern Interpretation of Rites

The first stage is the modern reinterpretation of the *Rites* text, aiming to use classical interpretation methods to enable individuals to understand the core concepts of Ritual in traditional culture and recognize the role of traditional rational norms in shaping behavior and social order. Individuals establish a preliminary cognition of traditional rational norms during the understanding stage, laying a foundation for subsequent internalization. Specific forms can include lectures, reading groups, discussion classes, etc., centered on traditional classics such as *Rites*.

Rites is lengthy and has a certain reading threshold, so the philosophical therapy team needs to reasonably select chapters to make the process less laborious for participants. For example, by interpreting the origin of Ritual in *Rites*, such as "Food and sex are the great human desires," (*飲食男女，人之大欲存焉*) participants can understand that ritual systems are not shackles or suppressing human nature but rational guidance for basic human desires. By interpreting the role of Ritual in *Rites*, such as "Rituals are instituted to regulate and refine human emotions,"

(*禮者，因人情而為之節文*) readers can actively realize that the rituals and systems of Ritual all originate from the condensation and sublimation of group emotions. Additionally, *Rites* states, "Rituals is based on heaven and reasoned on earth," (*禮本於天，理於地*) indicating that Ritual is both a projection of the cosmic order and a condensation of community emotions, endowing norms with sacredness and necessity.

Furthermore, the philosophical therapy team should use multiple approaches for popular interpretation of *Rites*. For instance, they can draw a generation map of "Emotion → Ritual → Virtue" to concisely show the generation process and function of Ritual. In the mourning ritual, there is "regulated crying and leaping" (*哭踊有節*) in *Rites*, indicating that the mourning ritual does not suppress grief but transforms individual sorrow into collective empathy through rituals, avoiding emotional breakdown. During this process, it is important to avoid labeled interpretations to eliminate rejection and fear of stereotypical norms. For example, "restraining the self and returning to Ritual" (*克己復禮*) should be explained as not negating subjectivity but emphasizing that individuals should return to themselves to achieve rational sublimation of emotions and will. More importantly, *Rites* needs to be translated into modern terms. For example, the ritual of "ruler and minister, father and son" (*君臣父子*) should be transformed into contemporary role ethics, emphasizing the integrating function of norms for diverse identities. Since this process is the foundational stage of the entire philosophical therapy model, determining the efficiency of subsequent stages, every effort should be made to mobilize participants' enthusiasm and ensure they are in a relatively good state. For example, by encouraging individuals to keep diaries recording new understandings and emotional experiences of Ritual, cognitive reconstruction is promoted.

3.2.2 Philosophical Dialogue on Rites

The second stage is cognitive reconstruction driven by philosophical dialogue, emphasizing the use of philosophical dialogue, reflection, and discussion to guide individuals to re-examine norms and find emotional resonance and humanistic care therein. Since participants do not necessarily change their values after learning about the emotion-ritual ideas in *Rites*, the core mechanism of this stage is to reconcile individual desires with social values through introspection, transforming external norms into internal virtues. Compared with the first stage, this stage pays more attention to reconstructing the emotion-ritual relationship in dialectical dialogue to achieve subjective acceptance.

Specific methods mainly include Socratic dialogue and thought analysis advocated by philosophical practice. The dialogue method of philosophical counseling has certain advantages over traditional psychotherapy because it can form a connection between the form and content of dialogue, enabling a certain depth of consciousness between dialoguers and enhancing the distance between them (Harteloh, 2023). It should be noted that the quality of dialogue affects the effectiveness of philosophical counseling to a certain extent, and it is necessary to expand the discussion to the rational domain, including the internal dialogue of the listener (Devarakonda & Goutham, 2025). Taking the Socratic dialogue method as an example, improving the subject's dialectical thinking is particularly crucial. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) helps participants complete cognitive reconstruction by challenging and replacing irrational beliefs, alleviating emotional problems. This method is structured, has a clear process, produces quick results, and is supported by extensive empirical research on its efficacy. The specific subjects of dialogue can set specific emotion-ritual conflict scenarios according to individual differences. Reference scenarios are as follows:

Scenario 1: When an entrepreneur complains that multiple workers taking bereavement leave affects enterprise efficiency but must approve it, leading to inner frustration, guide them to consider: "When professional ethics require suppressing personal grief, does it mean enterprise efficiency can override human warmth?" In this scenario, participants can refer to the buffer design of "mourning for three days before interment" (*喪三日而殯*) in *Rites* to understand that institutions need to appropriately accommodate emotions. Meanwhile, other methods such as optimizing enterprise plans and implementing flexible work schedules can be adopted to improve work efficiency, making the enterprise both warm and profitable.

Scenario 2: When a young person in a career upswing falls into a dilemma due to family dissatisfaction with work-related relocation, guide them to consider: "Does the traditional filial piety requirement of 'not traveling far while parents are alive' contradict self-actualization?" In this scenario, introducing "rituals follow appropriateness, and envoys follow customs" (*禮從宜，使從俗*) from *Rites* allows the client to understand that the inherent characteristic of li to adapt to the times leaves room for individual special circumstances. Perhaps the client can use this to communicate patiently with family members, adopting methods such as maintaining frequent emotional contact during work and organizing family trips during vacations to soothe family emotions, providing both emotional value to family and preserving better career development opportunities.

In this process, the method of thought analysis is indispensable. The thought analysis method has a unique role compared with traditional philosophical practice methods, helping people conduct philosophical review in multiple aspects to achieve the pursuit of harmony (Ding et al., 2024). The philosophical practice team can actively guide participants to share their experiences, achieving subjective narrative reconstruction. Additionally, participants can retell their experiences from the perspective of ritual creators. For example: "I chose to retain a certain link in the traditional wedding ceremony not because I was forced to comply, but to express my views on marriage through the meaning represented by the specific link." That is, there are many specific rituals, and I can selectively make reasonable behavioral adjustments according to the most suitable ritual, so that this ritual becomes the carrier of my emotions rather than a constraint.

In summary, the first stage emphasizes participants learning and understanding specific emotion-ritual knowledge from *Rites*, while the second stage emphasizes the change in subjective internal cognition during this process. The first stage provides a theoretical foundation for the second stage, which in turn ensures the therapeutic efficiency of the first stage. Both help transform external rational norms into the starting point of inner identification and emotional experience.

3.2.3. Simulating Classical Scenarios from Rites

Situational construction aims to enable individuals to feel the emotional significance of norms through experiencing specific scenarios (such as role-playing, scenario simulation, etc.). Compared with the internalized cognitive layer, this stage attaches more importance to participants' emotional expression. Because reason cannot completely replace emotion in action, even if people's understanding of emotion and ritual has changed, this cognitive change does not mean their subjective emotions can synchronously change. This step can connect the past and the present to achieve specific situational construction. Mindfulness-Based Therapy in philosophical practice helps individuals focus on the present and reduce excessive reactions to negative emotions by practicing emotional awareness and acceptance (Pérez et al., 2025). Therefore, this method is conducive to cultivating participants' concentration, inner peace, and emotional regulation during this process, with good effects in relieving physical and mental tension. Reference scenarios are as follows:

Scenario 1: Reenacting ancient wedding rituals: For example, "sharing the same food and drinking from the same gourd" (*共牢而食，合巹而酳*) in *Rites* includes two rituals: the bride and groom sharing sacrificial meat and drinking from a joined gourd,

reflecting the ancient wedding concept of sharing weal and woe. By designing a ritual where wedding partners feed each other, the ritual is transformed into a carrier of intimate emotions. They can also feel the connection between ancient and modern rituals during this process, as the "joined cup of wine" in contemporary weddings originates from ancient rituals.

Scenario 2: Experiencing the symbolic meaning of ritual artifacts: Referencing "a gentleman never removes jade from his body unless for cause" (*君子無故玉不去身*) in *Rites*, ancient scholar-officials should always wear jade appropriate to their status, indicating their conduct is as pure as jade. By designing participants to wear jade ornaments and simulate the life of ancient scholar-officials, this seemingly unnecessary ornament is integrated into individual morality and emotions, experiencing the metaphor of jade's "mildness" and emotional restraint. Wearing jade is not primarily to display noble status but to achieve self-supervision and self-appreciation through externally symbolic objects.

The situational construction stage is a deepening of the cognitive reconstruction stage because this process allows rational thinking to be felt and deepened in actual situations. In the link of situational reproduction and role-playing, participants can contextualize abstract rational norms, turning them into tangible and sensible emotional experiences.

3.2.4. Diverse Forms of Emotional Expression

The emotional expression and feedback stage encourages individuals to express their emotional experiences and obtain emotional feedback in collective discussions or interactions, further strengthening the effect of perceptual experiences. The emotional experience layer focuses on emotional activation brought by situational experiences, ultimately leading to the unity of emotion and ritual, forming a closed loop of emotional transformation. Through situational experiences, individuals can transform internalized cognition into warm emotional expressions, thus forming a more flexible adjustment mode. Narrative Therapy helps individuals reinterpret past experiences and shape more positive self-stories by deconstructing and reconstructing personal life narratives (Keisari, 2024). This method emphasizes individual subjective meaning construction and cultural inclusiveness, contributing to emotional expression and self-identity upgrading in this link.

Specific rituals are an important way to train emotional expression. Participants can activate the emotion-ritual symbiosis model in the collective unconscious through ritual reenactments in specific situational experiences. For example, simulating a mourning

ritual can arouse participants' empathy for the dignity of life to a certain extent; simulating a wedding ritual can arouse participants' expectations for love between men and women to a certain extent. Neural synchronization mechanisms have confirmed that collective rituals can activate emotional resonance among members through the mirror neuron system, thus achieving unconscious emotional integration (Fischer et al., 2013). The embodied cognitive approach also shows that ritual actions can reshape moral intuition through proprioceptive feedback, enhancing emotional synchronization and identity fusion (Norton & Gino, 2014).

The depth of norm internalization and the accuracy of emotional adjustment can be continuously debugged through various forms such as emotional communication, theme discussions, and simulated court debates. For example, a role-playing debate on the theme of "Emotion-Ritual conflict" can relatively centrally help participants express their views, ideas, and feelings. This form of output is not only rational but also contains participants' subjective feelings. For example, regarding "when the father calls, the son should not merely promise but respond immediately and rise" (*父召無諾，唯而起*) in *Rites*, which refers to the father-son relationship of "the father is the guiding principle of the son" (*父為子綱*) in Confucianism. In this relationship, the son unconditionally becomes the son, and the father becomes the object of worship and obedience. Associating with the modern dilemma of fathers interfering in children's career choices, different groups can be set up to encourage participants to quote the content learned from *Rites* and connect their experiences to output their views and feelings, enhancing sensitivity to emotional changes. "Gentlemen formulate rituals according to human emotions" (*君子因人之情而制禮*) in *Rites* can be used as an argument against fathers interfering in children's career choices because it does not respect the reasonable emotions of children. "Return to emotions to harmonize aspirations" (*反情以和其志*) in *Rites* can be used as an argument supporting friendly negotiation between both parties because both need to introspect the root of the conflict in career concepts between fathers and sons.

Emotional expression can be conveyed through words, behavior, mental state, or specific objects. The philosophical therapy team can help participants create new ritual artifacts. First, creators need to explain the emotional connotation of new ritual artifacts. If choosing to make new musical instruments, they can refer to "when emotions move within, they are manifested in sound" (*情動於中，故形於聲*) in *Rites*, which emphasizes the coordination of emotion and sound. This explains why modern people choose to tap electronic "wooden fish" for stress relief. Second, it is necessary to reasonably analyze whether new ritual artifacts can reasonably restrain emotions.

"Rituals do not casually please others" (*禮不妄說人*) in *Rites* explains the limit of ritual artifacts' use—they should not be used as tools to please others. Finally, most importantly, ritual artifacts should achieve the function of integrating emotion and ritual, i.e., "when the patterns of music are the same, the upper and lower will be harmonious" (*樂文同則上下和*) in *Rites.* For example, participants can design modern ritual artifact custom tea cups with the help of the therapy team, implying that when facing workplace anxiety, they can drink a cup of tea to calm down and consider whether this job suits them. If the job is unsuitable, how to minimize resignation losses; if the job is suitable but only temporary annoyance with workplace interpersonal relationships, they need to carefully reflect on how to find a balance between work socializing and personal life.

3.2.5. Moral Imitation and Learning

Specific behaviors need certain reference standards, so the process of moral guidance is crucial for individuals to strengthen positive behavior patterns, reflect on and correct inappropriate behavior modes in practice. Moral guidance and role modeling aim to help individuals find balance points in actual actions and achieve dynamic balance between emotions and norms using core moral principles and model demonstration.

Moral guidance includes two aspects: one is the virtue guidance advocated by the ritual righteousness recorded in *Rites*, such as the abstract guidance of virtues like "filial piety"(*孝*) , "benevolence"(*仁*) , "reverence"(*敬*) , and "self-discipline" (*慎獨*); the other is the imitation and learning of moral models and their behaviors advocated in *Rites*. *Rites* also records numerous cases of ancients handling personal emotions and external norms, similar to modern "workplace emotional intelligence classes" in ancient form. For example, when Zilu's sister died, he wept while still following the rules of "regulated crying and leaping"—the underlying method of dealing with things is that during extreme grief, rituals do not blindly suppress personal emotions but serve as an emotional seatbelt to prevent collapse. Additionally, "measuring the family's resources" (*稱家有無*) recorded in *Rites* contains the wisdom of hosting banquets: gentlemen should determine the quantity of dishes according to the guest's status, avoiding putting on a brave face beyond one's means. External social etiquette should be considered, but one should also act according to one's ability. This reflects the positive transformation of *Rites*' wisdom projected onto individual psychology and behavior, allowing individuals to experiment and reflect in real life on how to apply perceptual regulation to interpersonal relationships, career management, family life, and other aspects.

3.2.6. Unity of Knowledge and Action

The most important aspect of the behavioral practice layer is undoubtedly individuals practicing, continuously receiving feedback, and making corrections in practice. All the above stages are ultimately intended to serve individuals in practice, expecting them to continuously revise and strengthen the perceptual regulation path through feedback and self-reflection in practice, achieving internal-external harmony between Ritual and Emotion.

Many methods of philosophical practice can play a role at this stage. Existential Therapy, which explores the meaning of life, free choice, and self-responsibility, is suitable for participants with deep existential anxiety or self-identity confusion in emotion-ritual issues, who believe that no matter what they do, it is meaningless. It can guide individuals to face the life and existence issues in the emotion-ritual relationship, reshape life meaning, and improve psychological resilience and self-acceptance. Taking Heidegger's principle of existential authenticity as an example, behavioral choices must be rooted in individuals' clear awareness and active responsibility for their own situations, involving free choice and self-responsibility, which requires individuals to examine self-emotions and external norms in practice and bear the corresponding consequences. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) in psychotherapy is also considered effective, helping individuals establish an empirical cycle of "behavioral experiment → effect feedback → cognitive correction," assisting them in approaching the most reasonable choice when facing emotion-norm conflicts. Taking the principle of "light ritual, heavy affection" (*禮輕情意重*) advocated by *Rites* as an example, three principles should be followed: first, actions should be simple and easy to perform, avoiding troubles caused by complicated rituals; second, existentialism warns that each choice should assume personal responsibility and maintain self-authenticity; third, CBT emphasizes observing effects after actions and adjusting if effects are poor. Specific implementation steps are as follows:

First, choose a simple behavior to try. Participants select a matter they are hesitant about, such as facing an elder's persuasion to drink, unwilling to drink but fearing hurting feelings. Referencing the teaching of "rituals follow appropriateness" (*禮從宜*) in *Rites*, avoid blindly following traditional pressure. Conceive a simple and decent coping strategy, such as holding a cup of tea with both hands and saying sincerely: "I appreciate your kindness. Let me toast you with this cup of tea for your health!" Before acting, preset the other party's possible reactions (such as anger or understanding) like conducting an experiment to be prepared.

Second, record the action results and examine the self. Immediately after acting, briefly record: what action you took (such as toasting with tea), the inner contradiction at the time (such as health), the concept basis (such as *Rites* emphasizing emotion over form), and what this choice means to you (for example: I chose to care for my body). Such records are like snapshots of actions, helping participants clearly see their choices and underlying intentions.

Finally, adjust flexibly according to feedback. Share the records with trusted team members, who will gently offer suggestions. Perhaps someone will suggest "bowing deeper to show sincerity," someone will praise "directly expressing concern for health is sincere," and someone will propose "adding blessings will be warmer." Finally, periodically and symbolically "dispose of" unsatisfactory records, like the discarding the old and accepting the new described in *Rites*, then move forward lightly with new methods.

This process transforms the ancient wisdom of *Rites* (such as opposing maintaining face at all costs) into usable tips in individual life. Simple actions give participants the courage to make authentic choices (existential feeling), and records and feedback act like mirrors, allowing them to clearly see the effects of behaviors and make timely adjustments (behavioral therapy). In this way, rules no longer become constraints but tools to help participants live more freely and humanely, ultimately achieving the "profound emotion and civilized behavior" (*情深而文明*) yearned for in *Rites*—rich inner emotions and decent external behavior. Of course, with the continuous development of philosophical practice, more options will be available. Most importantly, participants can find suitable options after leaving the philosophical therapy team and dare to apply the learning from all previous stages to practice, continuing to learn in practice.

Table 2: Layers of the *Rites* Philosophical Therapy Model

Model Layer	Stage	Reference Methods	Mechanism
Internalized Cognitive Layer	Modern Interpretation of The Book of Rites	Socratic Method, Thought Analysis Knowledge	Transfer Mechanism
	Philosophical Dialogue on The Book of Rites		Internalization Mechanism
Emotional Experience Layer	Simulating Classical Scenarios from The Book of Rites	Mindfulness Therapy, Narrative Therapy	Situational Regulation Mechanism
	Diverse Forms of Emotional Expression		Emotional Expression and Feedback
Behavioral Practice Layer	Moral Imitation and Learning		Moral Guidance Mechanism

	Unity of Knowledge and Action	Existential Therapy, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy	Behavioral Feedback and Correction Mechanism

3.3. Expected Effects

The Rites philosophical model, structured with internalized cognitive, emotional experience, and behavioral practice layers and implemented through six stages, is relatively systematic and feasible. The overall therapeutic goal of this model is to help participants find comfort in the pull between human emotions and rules, living a life of "harmony between Emotion and Ritual." Guided by this model, the expected effects will be described in layers. If the entire article is regarded as an instruction manual, the previous text focuses on theoretical foundations, guiding principles, usage methods, etc., and the following will specifically explain the expected therapeutic effects of this model.

3.3.1. External Norms and Inner Identification

In the first layer, the expected effect of cognitive internalization is the gradual deepening of understanding of the emotion-ritual relationship. Before receiving training in the *Rites* philosophical model, participants are in an initial state of ignorance or misunderstanding. When first exposed to *Rites*, many may fall into a state of confusion. They may feel headache at the mention of *Rites*, simply equate "restraining the self and returning to ritual" with self-suppression, and consider traditional rules nothing but antiques. Especially when facing conflicts between tradition and personal emotions, such as parents urging marriage, they may show strong resistance, regarding traditional norms as nothing but constraints limiting their freedom.

After participating for a period, they will gradually recognize the utility of external norms. To deeply understand *Rites*, some may choose to attend corresponding lectures, reading groups, etc. After learning practical cases from The Book of Rites, such as "regulated crying and leaping" in mourning rituals, they may suddenly realize: "It turns out that 'regulated crying and leaping' in mourning rituals does not prohibit crying but aims to prevent fainting from excessive grief. This regulation actually protects people's physical and mental health."

However, even though they recognize the utility of norms, this understanding remains at the rational level. They may feel these regulations are like mathematical formulas—useful but not truly approved in their hearts. Therefore, to further deepen their understanding *Rites*, some may choose to participate in in-depth discussion activities like philosophical dialogue. In these discussions, they may fiercely debate topics such

as whether to refuse at workplace drinking parties. Through these discussions, they may gradually realize that "rituals follow appropriateness" in *Rites* means we should flexibly comply with ritual laws according to actual situations. Protecting health and respecting others are the real decency. This realization marks a shift in their attitude. They begin to regard norms as their own choices rather than impositions from others. Just as working professionals gradually understand that going to bed early is not due to their mother's nagging but their own health needs, they also begin to sincerely accept and follow these traditional rules.

3.3.2. Emotional Engagement and Emotional Resonance

In the second layer, the expected emotional experience effect is the profound perception of the integration of emotion and ritual. The evolution of the emotional experience layer is as follows. Normal participants, even after accepting *Rites* learning, may still keep this cognition at the rational level without involving subjective transformation due to the lack of emotional investment. Therefore, when facing traditional rituals, they may have resistance, thinking that some traditional rituals like kowtowing and serving tea are just for show; even at relatives' weddings or funerals, although physically participating in the rituals, they form an emotional isolation from the entire wedding, considering various rituals a waste of time. After experiencing some situational constructions like simplified wedding feeding rituals, you may gain insight: "It turns out that the design of husband and wife sharing a meal in *Rites* hopes that couples will share the bitterness of marriage together." However, this emotional investment is relatively short-lived—even if moved at the moment, conflicts will still occur after returning to real life. Therefore, in various emotional expression feedback links like participants sharing self-experiences and creating ritual artifacts, they may gradually realize the emotional meanings hidden behind various rituals. It is not that rituals bind emotions but that they carry emotions. Rituals transform from "routine" to "emotional triggers," just like pasting Spring Festival couplets—you no longer find it troublesome but think "without this ritual, the taste of the New Year is lost."

3.3.3. Active Practice and Harmony between Emotion and Ritual

At the third behavioral practice level, the individual's initial state is characterized by passive escape—although aware of the need to understand parents, they often respond with "Leave me alone!"—exhibiting a contradiction between cognition and action. Behaviorally, individuals tend toward two extremes: either openly violating established rules, such as venting emotions through drunkenness; or suppressing the

self, such as forcing a smile in social situations. By introducing moral guidance tools, such as *Rites* case applications, individuals begin to attempt change. Drawing on Zilu hosting a banquet according to his ability," when refusing a friend's request for a loan, the individual proposes providing other forms of help, such as assisting in revising a resume. Although the action is somewhat stiff, it is a positive step taken by the individual. Further, through behavioral feedback training, including diary records and group discussions, when encountering a colleague taking credit, the individual can use the principles in *Rites* to promptly organize work emails as evidence to safeguard their rights. At the same time, drawing on the teachings in *Rites*, they respond to the colleague's inappropriate behavior in a polite and professional manner and invite the colleague to communicate at an appropriate time to achieve better cooperation in future work. Finally, the individual demonstrates a mature and stable attitude in handling conflicts, able to appropriately adjust behavior according to the situation, both adhering to principles and flexibly responding, embodying the realm of acting in accordance with the mean advocated by *The Doctrine of the Mean*.

Through the construction of this model, we can discover the logic behind these expected effects. First, a solid foundation must be built at the cognitive level, such as correcting the mistaken cognition that "tradition equals repression," like correctly understanding *Rites*' opposition to excessive drinking. Second, at the emotional level, cold rules need to be transformed into emotionally warm stories, such as experiencing the feeding ritual at a wedding, making it a warm memory. Third, at the practice level, effective mechanisms should be established, using moral models as behavioral guides (such as referencing cases of Zilu, etc.) and feedback groups as behavioral supervisors, like the gentle corrections provided by peers. Finally, when an individual refuses a leader's persuasion to drink in a social setting like a KTV, they can confidently raise a coconut juice and politely say: "*Rites* teaches that a gentleman should moderate drinking. I toast you to good health and longevity." At this point, rules become the individual's protection rather than restriction, and human feelings remain moderately warm. This is the highest realm advocated by *Rites*: "profound emotion and civilized behavior"—deep emotions without loss of control, decent behavior full of sincerity.

The expected effects of this model are divided into different stages because the model acknowledges the situation where the patient's initial state has already achieved expected effect 1, requiring the philosophical therapy team to selectively choose treatment plans.

Table 3: Effects of the Philosophical Therapy Model

Model Effects	Initial State	Expected Effect 1	Expected Effect 2
Internalized Cognitive Layer	Confusion or Misunderstanding	External Norms	Inner Identification
Emotional Experience Layer	Indifference or Aversion	Emotional Engagement	Emotional Resonance
Behavioral Practice Layer	Escape or Resistance	Active Practice	Harmony between Emotion and Ritual

3.4. Feedback and Revision

The feedback and revision of the model aim to continuously improve the operation and effects of each stage through a sustained feedback mechanism, forming a dynamic closed loop to achieve long-term self-adjustment. To achieve this goal, several key steps need to be followed, and some effective techniques should be applied.

First, carry out multi-dimensional data collection, including but not limited to questionnaires, behavioral observations, individual interviews, and focus group discussions. These methods help us collect both quantitative data (such as numbers and statistics) and qualitative data (such as people's feelings and opinions). Through these data, we can understand our operations and effects from different angles.

Next, conduct in-depth analysis of the collected feedback data. This step involves organizing and interpreting the data to identify our strengths and areas for improvement in each stage. Through analysis, we can clearly see which aspects are done well and which need improvement.

With these analysis results, we can enter the stage of adjustment and optimization. Dynamically adjust participants' cognitive reconstruction, situational experience, and practical application based on feedback. This may involve changing work processes, enhancing team professionalism, or adjusting the way some stages are carried out. At the same time, strengthen the positive adjustment mechanism through moral guidance to ensure our improvements develop in a positive direction.

Artificial intelligence can be used to assist, feedback, and revise the model during this process. For example, FASSLING, an AI counseling platform integrating Eastern and Western philosophy, uses reflective prompts and positive language to promote psychological safety and internal motivation. It provides support when users face vulnerability and uncertainty, redefining emotional and life coaching through transpersonal growth and digital companionship, offering a new relational AI paradigm for cultivating self-awareness, resilience, and meaning construction (Zhu, 2025).

Ultimately, the philosophical therapy modeled on *Rites* will continue to be verified and improved due to this continuous feedback and revision process. We will form an internal closed-loop system that can self-update and continuously enhance individuals'

self-regulation abilities. Through this approach, each stage of the model is continuously verified and improved, forming an internal closed-loop system that continuously self-updates and enhances individual self-regulation capabilities.

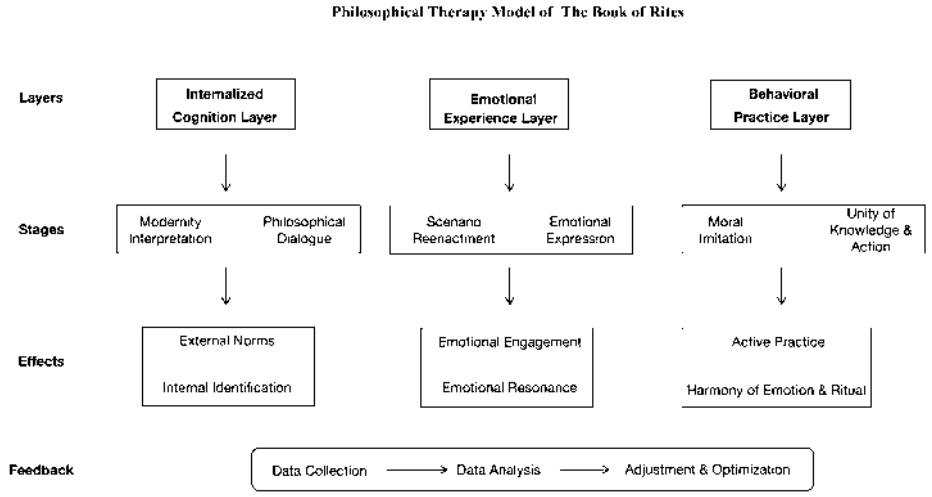


Figure 4: Overview of Philosophical Therapy Model of *Rites*

3.5. Model Comparison

Further analysis and evaluation of the *Rites* philosophical therapy model require integration with other existing models in the academic community. The previous text has discussed the model's layers, unfolding stages, usage methods, expected effects, feedback, and evaluation, etc. Now, the following representative philosophical therapy models in the academic community are selected for summary description.

There are some representative philosophical therapy models in both the East and the West. Wang Chuanshan's "Qi Theory" body-mind therapy model, based on "return to emotions to harmonize aspirations" (*反情以和其志*) in *Rites*, advocates "unity of principle and qi" (*理氣合一*) believing that evil originates from the disorder of the interaction between mind and matter, and regulates the conflict between emotions and desires and heavenly principles through "nourishing qi" (*理氣)* . The therapeutic goal is to achieve "body-mind interaction" (*身心交關*) , settle down life meaning in daily life, and resist "life drowning" (*生命陷溺*) . Core methods include dynamic regulation, shame transformation, and cultural adaptability, especially suitable for East Asian cultural groups that value collective ethics (Li, 2018).

Marinoff's PEACE model, based on Aristotle's practical wisdom and Stoic emotion regulation theory, emphasizes rational balance of emotions. The model includes five stages: problem identification, emotion management, analysis, contemplation, and balance. Technical methods include concept clarification and thought experiments. It is suitable for decision-making anxiety and moral dilemmas (Cutney, 2001).

Existential therapy, originating from the philosophy of Heidegger and Sartre, emphasizes that individuals assume existential responsibility through free choice to confront the nihility and alienation of life. Therapy aims to awaken individuals' awareness of life's finiteness and construct personal meaning. Methods include existential visualization and responsible embodied practice (Yuan, 2025).

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) integrates the Stoic dichotomy of control, regarding distorted cognition as passion disorder. Confucian ethics are integrated into situational decision trees, such as refusing an invitation from a toxic friend. Moral model cases, such as Zilu hosting a banquet according to his ability, are cited to strengthen cultural identity motivation. A Zhejiang drug rehabilitation project shows that Confucian CBT reduces the relapse rate by 43% (Temple, 2025).

Through the summary description of these models, it can be seen that *Rites* philosophical therapy model absorbs the advantages of these models to a certain extent, advocating the reasonable selection of appropriate therapeutic methods for assistance throughout the treatment process. However, *Rites* therapy model differs from these models, which can be more clearly compared through the following figure.

Table 5: Comparison of Philosophical Therapy Models

Model	Core Mechanism	Therapeutic Goal	Technical Difficulty
Marinoff's PEACE	Logical Analysis	Enhancement of Decision-Making Ability	Rationality Suppressing Individual Emotions
Existential Therapy	Responsibility Undertaking	Awakening of Individual Existential Meaning	Anxiety Increased by Responsibility Discourse
CBT	CBT Behavioral Experiment	Closed-Loop Correction of Cognition-Behavior	Pan-Situationalization of Ethical Decisions
Wang Chuanshan's "Qi Theory"	Nourishing Qi to Connect Principle and Qi	Ordering of Body-Mind Energy	The Transcendence of Qi Theory is Difficult to Verify Empirically
The Book of Rites Philosophical Therapy	"Cognition-Emotion-Behavior" Adjustment	Dynamic Harmonization of Emotion-Ritual Conflict	Conflict between Ritual Systems and Modern Freedom

4.Discussion

Although this study has achieved certain results in exploring the philosophical application of *Rites*, there are still some limitations that need to be addressed in future research.

First, this model remains at the theoretical discussion stage, lacking experimental verification and practical application. The model has not undergone any empirical research to verify its effectiveness. Although it appears promising in theory, extensive experiments and data are needed to prove its feasibility and accuracy before practical application. Only after sufficient empirical research can we finally determine whether this model truly has practical value and can play the expected role in actual operation.

Second, the influence of cultural background factors requires in-depth discussion. Researchers need to further consider the impact of different cultural backgrounds on the model's acceptance and evaluate its applicability and effectiveness in different cultural environments. A study exploring the integration of Eastern philosophical practices into contemporary psychotherapy points out challenges in cultural adaptation, ethical considerations, and therapist competence, emphasizing the importance of specialized guidance (Zhao, 2025). Additionally, expanding philosophical practice in China faces cultural challenges such as introversion and stigma, requiring attention to cultural responsiveness and the importance of developing termination programs (Chai et al., 2024). When applying this model, appropriate localization adjustments should be made, integrating local cultural elements and developing more culturally suitable tools and techniques to improve the cultural appropriateness of therapy.

Third, the influence of individual differences needs attention, and the integration of intervention methods should be explored. As mentioned in a humanities counseling project, humanities counseling projects rely on participants' spontaneity (Lee, 2022). In this regard, this study supports the combination of multiple therapeutic methods, especially when dealing with complex psychological problems caused by involution, multi-modal intervention may be more effective.

Finally, the level of the model's therapy team is particularly critical. To improve the professional level of the The Book of Rites philosophical therapy team, team members should deeply study the philosophical thoughts of *Rites*, master their core concepts, and effectively apply them to therapy practice. Regular training and seminar activities should be organized, inviting experts and scholars in philosophy and psychology to provide guidance and share the latest research results and therapeutic methods. In

addition, team members should actively participate in academic exchanges, continuously updating their knowledge reserves and improving their professional literacy by writing papers and attending academic conferences. Through these measures, ensure that the *Rites* philosophical therapy team reaches a higher standard of professionalism, providing higher-quality therapy services to patients.

5.Conclusion

In this era of rapid development, the imbalance between individual desires and external norms has become an undeniable social reality, with drug addiction and violent crimes occurring frequently. Although academic circles have expounded on the therapeutic ideas of *Rites*, they have not specifically planned its theoretical model. This study innovatively takes the emotion-ritual thoughts of *Rites* as the theoretical foundation, systematically planning them into a highly feasible philosophical therapy model, providing a new theoretical framework and reference path. The model is divided into three layers: internalized cognitive layer, emotional experience layer, and behavioral practice layer. The internalized cognitive layer helps individuals understand and accept traditional moral norms, eliminating their sense of alienation from these norms. The emotional experience layer stimulates real emotions through situational experiences, transforming the external value system into an internal emotional cognitive framework. The behavioral practice layer aims to transform the perceptual regulation mechanism into self-adjustment ability to cope with actual conflicts. These three layers do not require unconditional submission to tradition but use the dialectical wisdom of *Rites* to move emotion and ritual from confrontation to harmony. Through comparison with typical Eastern and Western philosophical therapy models such as Wang Chuanshan's "Qi" theory and existentialism, the core mechanism, therapeutic goals, and technical difficulties of this model are revealed.

However, due to factors such as the lack of experimental verification and practical application, cultural background factors, individual differences, and the level of the therapy team, this model remains relatively idealized and insufficient to confirm its feasibility and effectiveness. Therefore, it is expected that under the guidance of this theoretical model, more specific and empirical research will be carried out in the future to realistically explore the application effects of this model in different groups and situations.

Note

References

Chai, F., Wang, Y., Ma, J., et al. (2024). Dialectics of wellness: Philosophical practice in Chinese contexts. Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, 11(1), 151. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-01456-7

Cutney, B. (2001). Plato not Prozac: Applying philosophy to everyday problems. Metaphilosophy, 32(5), 543–547.

Devarakonda, B., & Goutham, V. A. (2025). Bhagavad Gītā as a dialogical space in philosophical counseling. Religions, 16(3), 348. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16030348

Ding, X., Ma, Y., & Yu, F. (2023). The therapy of desire in times of crisis: Lessons learned from Buddhism and Stoicism. Religions, 14(2), 237. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14020237

Ding, X., Xie, C., & Yu, F. (2024). Beyond dissonance: The transformative power of thought analysis in philosophical practice. Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, 11(1), 1617. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-01617-x

Fischer, R., et al. (2013). How do rituals affect cooperation? An experimental field study comparing nine ritual types. Human Nature, 24(2), 115–125. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12110-013-9167-y

Harteloh, P. (2023). On the content and form of a philosophical consultation. Journal of Humanities Therapy, 14(2). https://doi.org/10.1558/jht.v14i2.43316

Keisari, S. (2024). Bringing a path to life: The integration of narrative therapy and playback theater in individual therapy. Zeitschrift für Psychodrama und Soziometrie, 23(suppl 1), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1024/2192-4768/a000344

Lee, B. D. (2022). Effect of a 'Humanities Counseling Program' with play elements. Studies in Humanities, 75. (Original work published as "놀이요소를 가미한 '인문카운슬링 프로그램'의 효과")

Lee, T. H., Kim, H., et al. (2024). A meaningful inquiry into the daily life of philosophical practice through Laozi's philosophy. Studies in Humanities, 81. (Original work published as "노자철학을 통해 본 철학실천의 일상성에 관한 의미 고찰")

Nho, S. S. (2023). Adorno's critical theory and Achenbach's philosophical practice: Critical reflection on healing the life of 'powerless and isolated individuals'. Society and Philosophy, (46). (Original work published as "아도르노의 비판이론과 아헨바흐의 철학실천: '무력화되고 고립된 개인'의 삶을 치유하기 위한 비판적 사유")

Norton, M. I., & Gino, F. (2014). Rituals alleviate grieving for loved ones, lovers, and lotteries. Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, 143(1), 266–272. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035137

Park, K. S. (2020). A study on the methodology of Confucian philosophical counseling—Focusing on Confucius' non-methodological method. Studies in

Humanities, 67. (Original work published as "유학의 철학상담 방법론 연구 - 공자의 비방법론의 방법을 중심으로 - ")

Pérez, G. L., Rodriguez, A. E. M., González, C. M., et al. (2025). Effectiveness of physical activity, mindfulness and mind-body therapies in improving mental health of university students: A systematic review of RCTs. Journal of American College Health, 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/07441610.2025.2398741

Temple, S., III, C. T. R. (2025). Eight principles for a modern CBT: Re-visioning cognitive behavior therapy in clinical training. Taylor & Francis.

Zhao, Y. C. (2025). Exploring "Who am I": The potential of applying the Indian Vedanta philosophical practice of self-enquiry in psychotherapy. Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, 12(1), 252. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-025-01692-3

Zhu, Y. (2025). The design foundation of FASSLING: Revolutionizing emotional and life coaching through AI-driven philosophical counseling. Journal of Clinical Technology and Theory, 3(1), 23–38.

Ding, X. J. (2018). How philosophy heals—Exploration of philosophical therapy thoughts in ancient Greece and Rome. Lanzhou Academic Journal, (4), 82–91.

丁曉軍. (2018). 哲學何以治療 —— 古希臘、古羅馬的哲學治療思想探微. 《蘭州學刊》, (4), 82–91.

Ding, X. J., & Yu, F. (2020). Philosophical counseling and therapy in the context of “Healthy China”. Studies on Core Socialist Values, 5(1), 94–104.

丁曉軍，喻豐. (2020). "健康中國" 背景下的哲學諮詢與治療.《當代中國價值觀研究》, 5 (1), 94–104.

Huang, C. G. (2019). Review and prospect: A review of “philosophical counseling” research in mainland academia. Journal of Dialectics of Nature, 41(11), 118–124.

黃傳根. (2019). 回顧與展望：大陸學界 "哲學諮詢" 研究述評.《自然辯證法通訊》, 41 (11), 118–124.

Li, W. H. (2018). On the meaning therapy dimension of “sincerity” in Wang Chuanshan’s righteousness. Chuanshan Journal, (5), 38–42.

李瑋皓. (2018). 論王船山義理中 "誠" 的意義治療向度.《船山學刊》, (5), 38–42.

Luo, L. X. (2016). Socrates’ maieutics and the practical scheme of philosophical education. Journal of Educational Studies, 12(5), 25–31.

羅龍祥. (2016). 蘇格拉底助產術與哲學教育的實踐方案.《教育學報》, 12 (5), 25–31.

Pan, B. (2022). Academic history of The Book of Rites. Jinan: Jinan Publishing House.

潘斌. (2022).《禮記》學術史。濟南：濟南出版社.

Tan, G. Z. (2021). Research on the issue of emotion and ritual in The Book of Rites. Shenyang: Liaoning University.

譚功哲. (2021).《禮記》中的情禮問題研究。瀋陽：遼寧大學.

Yang, G. R. (2024). Ritual as a normative system—Viewing The Etiquette and Rites, The Zhou Rites, and The Book of Rites from the modern significance of classical learning. Academic Monthly, 56(2), 33–44.

楊國榮. (2024). 作為規範系統的禮 —— 從經學的現代意義看《儀禮》《周禮》《禮記》. 《學術月刊》, 56 (2), 33–44.

Yang, Y. C. (2021). Analysis of non-disease-oriented philosophical therapy. Social Sciences Digest, (2), 16–18.

楊玉昌. (2021). 非疾病化的哲學治療探析.《社會科學文摘》, (2), 16–18.

Yang, Y. C. (2022). How is philosophical therapy modeled on philosophy possible—From the practice of philosophical counseling. Modern Philosophy, (6), 77–84.

楊玉昌. (2022). 以哲學為模型的哲學治療何以可能 —— 從哲學諮詢的實踐看. 《現代哲學》, (6), 77–84.

Yuan, M. Q. (2025). Existential art therapy and the creation of life meaning. Nanjing Journal of Social Sciences, (5), 107–118.

袁夢倩. (2025). 存在主義藝術治療與生命意義的創造.《南京社會科學》, (5), 107–118.

Zhao, D. (2019). Exploration of philosophical practice models in The Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon. Hefei: Anhui University.

趙豆. (2019).《黃帝內經》中的哲學踐行模式探討。合肥：安徽大學.

Zhou, F. J. (2024). The emotional dimension of ritual in The Book of Rites. Studies in Ethics, (4), 53–62.

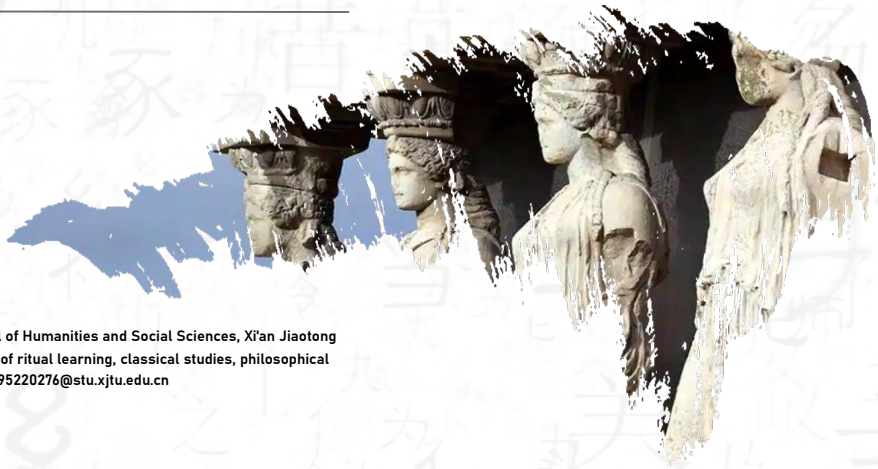
周豐堇. (2024).《禮記》中禮的情感之維.《倫理學研究》, (4), 53–62.

Zhou, M. F. (2021). Research on the philosophical therapy dimension of Confucius' thoughts. Baoding: Hebei University.

周萌帆. (2021). 孔子思想的哲學治療向度研究。保定：河北大學.

HARMONY BETWEEN EMOTION AND RITUAL:

A Philosophical Therapy Theoretical Model Based on *The Book of Rites*



Author Biography: Li Liu, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Xi'an Jiaotong University, specializes in the study of ritual learning, classical studies, philosophical counseling, and therapy. E-mail: 2195220276@stu.xjtu.edu.cn

Research Background



We are living in an era of rapid change, where inevitable differences and even **conflicts exist between traditional social norms and the desires of the new generation.**

Notably, some young people oppose traditional concepts of clan, marriage, and career, feeling constrained by these ideas and in a state of limited freedom. The relationship between external norms and subjective desires requires re-examination.



Research Background

Philosophical practice is an emerging field of philosophy, with recent research indicating that philosophy can serve as a new therapeutic model, using philosophical theories and methods to guide daily life and solve problems and puzzles. The non-disease-oriented feature of philosophical therapy distinguishes it from general psychotherapy, gaining widespread popularity in contemporary society.



Research Background

Chinese philosophical practice has initiated a new trend of seeking wisdom from classics. Chinese scholars advocate starting with **Chinese classics**, expounding their philosophical practice wisdom, and exploring the feasibility of modeling. It should be noted that mainland Chinese academia has insufficient research on philosophical counseling, such as in the excavation of traditional resources and promotion of practical applications.

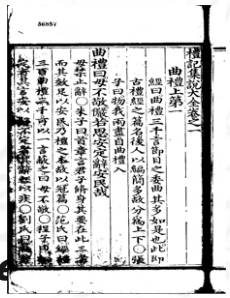


Research Background

The Book of Rites (Hereinafter referred to as Rites) has become a research focus due to its highly relevant themes and significant influence. As an important Confucian classic, Rites is renowned for emphasizing the interpretation of the righteousness of rituals. Interpreting the emotional dimension of Rites is beneficial for constructing modern moral civilization.

01

Thoughts on Emotion and Ritual in *Rite*

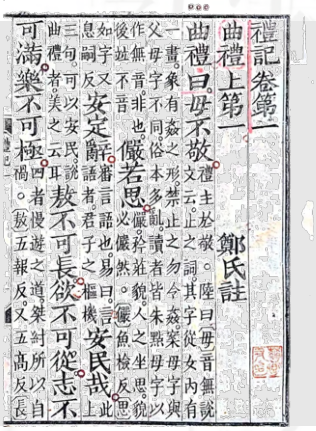




1.1.Differences between Ritual and Emotion

Emotion symbolizing external norms:
In Rites, emotion demonstrates human desires. On the one hand, different emotions reflect the different psychological states of the acting subject; on the other hand, different emotional control abilities also reflect the self-restraint levels of different moral individuals.

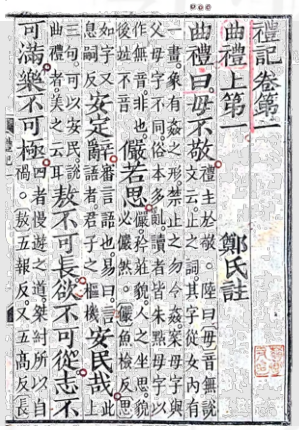
Ritual symbolizing individual desires:
In Rites, Ritual has an institutional attribute, distinguishing it from the natural attribute of emotion. The institutional attribute of Ritual determines its normativity, not only specify what people should do but also how they should do it.


禮記卷第二
曲禮上第一
鄭氏註
曲禮曰毋不敬
可滿樂不可極
敖不可長欲不可從志不
安定辭
安民哉

1.2Interactive Relationship between Ritual and Emotion

The Influence of Emotion on the Generation of Ritual:
Ritual originates from human emotions, which is the natural foundation of Ritual. Because Ritual originates from emotion, it naturally has an aspect of conforming to human emotions.

The Regulatory Role of Ritual on Emotion:
Ritual governs emotion through direct or indirect regulations, specifically manifested as Ritual restraining Emotion, Ritual guiding, adorning and harmonizing Emotion. The regulatory role of Ritual on Emotion is not as direct and coercive as law but slowly and persistently influences a person's value orientation and moral level.


禮記卷第二
曲禮上第一
鄭氏註
曲禮曰毋不敬禮主於敬。陸曰毋音無說文云止之詞。其字從女內有一畫象有姦之形。禁止之勿令姦。案毋字與父母字不同。俗本多亂讀者皆宋監本毋字以下作無後並不音非也。儼若思儼矜莊貌。人之坐思貌如此。安定辭安定審言語也。易曰言語以定民志。又曰安其辭則民不爭。又曰安其辭則民不爭。安定辭者君子之樞機。樞機發動之主。安民哉上此息嗣反又如字。後並不音。儼若思儼然。儼魚檢反。思息嗣反。又如字。後並不音。安定辭安定審言語也。易曰言語以定民志

2.1. Hierarchical Overview

The internalized cognitive layer aims to help individuals understand and accept the essence of traditional moral norms (Ritual), thereby internalizing external norms as part of self-identification. By deconstructing the essence and generation logic of Ritual, it dissolves individuals' sense of alienation from traditional norms.



2.1. Hierarchical Overview



The emotional experience layer, based on individuals' internalization of traditional norms, aims to stimulate real emotions through situational experiences, promoting the transformation of rational content into perceptual experiences. It seeks to transform the external value system into an emotional cognitive framework of internal identification, providing a rational and emotional compatible foundation for resolving emotion-ritual contradictions.

2.1. Hierarchical Overview

The behavioral practice layer strives to transform the perceptual regulation mechanism into daily self-adjustment ability in response to actual conflicts based on emotional experience and cognitive reconstruction. At this layer, individuals continuously adjust and verify new behavioral patterns in real life, forming an internal-external consistent self-regulation effect.



2.2.Implementation Process

2.2.1.Modern Interpretation of Rites

The first stage is the modern reinterpretation of the Rites text, aiming to use classical interpretation methods to enable individuals to understand the core concepts of Ritual in traditional culture and recognize the role of traditional rational norms in shaping behavior and social order. Individuals establish a preliminary cognition of traditional rational norms during the understanding stage, laying a foundation for subsequent internalization. Specific forms can include lectures, reading groups, discussion classes, etc., centered on traditional classics such as *Rites*.

2.2.Implementation Process

2.2.2 Philosophical Dialogue on Rites

The second stage is cognitive reconstruction driven by philosophical dialogue, emphasizing the use of philosophical dialogue, reflection, and discussion to guide individuals to re-examine norms and find emotional resonance and humanistic care therein. Since participants do not necessarily change their values after learning about the emotion-ritual ideas in Rites, the core mechanism of this stage is to reconcile individual desires with social values (aspirations) through introspection, transforming external norms into internal virtues. Compared with the first stage, this stage pays more attention to reconstructing the emotion-ritual relationship in dialectical dialogue to achieve subjective acceptance.

2.2.Implementation Process

2.2.3. Simulating Classical Scenarios from Rites

Situational construction aims to enable individuals to feel the emotional significance of norms through experiencing specific scenarios (such as role-playing, scenario simulation, etc.). The situational construction stage is a deepening of the cognitive reconstruction stage because this process allows rational thinking to be felt and deepened in actual situations. In the link of situational reproduction and role-playing, participants can contextualize abstract rational norms, turning them into tangible and sensible emotional experiences.

2.2.Implementation Process

2.2.4. Diverse Forms of Emotional Expression

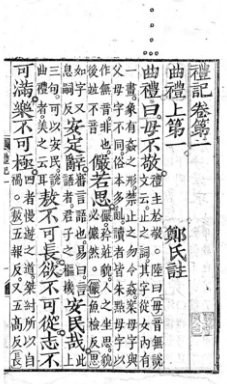


The emotional expression and feedback stage encourages individuals to express their emotional experiences and obtain emotional feedback in collective discussions or interactions, further strengthening the effect of perceptual experiences. Through situational experiences, individuals can transform internalized cognition into warm emotional expressions, thus forming a more flexible adjustment mode. Narrative Therapy helps individuals reinterpret past experiences and shape more positive self-stories by deconstructing and reconstructing personal life narratives. Specific behaviors need certain reference standards, so the process of moral guidance is crucial for individuals to strengthen positive behavior patterns, reflect on and correct inappropriate behavior modes in practice. Moral guidance and role modeling aim to help individuals find balance points in actual actions and achieve dynamic balance between emotions and norms using core moral principles and model demonstration.

2.2.Implementation Process

2.2.5. Moral Imitation and Learning

Specific behaviors need certain reference standards, so the process of moral guidance is crucial for individuals to strengthen positive behavior patterns, reflect on and correct inappropriate behavior modes in practice. Moral guidance and role modeling aim to help individuals find balance points in actual actions and achieve dynamic balance between emotions and norms using core moral principles and model demonstration.


禮記卷第一
曲禮上第一
鄭氏註
曲禮曰毋不敬

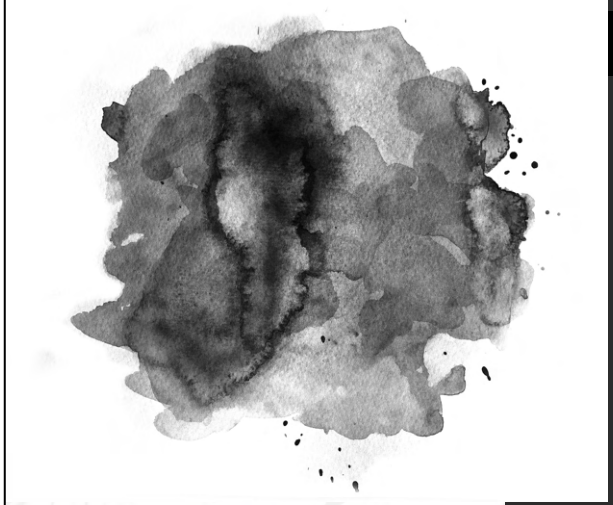
2.2.Implementation Process

2.2.6. Unity of Knowledge and Action

The most important aspect of the behavioral practice layer is undoubtedly individuals practicing, continuously receiving feedback, and making corrections in practice. All the above stages are ultimately intended to serve individuals in practice, expecting them to continuously revise and strengthen the perceptual regulation path through feedback and self-reflection in practice, achieving internal-external harmony between Ritual and Emotion. Many methods of philosophical practice can play a role at this stage.

Model Layer	Stage	Reference Methods	Mechanism
Internalized Cognitive Layer	Modern Interpretation of The Book of Rites	Socratic Method, Thought Analysis Knowledge	Transfer Mechanism
	Philosophical Dialogue on The Book of Rites		Internalization Mechanism
Emotional Experience Layer	Simulating Classical Scenarios from The Book of Rites	Mindfulness Therapy, Narrative Therapy	Situational Regulation Mechanism
	Diverse Forms of Emotional Expression		Emotional Expression and Feedback
Behavioral Practice Layer	Moral Imitation and Learning	Existential Therapy, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy	Moral Guidance Mechanism
	Unity of Knowledge and Action		Behavioral Feedback and Correction Mechanism

Table 2: Layers of the The Book of Rites Philosophical Therapy Model



2.3.Effects

2.3.1. External Norms and Inner Identification

In the first layer, the expected effect of cognitive internalization is the gradual deepening of understanding of the emotion-ritual relationship. When first exposed to Rites, many may fall into a state of confusion. After participating for a period, they will gradually recognize the utility of external norms. Through these discussions, they may gradually realize that they could flexibly comply with ritual laws according to actual situations.

2.3.Effects

2.3.2. Emotional Engagement and Emotional Resonance

In the second layer, the expected emotional experience effect is the profound perception of the integration of emotion and ritual. When facing traditional rituals, they may have resistance, thinking that some traditional rituals like kowtowing and serving tea are just for show. In various emotional expression feedback links like participants sharing self-experiences and creating ritual artifacts, they may gradually realize the emotional meanings hidden behind various rituals.



2.3.Effects

2.3.3. Active Practice and Harmony between Emotion and Ritual

At the third behavioral practice level, the individual's initial state is characterized by passive escape—although aware of the need to understand parents, they often respond with "Leave me alone!"—exhibiting a contradiction between cognition and action. By introducing moral guidance tools, such as Rites case applications, individuals begin to attempt change. Finally, the individual demonstrates a mature and stable attitude in handling conflicts, able to appropriately adjust behavior according to the situation, both adhering to principles and flexibly responding, embodying the realm of "acting in accordance with the mean" advocated by The Doctrine of the Mean.

Model Effects	Initial State	Expected Effect 1	Expected Effect 2
Internalized Cognitive Layer	Confusion or Misunderstanding	External Norms	Inner Identification
Emotional Experience Layer	Indifference or Aversion	Emotional Engagement	Emotional Resonance
Behavioral Practice Layer	Escape or Resistance	Active Practice	Harmony between Emotion and Ritual

Table 3: Effects of the Philosophical Therapy Model

2.4.Feedback and Revision



To achieve this goal, several key steps need to be followed, and some effective techniques should be applied.

First, carry out multi-dimensional data collection, including but not limited to questionnaires, behavioral observations, individual interviews, and focus group discussions.

Next, conduct in-depth analysis of the collected feedback data.

Ultimately, the philosophical therapy modeled on The Book of Rites will continue to be verified and improved due to this continuous feedback and revision process.

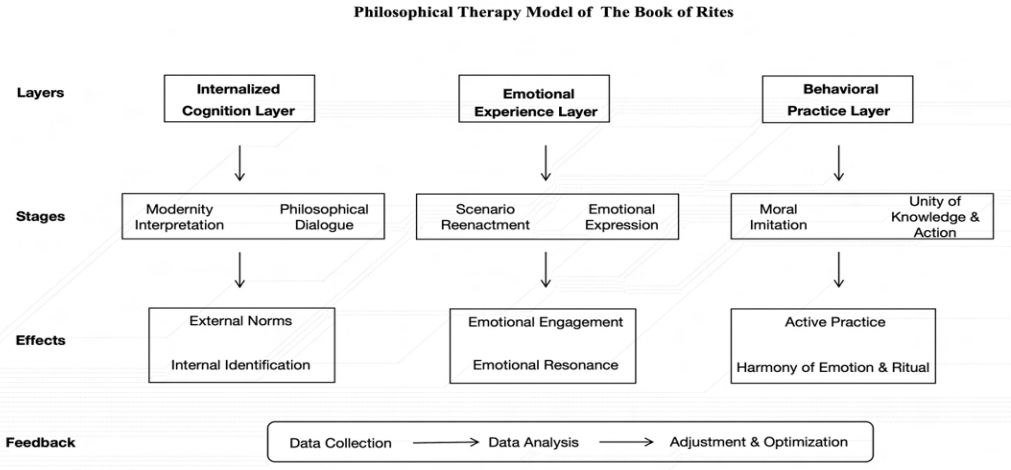


Figure 4: Overview of Philosophical Therapy Model of The Book of Rites

2.5. Model Comparison

There are some representative philosophical therapy models in both the East and the West. Through the summary description of these models, it can be seen that Rites philosophical therapy model absorbs the advantages of these models to a certain extent, advocating the reasonable selection of appropriate therapeutic methods for assistance throughout the treatment process. However, Rites therapy model differs from these models, which can be more clearly compared through the following figure.

Model	Core Mechanism	Therapeutic Goal	Technical Difficulty
Marinoff's PEACE	Logical Analysis	Enhancement of Decision-Making Ability	Rationality Suppressing Individual Emotions
Existential Therapy	Responsibility Undertaking	Awakening of Individual Existential Meaning	Anxiety Increased by Responsibility Discourse
CBT	Behavioral Experiment	Closed-Loop Correction of Cognition-Behavior	Pan-Situationalization of Ethical Decisions
Wang Chuanshan's "Qi Theory"	Nourishing Qi to Connect Principle and Qi	Ordering of Body-Mind Energy	The Transcendence of Qi Theory is Difficult to Verify Empirically
The Book of Rites Philosophical Therapy	"Cognition-Emotion-Behavior" Adjustment	Dynamic Harmonization of Emotion-Ritual Conflict	Conflict between Ritual Systems and Modern Freedom

Table 5: Comparison of Philosophical Therapy Models

03

Discussion

First, this model remains at the theoretical discussion stage, lacking experimental verification and practical application.

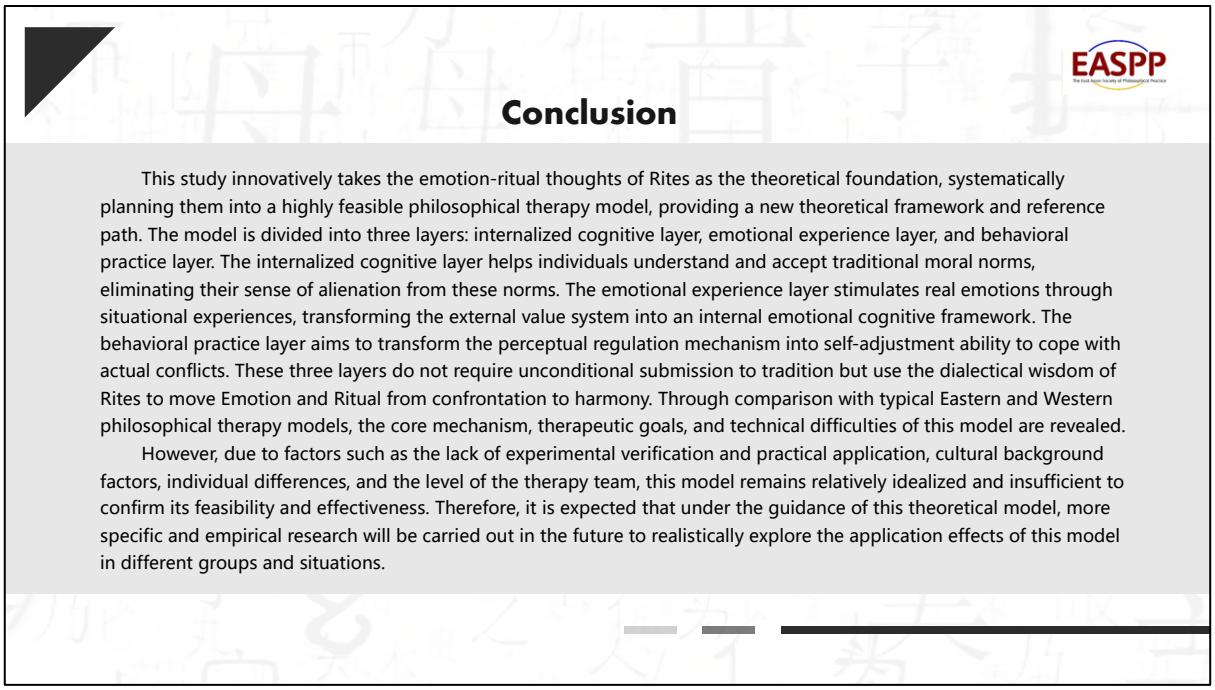
Second, the influence of cultural background factors requires in-depth discussion.

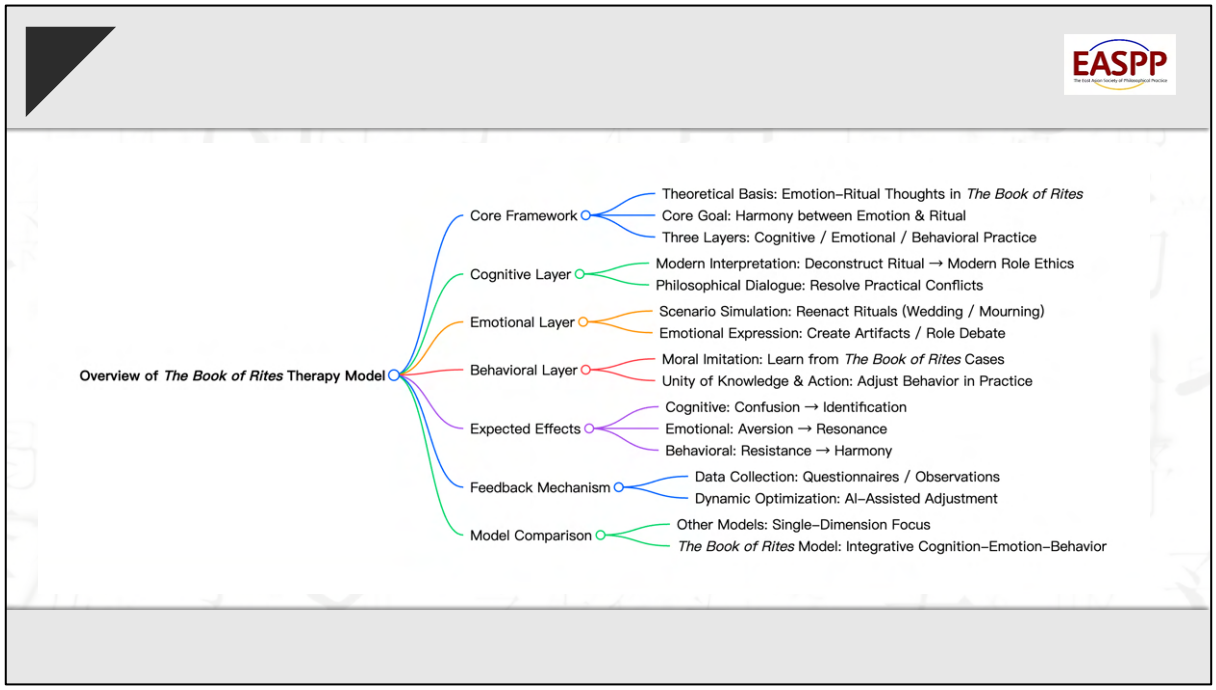
Third, the influence of individual differences needs attention, and the integration of intervention methods should be explored.

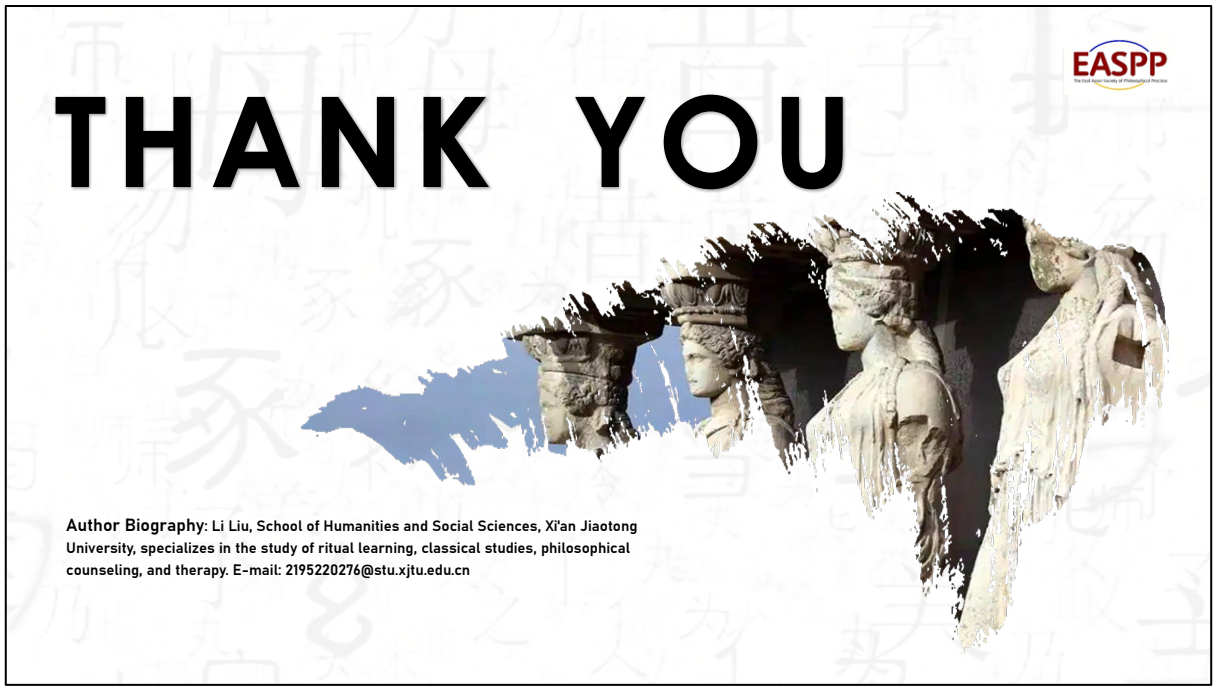
Finally, the level of the model's therapy team is particularly critical.




EASPP
04
Conclusion


EASPP
Conclusion
This study innovatively takes the emotion-ritual thoughts of Rites as the theoretical foundation, systematically planning them into a highly feasible philosophical therapy model, providing a new theoretical framework and reference path. The model is divided into three layers: internalized cognitive layer, emotional experience layer, and behavioral practice layer. The internalized cognitive layer helps individuals understand and accept traditional moral norms, eliminating their sense of alienation from these norms. The emotional experience layer stimulates real emotions through situational experiences, transforming the external value system into an internal emotional cognitive framework. The behavioral practice layer aims to transform the perceptual regulation mechanism into self-adjustment ability to cope with actual conflicts. These three layers do not require unconditional submission to tradition but use the dialectical wisdom of Rites to move Emotion and Ritual from confrontation to harmony. Through comparison with typical Eastern and Western philosophical therapy models, the core mechanism, therapeutic goals, and technical difficulties of this model are revealed.
However, due to factors such as the lack of experimental verification and practical application, cultural background factors, individual differences, and the level of the therapy team, this model remains relatively idealized and insufficient to confirm its feasibility and effectiveness. Therefore, it is expected that under the guidance of this theoretical model, more specific and empirical research will be carried out in the future to realistically explore the application effects of this model in different groups and situations.





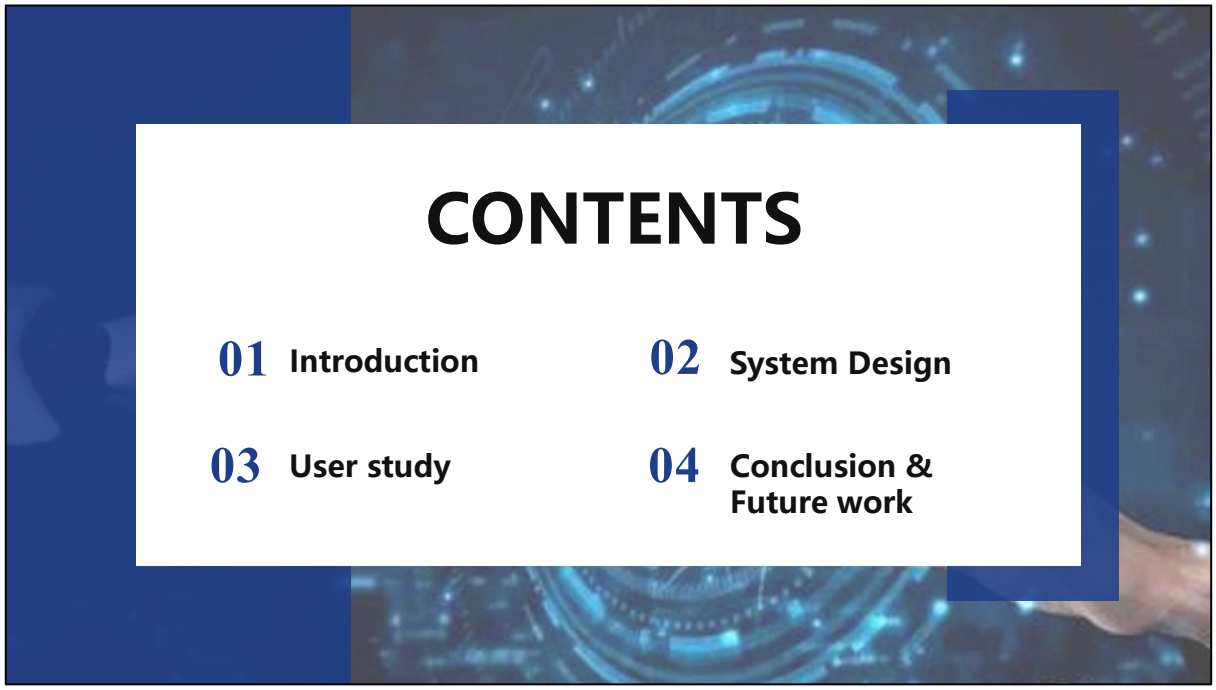
Author Biography: Li Liu, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Xi'an Jiaotong University, specializes in the study of ritual learning, classical studies, philosophical counseling, and therapy. E-mail: 2195220276@stu.xjtu.edu.cn

C1

Xiaojun Ding (Xi'an Jiaotong University)

"Aligning AI with Confucian Wisdom: LLM-empowered Philosophical Counseling Agent for Mental Health"





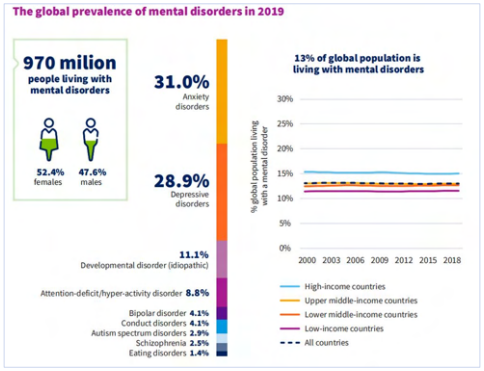
01
Introduction

1.1 Background
1.2 Approach & Innovation

1.1 Background

Global Mental Health Crisis

- The rapid transformation of modern societies has precipitated a **global mental health crisis**.
- **Mental health disorders** (stress, anxiety, existential despair) **prevail worldwide** (Sun & Ryder, 2016).
- **Material prosperity ≠ mental well-being**; "**spiritual void**" persists (Yang, Staps, & Hijmans, 2010).
- Prevalence of mental health challenges demands **innovative and integrative approaches that extend beyond conventional therapeutic models** (WHO, 2021).

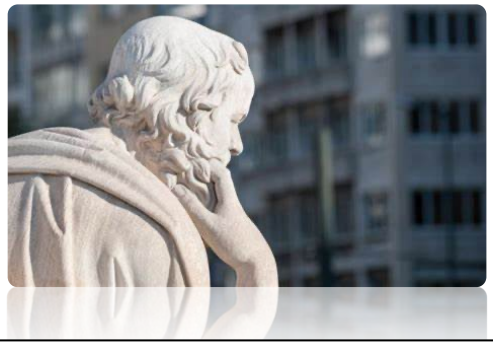


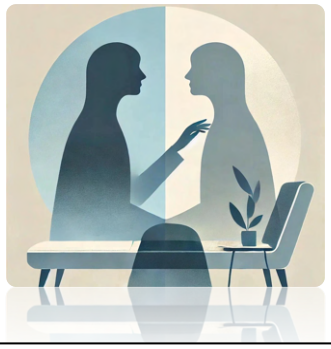
Source: IHME, 2019 (99)

1.1 Background

Philosophical Counseling as a Solution

- **Contemporary Philosophical Counseling**: Emerges as a promising approach to mental challenges (Chai, Wang, Ma, & Han, 2024).
- Contrasts with traditional psychological counseling:
  - Traditional: Focuses on relieving symptoms
  - Philosophical: Encourages **critical self-reflection to reassess core values & life purposes** (Ding, Yu, & Xu, 2019)





1.1 Background

Confucian Wisdom for Modern Minds

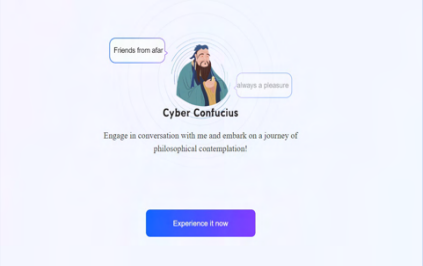
- **Culture** has long served as an **effective means for societies to mitigate mental crises** (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).
- **Terror Management Theory**: "**Cultural worldviews** play a central role in **alleviating death anxiety by offering a sense of order and meaning**." (Greenberg, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1986)
- **Confucian philosophy (*ren, yi, li, zhi, xin*)** offers **a spiritual framework** for **self-cultivation and meaning-seeking** (Chen, Chen, & Li, 2017; Ren, 2022).
- Challenge: Confucian insights are **locked in archaic texts, lacking accessibility** for many contemporary users (Trivedi & Pawelski, 2025; Chen, Zheng, Zhao, & Ding, 2025).

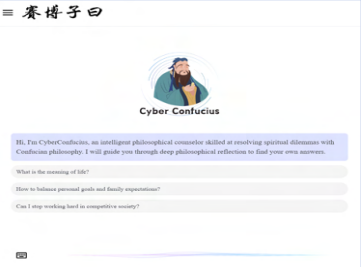


1.2 Approach & Innovation

Our Solution: An LLM-Powered System

- **CyberConfucius: LLM-powered system transforming Confucian wisdom into interactive counseling .**
- **Core innovation:**
  - ➢ **Idiom-based Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) framework**
  - ➢ **Dual Alignment Mechanisms**
    - ✓ **Conceptual Alignment:** Map modern issues (e.g., emotional regulation) to Confucian themes via 4-character idioms (e.g., "修身养性" (self-cultivation) for personal growth).
    - ✓ **Textual Alignment:** LLM retrieves *Analects* quotes via pre-scored idiom mappings.





02
System Design

2.1 Dual-Alignment RAG Framework
2.2 Philosophical Counseling Format Control
2.3 Consultation Summary Generation
2.4 Demonstration

2 System Design

2.1 Dual-Alignment RAG Framework

1. Conceptual Alignment: Mapping Modern Issues to Confucian Themes

- **Goal: Semantically link contemporary counseling topics to Confucian philosophical frameworks using culturally resonant 4-character idioms.**
- **Key Steps:**
  - **a) Topic Categorization**
  - **b) Idiom as Semantic Bridge**
    - **Example: "How to build a sustainable world?" → Idiom "天人合一" (Unity of Heaven & Humanity) → Confucian theme of ecological ethics**

Table 1: Confucian Framework Applied to Philosophical Counseling

User Counseling Topics	Example Question	Confucian Level	Corresponding Thematic Idiom	Quote from The Analects
Self-discipline, emotional regulation, pursuit of meaning	How can I find the true meaning and purpose of my life?	Individual: Self-Cultivation	修身养性 (Cultivate oneself and nourish one's nature)	Self-introspection should be practiced every day.
Generational gaps, filial duties, marital challenges	How can I handle conflicts among family members?	Family: Family Regulation	和而不同 (Harmony in diversity)	There are differences in harmony gentleman.
Civic responsibility, leadership dilemmas, social role identity	As a citizen, how should I actively fulfill my social responsibilities and obligations?	Nation: Society and Governance	正己守道 (Rectify oneself and uphold the Way)	A wise man devotes his attention to what is essential in the foundation of life.
Environmental ethics, global justice, cultural continuity	How can we build a more sustainable world?	World: Harmony with the Whole World	天人合一 (Unity of heaven and humanity)	Confucius fishes but not with a net; he shoots, but not at a bird at rest.

2 System Design

2.1 Dual-Alignment RAG Framework

2. Textual Alignment: LLM-Driven Retrieval of *The Analects* Quotes

- **Dual-LLM Architecture:**
  - **a) DeepSeek-R1 (Inference LLM):**
    - **Scores *Analects* quotes on modern relevance (5-point Likert) .**
    - **Generates idiom-quote pairs (e.g., "天人合一" → "Confucius fishes but not with a net...") .**
  - **b) DeepSeek-V3 (Interaction LLM):**
    - **Powers real-time dialog, retrieves top-k idioms (k=2) from user queries .**

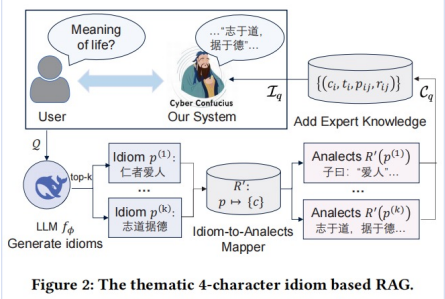


Figure 2: The thematic 4-character idiom based RAG.

2 System Design

2.2 Philosophical Counseling Format Control

- **Three Core Characteristics of CyberConfucius Responses**

1. Empathetic Expressions

- Culturally attuned language that acknowledges users' emotional states
- Aligns with Confucian values of *ren* (benevolence) in communication

2. Confucian Philosophy Quotes

- Direct citations from *The Analects* via idiom-based RAG (e.g., "Analects XII.1")
- Anchors responses in authentic classical wisdom

3. Continuous Guiding Questions

- Open-ended queries to prompt self-reflection (e.g., "How does this principle apply to your life?")
- Emulates human philosophical counselors' dialogue style

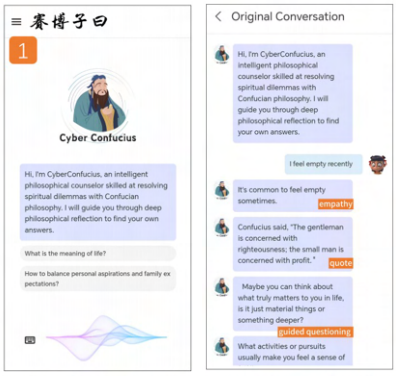


Figure 1: The Main Interfaces of CyberConfucius System.

2 System Design

2.2 Philosophical Counseling Format Control

- **Prompt Engineering Approach**

1. System Prompt Design Principles

- **No direct solutions**: Instructs LLM to provide guidance rather than answers
- **Confucian grounding**: Requires explicit *Analects* quote reference per user question
- **Reflective closure**: Forces responses to end with a question (e.g., "What new perspective might this offer?")

2. Technical Controls

- Generation temperature = 0.7: Balances creativity & coherence
- 50-turn dialogue memory: Ensures long-term semantic consistency

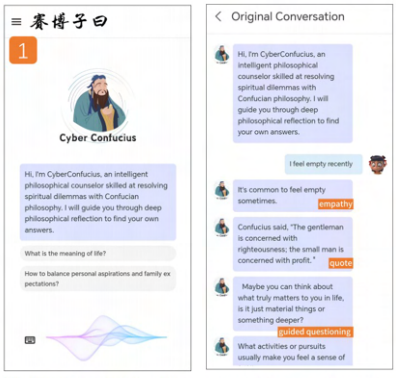


Figure 1: The Main Interfaces of CyberConfucius System.

2 System Design

2.3 Consultation Summary Generation

- **Structured Summaries to Enhance Reflection & Engagement**

1. Summary Purpose

➢ **Goal:** Strengthen user self-efficacy and philosophical reflection

➢ **Rationale:** Summarizing improves perceived consultation coherence (Sundar, Bellur, Oh, Jia, & Kim, 2016)

2. Session Demarcation Rules

➢ **Explicit Session Start:** User initiates a new conversation → automatic session break

➢ **Time-Based Split:** 30+ minute interval between interactions → splits into distinct sessions

3. Summary Structure (4 Parts)

Session Details; Core Theme Discussed; Key Insights & Discussions; Confucius Tips

4. Technical Implementation

LLM-Powered Generation: DeepSeek-V3 leverages prompt engineering for structured output

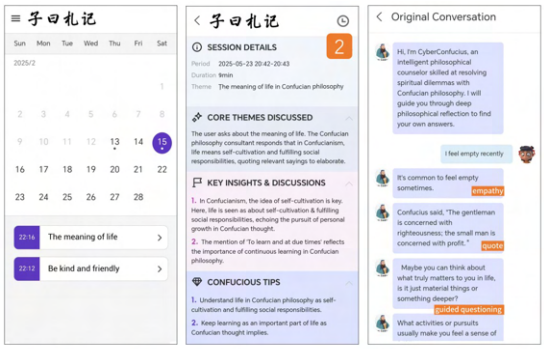


Figure 1: The Main Interfaces of CyberConfucius System.

2 System Design

2.4 Demonstration

- **CyberConfucius: A Lightweight Web Application for Cross-Device Access**

1. System Architecture: Web-Based Design

➢ Lightweight application compatible with smartphones/tablets

➢ No installation required, accessible via browser

2. User Access Modes

Anonymous Guest	Registered User
• Non-archived dialogs	• Personalized counseling history
• Basic philosophical counseling	• Structured session summarizations
• No account needed	• Calendar-based history review

3. Interactive Features (4 Parts)

➢ **Dual Interaction Modes**

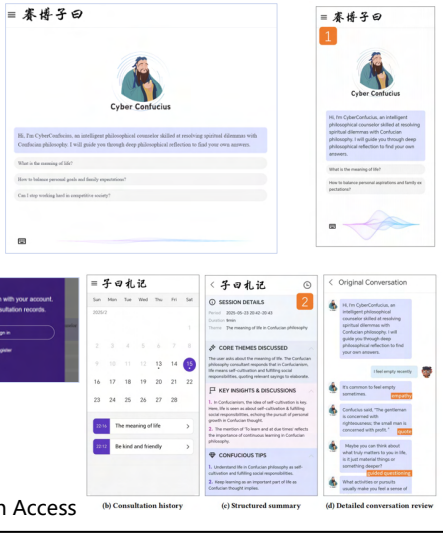
Voice-based: Simulates human-like counseling experience

Text-based: Keyboard icon for typing **Post-Login Functionality**

4. Post-Login Functionality

➢ Account Management

➢ History & Summaries: Structured Summaries; Original Conversation Access



03
User study

3 User Study

Preliminary User Experience Evaluation

- **Study Design**
  - **Sample Size:** 455 participants (286 female, 169 male)
  - **Questionnaire Dimensions** (Castaneda, Munoz-Leiva, & Luque, 2007; Venkatesh & Davis, 2000)
    (5-point Likert scale):
    Perceived Usefulness; Perceived Ease of Use; Information Quality; Self-Efficacy; Intention to Use
  - **Reliability:** Cronbach's α > 0.7 for all dimensions (high internal consistency)
- **Key Results**
  Average Scores (out of 5):
  - Perceived Usefulness: 4.32 (SD=0.61)
  - Perceived Ease of Use: 4.26 (SD=0.67)
  - Information Quality: 4.27 (SD=0.58)
  - Self-Efficacy: 4.19 (SD=0.62)
  - Intention to Use: 3.81 (SD=0.61)

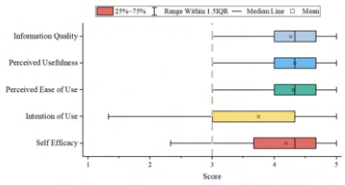
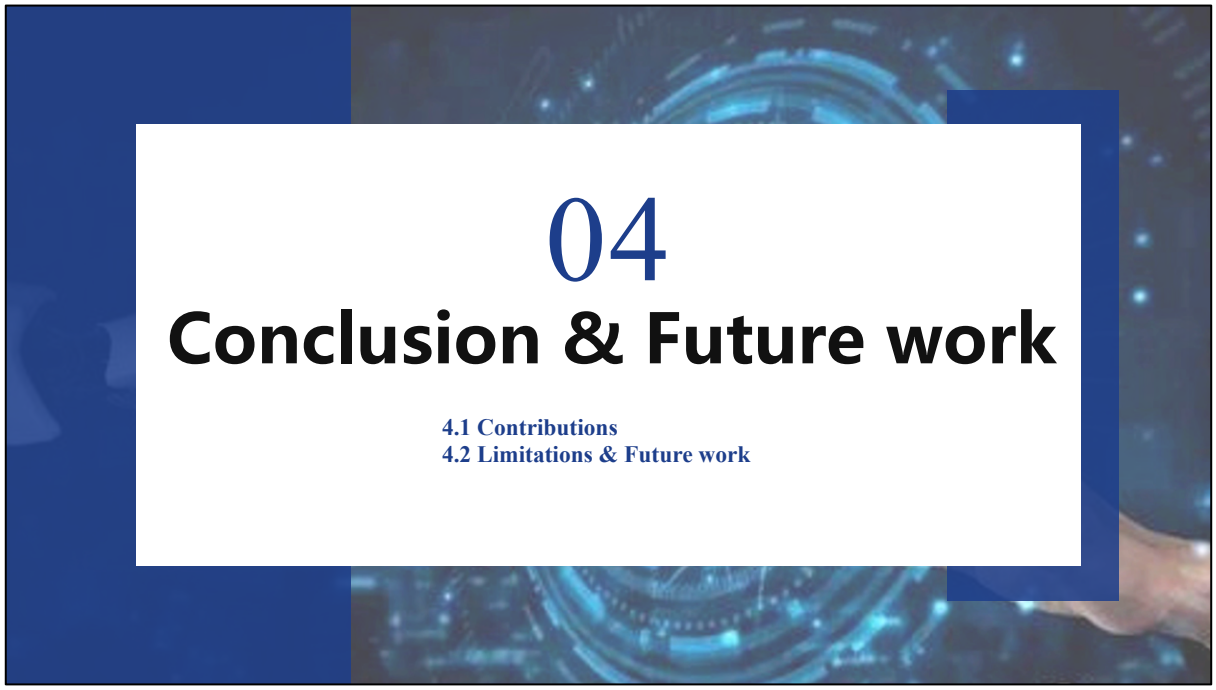


Figure 3: User Experience of CyberConfucius

Statistical Significance: All dimensions significantly above neutral score (3.0) (p < 0.001, one-sample t-test)

- Users reported **highly positive experiences**, **validating the system's effectiveness in integrating Confucian philosophy with AI for mental health support.**



4 Conclusion & Future work

4.1 Contributions

01

Innovative Integration

First to **merge LLMs with Confucian philosophy for AI-powered philosophical counseling**, a breakthrough in AI and human-centered computing.

02

Bridging Ancient Wisdom and Modern Needs

Developed an **idiom-based Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG)** framework that bridges ancient Confucian wisdom and modern mental health contexts through **dual-alignment mechanisms.**

03

Theoretical Advancements

Reveals how cultural traditions address existential anxiety, **enriching discourse on mental health, philosophy, and cultural revitalization**.

04

Practical Implications

Drives progress in **HCI, AI-based mental health tools, and policy**, leveraging tech to revive traditional culture for holistic well-being.

4 Conclusion & Future work

4.2 Limitations & Future work

- **Limitations**

1. Textual Coverage: Focused on core *Analects* passages (covering >50% of canonical text), lacking full corpus integration.

2. Longitudinal Data: No long-term mental health outcome data (current study is cross-sectional).

- **Future Work**

1. Knowledge Base Expansion: Incorporate later Confucian commentaries (e.g., *Mencius*) to enrich philosophical depth.

2. RCT Studies: Conduct 3–6 month randomized trials to measure well-being improvements.

3. Cross-Tradition Adaptation: Extend alignment framework to Daoist, Buddhist, and other wisdom traditions.

References

[1] J. Alberto Castaneda, Francisco Munoz-Leiva, and Teodoro Luque. 2007. Web Acceptance Model (WAM): Moderating effects of user experience. Information & management 44, 4 (2007), 384–396. doi:10.1016/j.im.2007.02.003

[2] Fangyuan Chai, Yi Wang, Jiajia Ma, and Tingting Han. 2024. Dialectics of wellness: philosophical practice in Chinese contexts. Humanities and Social Sciences Communications 11, 1 (2024), 1–10. doi:10.1057/s41599-025-04657-7

[3] Bokai Chen, Weiwei Zheng, Liang Zhao, and Xiaojun Ding. 2025. Leveraging large language models to assist philosophical counseling: prospective techniques, value, and challenges. Humanities and Social Sciences Communications 12, 1 (2025), 1–15. doi:10.1057/s41599-025-04657-7

[4] Lai Chen, Lai Chen, and Li. 2017. The core values of Chinese civilization. Springer.

[5] Xiaojun Ding, Feng Yu, and Liying Xu. 2019. Diagnosis and Treatment of Contemporary Chinese College Students" Empty Heart Disease': Based on the Theory and Practice of Philosophical Counseling and Therapy. Journal of Humanities Therapy 10, 1 (2019), 1–31. doi:10.33252/jht.2019.06.10.1.1

[6] Yunfan Gao, Yun Xiong, Xinyu Gao, Kangxiang Jia, Jinliu Pan, Yuxi Bi, Yixin Dai, Jiawei Sun, Haofen Wang, and Haofen Wang. 2023. Retrieval-augmented generation for large language models: A survey. arXiv preprint arXiv:2312.10997 2 (2023), 1.

[7] Jeff Greenberg, Tom Pyszczynski, and Sheldon Solomon. 1986. The causes and consequences of a need for self-esteem: A terror management theory. In Public self and private self. Springer, 189–212. doi:doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4613-9564-5_10

[8] Hazel R. Markus and Shinobu Kitayama. 1991. Culture and the Self: Implications for Cognition, Emotion, and Motivation. Psychological Review 98, 2 (1991), 224–253. doi:10.1037/0033-295X.98.2.224

[9] Jiantao Ren. 2022. Self-Cultivation as the Root of All" —The Individual in the Recursive Process of "Ensuring Peace for All Under Heaven, Good State Governance and Regulation of Family Affairs, and Self-Cultivation. International Confucian Studies 1, 1 (2022), 64–80. doi:10.1515/icos-2022-2005

References

[10] Jiahong Sun and Andrew G Ryder. 2016. The Chinese experience of rapid modernization: Sociocultural changes, psychological consequences? Frontiers in psychology 7 (2016), 109319. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00477

[11] S. Shyam Sundar, Saraswathi Bellur, Jeeyun Oh, Haiyan Jia, and Hyang-Sook Kim. 2016. Theoretical Importance of Contingency in Human-Computer Interaction: Effects of Message Interactivity on User Engagement. Communication Research 43, 5 (2016), 595–625. doi:10.1177/0093650214534962

[12] Bhumi Trivedi and James O Pawelski. 2025. The love of wisdom and the cultivation of human flourishing: toward a science of philosophical practice. The Journal of Positive Psychology (2025), 1–11. doi:10.1080/17439760.2025.2481040

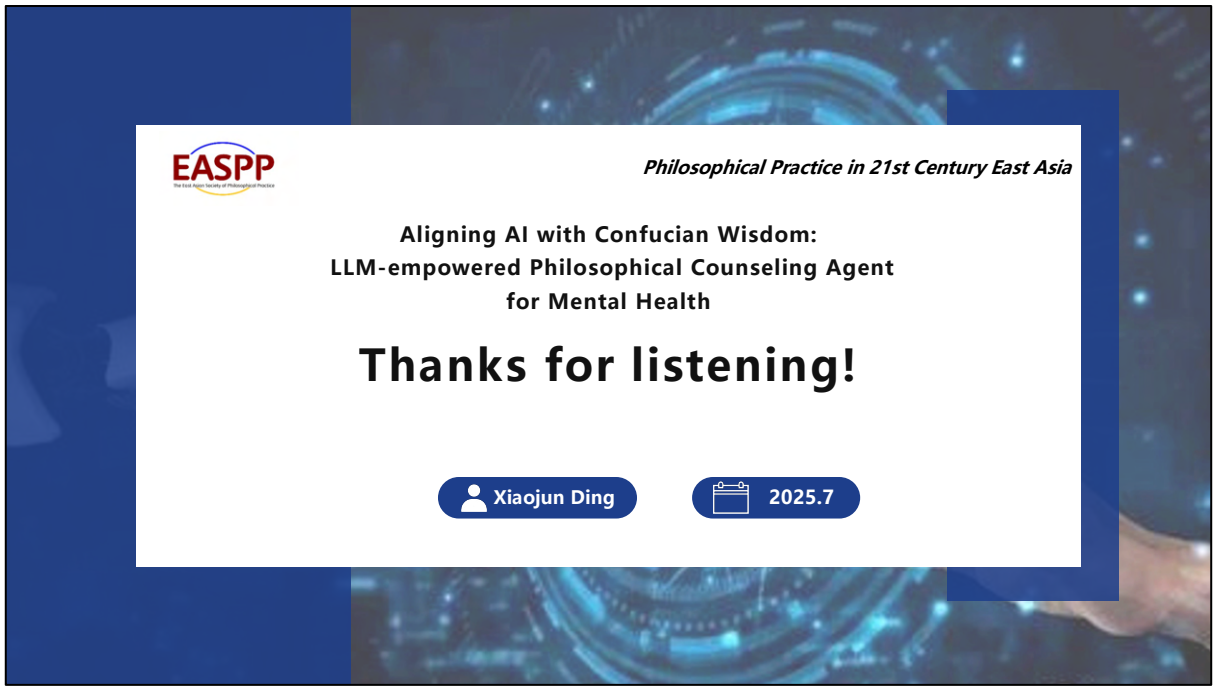
[13] Viswanath Venkatesh and Fred D Davis. 2000. A theoretical extension of the technology acceptance model: Four longitudinal field studies. Management science 46, 2 (2000), 186–204. doi:10.1287/mnsc.46.2.186.11926

[14] Theo Vos, Christine Allen, Megha Arora, Ryan M. Barber, Zulfiqar A. Bhutta, Alexandria Brown, Austin Carter, Daniel C. Casey, Fiona J. Charlson, Alan Z. Chen, Johanna M. Geleijnse, GBD 2015 Disease, Injury Incidence, and Prevalence Collaborators. 2016. Global, regional, and national incidence, prevalence, and years lived with disability for 310 diseases and injuries, 1990–2015: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2015. The Lancet 388, 10053 (2016), 1545–1602. doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(16)31678-6

[15] World Health Organization. 2021. Mental Health: Strengthening Our Response. https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response Accessed: 2025-05-31.

[16] William Yang, Ton Staps, and Ellen Hijmans. 2010. Existential crisis and the awareness of dying: The role of meaning and spirituality. OMEGA-Journal of death and dying 61, 1 (2010), 53–69. doi:10.2190/OM.61.1.c

[17] Jianxin Zhang and Na Zhao. 2023. The impact of Chinese-style modernisation on the social-psychological behaviours of Chinese individuals: Evidence from sociological and psychological research. Psychology and Developing Societies 35, 2 (2023), 324–346. doi:10.1177/09713336231180962



Lizeng Zhang (Shandong Normal University)

"The Temporal Wisdom in Zhou Yi from the Perspective of Philosophical Counseling"

Introduction

Philosophical counseling aims to enhance the practical wisdom of clients. Although it originated in the West, philosophical counseling should not only draw upon Aristotelian Western wisdom—emphasizing philosophical traditions such as those of Socrates, the Stoics, and existentialism—but also attach the same importance to Eastern philosophy, particularly traditional Chinese wisdom.[1] Ran Lahav anticipated that various Eastern traditions will make significant contributions to the development of contemporary philosophical counseling.[2] Lou Marinoff integrated Aristotelian thought with Eastern philosophies such as Buddhism and Confucianism to establish the "ABC theory",[3] as a means of addressing the challenges of an extreme world.

I Ching is a great classic of ancient Chinese wisdom. It is revered as the "first of all classics and the source of the Great Dao". Zhou Yi (I Ching and its philosophical interpretations - Ten Wings) reveal profound insights into life and existence. The wisdom of Zhou Yi can apply to all things—it can trace the origin of phenomena, explore their outcomes, and uncover their essential nature. As the text declares, "Its way can establish the enterprises of the world and resolve the doubts of the world" (Xi Ci I, Chapter 11). Since ancient times, Chinese people have consulted I Ching before taking action, as stated in Xi Ci: "Before undertaking anything, one should consult it and act accordingly." The wisdom embedded in Zhou Yi helps us diagnose, resolve, or cope with problems in life，and more importantly, it helps prevent many potential life predicaments. Therefore, mastering the wisdom of I Ching enables one to both accept the will of Heaven and understand the course of fate, thereby finding peace in life, as expressed in the saying: "Joyfully accept Heaven's will and understand one's destiny, thus free from anxiety" (Chapter 4, Xi Ci I). Zhou Yi's wisdom can serve as a valuable resource for philosophical counseling. As a philosophy of change, Zhou Yi centers on the dynamic processes of transformation, which are inseparable from the dimension of time. Hence, uncovering the wisdom of "timing" holds crucial significance and value for developing a model of philosophical counseling grounded in Zhou Yi.

1. "The Change Inseparable from Time"

---

[1] *Philosophical Counseling as Practical Wisdom: An Inquiry Centered on Its Disciplinary Nature* (Doctoral dissertation, Shandong University), 2015.

[2] Ran Lahav, Philosophical counseling and Taoism: Wisdom and Lived Philosophical Understanding, *Journal of Chinese Philosophy,* 1996, 23, pp.259-276.

[3] Lou Marinoff, in his book *The Middle Way*, introduced the ABC theory, where "ABC" stands for Aristotelianism, Buddhism, and Confucianism—three major philosophical traditions from the West and the East.

I Ching emphasizes change and explains the principles of change. Chapter 2 of the Xi Ci Ⅱ states: “When things reach their limit, they change; through change, they become smooth; through smoothness, they endure. Therefore, Heaven aids those who understand the way of change, and it is nothing unfavorable for them.” This statement means that when anything develops to its utmost, change must occur. As long as change continues, things will progress smoothly, and smooth progress naturally leads to lasting endurance. As Confucius said, “Those who understand the way of change understand what the Gods are doing.” Thus, it is crucial to grasp the principles of change of Zhou Yi.

The sixty-four hexagrams of I Ching constitute a symbolic system of human–nature interaction. This system reflects the interconnectedness of things and events in human experience, encompassing human factors such as values, emotions, culture, prediction, and decision-making. Wen Yan Zhuan(《文言传》)states, “If a person aligns with time, connecting with his/her position in the universe, he/she can harmonize with the virtues of Heaven and Earth, with the clarity of the sun and moon, with the order of the four seasons, and with the fate of the spirits and gods”.

If the entire set of sixty-four hexagrams represents a large cosmic cycle of change, then each hexagram corresponds to a particular period, stage, or scene. From a micro perspective, each individual line (yao,爻) represents a different point in time and space within a certain scene in a certain period. The six lines in a hexagram reflect the conditions of change at six different spatiotemporal points and indicate how one should respond accordingly. And the different outcome results from different responses. Chapter 3 of Xi Ci Ⅱ states: “The yao (爻) imitates the movements of all things under Heaven.” The characteristics of the yao enlighten us to follow to the change of the world and to adjust ourselves according to the time. Whether you can follow the law of change, and whether you can make adjustments over time, the results are different, including fortune or misfortune, regret or no regret.[4]

I Ching attaches great importance to the dimension of "time". “Time” plays a fundamental or structural role in the hexagrams of I Ching. The explanation of hexagrams in I Ching are often expressed as follows: “Acting in accordance with the time” and “moving together with the time”. The changes and flows of heaven, earth, and all things follow or adapt to the changes of time. For human life, the time and the timing is extremely important. In the Wenyan Zhuan, the most brilliant interpretation of Qian hexagram is to interpret the fifth line - “The Flying Dragon in the Sky: it is beneficial to see the great man whose actions must conform to the order of time.” Confucius said: “Junzi(君子) always acts at the right time.” This means that Junzi can

[4] Zhang Qicheng, *The Tao Is Called the Unity of Yin and Yang: A Detailed Ex*, Tiandi Publishing House, October 2023, p. 204.

do the most appropriate thing at the most appropriate time, which is the unity of heaven and man (tianrenheyi,天人合一), and is also the proper integration of humans with time.

Chapter 11 of Xi Ci Ⅰ states, “I Ching is not only able to predict the future, but also contains the philosophical wisdom of the past.” The future and past refer to the dimension of time, which highlight the development law of things that have happened, and to predict the trend and outcome of future development. In the view of Confucianism, learning “Yi” is not to predict the future through divination, but to master the Dao of “Yi”. The future is naturally predicted by mastering the Dao of “Yi”.

2. Timely Appropriateness (“Shizhong”, 时中)

I Ching emphasizes not only the “time” within the “Four Seasons”, but also highlights the “timely appropriateness” (“shizhong”, 时中) that is to follow the changes of Yin and Yang(阴阳) and the creation of life and morality. “Timely appropriateness” is a more dynamic concept than simply “centrality” (“zhong”, 中). Firstly, “timely appropriateness” not only means achieving the mean in reality but also implies a potential state of harmony and order. Secondly, “timely appropriateness” is an appropriate behavioral characteristic of achieving the mean; “timely appropriateness” involves the positioning of the individual within the entire context, which individual must understand his/her situation in order to act appropriately toward the sustained coherence, order, harmony, and coordination.[5]

The natural development of things always follows an inherent temporal order that is about “the harmony with the time”. For humans, it is necessary first to recognize this natural tendency and understand the context in order to find the appropriate course of action that aligns with the development of things. As the Tuan Zhuan (《彖传》) states, “Don’t step outside the courtyard otherwise the misfortune will come; this is the consequence of missing the proper time.” The Wenyan Zhuan also says, “Follow Heaven and act in accordance with the time.” A person must strive to realize and develop the hidden potentials and qualities within a given context. This effort must be coordinated with the Yin and Yang within that context. Whether a certain action is good or appropriate depends on its harmony with all Yin and Yang aspects of the situation which is called “timely appropriateness”. The action at the“timely appropriateness”is both connected and coordinated with the time and the changes of the circumstance. Such action can not only promote order and harmony, but also avoid deterioration that leads to misfortune.

In specific situation, a person can have either a correct or incorrect attitude toward time or opportunity. The best relationship between a person and the time should be a

[5] Cheng Zhongying, *Ontology of I Ching Studies*, The Commercial Press, 2020, p. 209.

natural harmony, which one grasped the appropriate timing with the current circumstances. For example, in Qian hexagram, the first line (初九) says, “The Hidden dragon, do not act!” It means that the dragon must conceal and conserve strength, refraining from rash action for this moment. In Kun(坤卦) hexagram, the third line (六三) says in its Image Commentary (daxiangzhuan,《大象传》), “With the latent virtue, one can be waiting for manifesting at the right time.” It emphasizes to judge the situation, grasp the opportunity, and act when the time comes. The Gen hexagram(艮卦) advises: “Stop when it’s the time to stop; act when it’s the time to act.” That means whether one act or not must consider the “timely appropriateness”.

Therefore, one must also understand “timely appropriateness” rather than only understand “time”. “Timely appropriateness” carries meaningful guidance and practical functions for our decisions and behaviors. If one can act in accord with the times and his/her situations within the entire context, there is perfect harmony and order in his/her life. A person with the virtue of “timely appropriateness” can flexibly apply their virtues and fully express human nature and energy in different environments. However, if failing to act in accordance with the “timely appropriateness”, i.e. ignoring the changes with the time and the circumstances, and failing to adapt oneself with the changes, the disaster will be brought upon oneself, which is called “missing the timing” (“shishi”, 失时).

3. “Temporal position”(“Shiwei”, 时位)

The first chapter of Xi Ci Ⅰ states, "When understanding the principles governing all things under the Heaven, one can find his/her proper position within the Heaven and Earth." It means that one can find a fitting place between Heaven and Earth if he/she has mastered the fundamental principles and great laws governing all things in the universe. The fitting place is the concept of “position” (“wei”, 位) in Zhou Yi. The “position” is not purely spatial, but also temporal. In fact, the spatiotemporal laws of the sixty-four hexagrams correspond to the spatiotemporal laws of Heaven and Earth. Once an individual masters the laws of change of Heaven and Earth, he/she can find the right position within the universe.[6] Xu Gua Zhuan (《序卦传》), the commentary about the order of hexagrams, provides a creative explanation of the temporal sequence and spatial orientation of the eight trigrams, and endow them with the unifying factor of space and time.

[6] Zhang Qicheng, *The Way Called One Yin and One Yang: A Detailed Explanation of the Yi Commentary*, Tiandi Publishing House, October 2023, Introduction, p. 23.

The first chapter of Xi Ci Ⅰ states: “The sage thinks the ‘position’ as the greatest treasure.” Zhou Yi Ji Jie (《周易集解》), the collected explanations on Zhou Yi, states, “The sages practice the Dao of the Yi, in the course of which they must follow the great virtues of Heaven and Earth, and cherish the celestial ‘position’.” Considering the sixty-four hexagrams and their lines (yao, 爻), “position” should be understood as “temporal position” (时位). I Ching unites and combines both time and position. Each of the sixty-four hexagrams contains six temporal positions, which are six spatiotemporal points. For example, Tuan Zhuan (《彖传》) of the Qian hexagram(乾卦) states, “The six positions are completed under the times” (六位时成). Only by conforming to the temporal positions of Heaven and Earth, life can continuously generate and renew itself. I Ching emphasizes both “time” and “position”, but comparatively, “time” is more important than “position,” because whether good or bad and whether regret or shame are ultimately determined by the “time.”

Sometimes, “time” refers to the right moment or timing, and also including the meaning of the environment, context, and specific conditions in which a hexagram occurs.[7] I Ching expresses changes of time, opportunity, and circumstances through the transformations of its hexagrams and lines. A hexagram represents time, while a line represents the change adapting to the time. “Time” represents the time of some certain “position”. Each “position” is determined in the progress of time. Position exists within the dimension of time, and one cannot consider position without time. Therefore, both “time” and “position” contain each other. If time and position are not coordinated, problems arise. For example, the generational gap between parents and children occurs because parents overlook the growth and changes of their children and fail to keep up with the changes of their position. Hence, each “position” must be adjusted according to “time”.[8]

4. Seizing “the Right Timing”

Chapter 2 of Xi Ci II states, “When things reach an extreme, they change; through change they become smooth; and when smooth, they endure.” Chapter 1 of Xi Ci II also says, “Those who are adaptable are the men who follow times.” To bring about transformation and smooth progress, one must respond to the appropriate time. The appropriate time is timing or opportunity. I Ching strongly values the importance of seizing the right timing.

Each “line statement” (yaoci, 爻辞) in the hexagrams conveys three key messages: first, each line’ situation in which this point of time and position is located throughout

[7] Zhang Qicheng, *The Way Called One Yin and One Yang: A Detailed Explanation of the Yi Commentary*, Tiandi Publishing House, October 2023, Introduction, p. 14.
[8] Cheng Zhongying, *Ontology of I Ching Studies*, The Commercial Press, 2020, p. 447.

the course of change; second, what action should be taken at this point of time and position; and third, what will happen as acting? This structure of hexagram helps us find appropriate ways to respond to the situation. Then, based on one's own abilities and moral character, and in conjunction with the external environment, one can decide whether or not to take action. It is reflected as what is stated in Chapter 8 of Xi Ci I, "Deliberate before taking action".[9] Zhou Yi can help one determine one's "position" and "timing" in the midst of the changes of all things. It gives one a comprehensive, holistic, dynamic, and in-depth understanding of oneself and one's circumstances. Especially, it gives one a clear recognition of one's temporal and spatial position within the ongoing development, and so one has a rational judgment about whether the time is ripe or not.

Chapter 10 of Xi Ci I also states, "By Yi, the sages probe the depths and investigate subtle signs." Yi is the tool used by sages to examine the subtle omens. I Ching and its commentaries frequently mention "incipient awareness" ("zhiji'' , 知几), which emphasizes the importance of perceiving subtle signs and grasping fleeting opportunities. "Incipience"("ji", 几) carries two meanings: first, it refers to subtlety or minuteness —something that is slight and barely perceptible; second, it is synonymous with "opportunity" or "timing". In the Eastern Jin dynasty, Han Kangbo annotated, "'Incipience' is a subtle sign". "Incipience" refers to the subtle sign that emerges in the very beginning of the change, so it is very faint, fleeting, and transient. The subtle sign is precisely timing or opportunity.

"Incipience" represents a marvelous function of Yi, and it is also the wisdom of Yi. In Yizhuan (《易传》), Confucius stressed the importance of cultivating the ability of "incipient awareness" ("zhiji", 知几). This ability can help one "remain secure without forgetting danger, exist without forgetting extinction, and be orderly without forgetting chaos" (Chapter 5, Xi Ci II). Those who have the ability of "incipient awareness'' can grasp the fleeting opportunities from subtle premonitions. Chapter 5 of Xi Ci II states, "Junzi (君子) acts with the 'incipience' ("jianjierzuo",见几而作); he does not wait till the end of the day. " It means that as soon as Junzi perceives the faint signs of change, he immediately takes action without procrastination.[10]

The Kun hexagram(困卦) is the criterion for distinguishing morality. Chapter 7 of Xi Ci II says, "Difficulties can be used to distinguish virtues." The "Kun" in Kun hexagram means difficulty or distress. It is the time someone in troubles that his/her moral characters are clearly revealed. The Kun hexagram admonishes people how to try to

[9] Zhang Qicheng, *The Way Called One Yin and One Yang: A Detailed Explanation of the Yi Commentary*, Tiandi Publishing House, October 2023, p. 96.
[10] Zhang Qicheng, *The Way Called One Yin and One Yang: A Detailed Explanation of the Yi Commentary*, Tiandi Publishing House, October 2023, p. 224.

get out of a difficult situation, and that it is a good time to test whether the person holds firmly to moral principles. Adversity is a timing to cultivate virtues.

Conclusion: Keeping Pace with the Times

Where there is change, there will be fortune and misfortune. In the midst of change, some situations contribute to one's success, while the others act as obstacles. If we can act according to the times and seize the favorable opportunity, you will be able to successfully achieve the goal, which is fortune; Otherwise, if we fail to seize the favorable opportunity, we cannot achieve the auspicious results, which is misfortune. In this way, whether fortune or misfortune depends on change and its temporal dimension. People who value and know how to use their time are more likely to succeed.

Therefore, the philosophical counseling based on the temporal wisdom in Zhou Yi can help clients understand "time" and grasp "timing". In practice, philosophical counselors can remind clients of three aspects followed:

1) paying attention to the temporal dimension of change;
2) considering the "position" at a particular time and in the holistic context.
3) cultivating the ability of the "incipient awareness" ("zhiji"，知几), and seizing the right timing.

Overall, with the temporal wisdom in Zhou Yi, people can keep pace with times and reach the "timely appropriateness"(shizhong, 时中) in a state of harmony.

The First International Conference of the East Asian Society of Philosophical Practice:
"Philosophical Practice in 21st Century East Asia"

The Temporal Wisdom in *Zhou Yi* from the Perspective of Philosophical Counseling

ZHANG Lizeng, Ph.D.
Professor, Department of Philosophy
Director, Philosophical Counseling Research and Practice Center
Shandong Normal University
Email: zhanglizeng6666@126.com; 103078@sdnu.edu.cn

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

CONTENTS

1. "The Change Inseparable from Time"
2. The Timely Appropriateness ("*Shizhong*", 时中)
3. "The temporal position"("*Shiwei*", 时位)
4. Seizing "the Right Timing"

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

Introduction

Philosophical counseling aims to enhance the practical wisdom of clients. Although it originated in the West, philosophical counseling should not only draw upon Aristotelian Western wisdom—emphasizing philosophical traditions such as those of Socrates, the Stoics, and existentialism—but also attach the same importance to Eastern philosophy, particularly traditional Chinese wisdom.

Ran Lahav anticipated that various Eastern traditions will make significant contributions to the development of contemporary philosophical counseling.

Lou Marinoff integrated Aristotelian thought with Eastern philosophies such as Buddhism and Confucianism to establish the "ABC theory", as a means of addressing the challenges of an extreme world.

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

Introduction

I Ching is a great classic of ancient Chinese wisdom. It is revered as the "first of all classics and the source of the Great Dao". *Zhou Yi* (*I Ching* and its philosophical interpretations - *Ten Wings*) reveal profound insights into life and existence. The wisdom of *Zhou Yi* can apply to all things—it can trace the origin of phenomena, explore their outcomes, and uncover their essential nature.

Since ancient times, Chinese people have consulted *I Ching* before taking action, as stated in *Xi Ci*(《系辞传》): "*Before undertaking anything, one should consult it and act accordingly*." The wisdom of *Zhou Yi* helps people diagnose, resolve, or cope with problems in life， and more importantly, it helps prevent many potential life predicaments.

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

Introduction

Therefore, mastering the wisdom of *I Ching* enables one to both accept the will of Heaven and understand the course of fate, thereby finding peace in life, as expressed in the saying: "*Joyfully accept Heaven's will and understand one's destiny, thus free from anxiety*" (Chapter 4, *Xi Ci I*). *Zhou Yi*'s wisdom can serve as a valuable resource for philosophical counseling.

As a philosophy of change, *Zhou Yi* centers on the dynamic processes of transformation, which are inseparable from the dimension of time. Hence, uncovering the wisdom of "timing" holds crucial significance and value for developing a model of philosophical counseling grounded in *Zhou Yi*.

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

1. "The Change Inseparable from Time"

I Ching emphasizes change and explains the principles of change. Chapter 2 of *Xi Ci II* states: "*When things reach their limit, they change; through change, they become smooth; through smoothness, they endure. Therefore, Heaven aids those who understand the way of change, and it is nothing unfavorable for them*." This statement means that when anything develops to its utmost, change must occur. As long as change continues, things will progress smoothly, and smooth progress naturally leads to lasting endurance. As Confucius said, "*Those who understand the way of change understand what the Gods are doing*." Thus, it is crucial to grasp the principles of change of *Zhou Yi*.

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

1. "The Change Inseparable from Time"

The sixty-four hexagrams of the I Ching constitute a symbolic system of human–nature interaction. This system reflects the interconnectedness of things and events in human experience, encompassing human factors such as values, emotions, culture, prediction, and decision-making. *Wen Yan Zhuan* (《文言传》) states, "*If a person aligns with time, connecting with his/her position in the universe, he/she can harmonize with the virtues of Heaven and Earth, with the clarity of the sun and moon, with the order of the four seasons, and with the fate of the spirits and gods*".

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

1. "The Change Inseparable from Time"

If the entire set of sixty-four hexagrams represents a large cosmic cycle of change, then each hexagram corresponds to a particular period, stage, or scene. From a micro perspective, each individual line ("*yao*",爻) represents a different point in time and space within a certain scene in a certain period. The six lines in a hexagram reflect the conditions of change at six different spatiotemporal points and indicate how one should respond accordingly. And the different outcome results from different responses.

Chapter 3 of *Xi Ci II* states: "*The yao (爻) imitates the movements of all things under Heaven*." The characteristics of the *yao* enlighten us to follow to the change of the world and to adjust ourselves according to the time. Whether you can follow the law of change, and whether you can make adjustments over time, the results are different, including fortune or misfortune, regret or no regret.

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

1. "The Change Inseparable from Time"

The explanation of hexagrams in *I Ching* are often expressed as follows: "*Acting in accordance with the time" and "moving together with the time*". The changes and flows of heaven, earth, and all things follow or adapt to the changes of time. For human life, the time and the timing is extremely important. In the *Wenyan Zhuan*, the most brilliant interpretation of the *Qian* hexagram is to interpret the fifth line – "*the Flying Dragon in the Sky: it is beneficial to see the great man whose actions must conform to the order of time*. " Confucius said: "*Junzi* (君子)*always acts at the right time*." This means that *Junzi* can do the most appropriate thing at the most appropriate time, which is the unity of heaven and man (*tianrenheyi,*天人合一), and is also the proper integration of humans with time.

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

1. "The Change Inseparable from Time"

Chapter 11 of *Xi Ci I* states, "*I Ching is not only able to predict the future, but also contains the philosophical wisdom of the past*." The future and past refer to the dimension of time, which highlight the development law of things that have happened, and to predict the trend and outcome of future development. In the view of Confucianism, learning "*Yi*" (易)is not to predict the future through divination, but to master the Dao of "*Yi*". The future is naturally predicted by mastering the Dao of "*Yi*".

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

2. Timely Appropriateness ("*Shizhong*", 时中)

I Ching emphasizes not only the "time" within the "Four Seasons", but also highlights "timely appropriateness" ("*shizhong*", 时中) that is to follow the changes of *Yin and Yang*(阴阳) and the creation of life and morality. "Timely appropriateness" is a more dynamic concept than simply "centrality" ("*zhong*", 中). Firstly, "timely appropriateness" not only means achieving the mean in reality but also implies a potential state of harmony and order. Secondly, "timely appropriateness" is an appropriate behavioral characteristic of achieving the mean; "timely appropriateness" involves the positioning of the individual within the entire context , which individual must understand his/her situation in order to act appropriately toward the sustained coherence, order, harmony, and coordination.

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

2. Timely Appropriateness ("*Shizhong*", 时中)

The natural development of things always follows an inherent temporal order that is about "the harmony with the time". For humans, it is necessary first to recognize this natural tendency and understand the context in order to find the appropriate course of action that aligns with the development of things.

A person strives to realize and develop the hidden potentials and qualities within a given context. This effort must be coordinated with the *Yin and Yang* within that context. Whether a certain action is appropriate depends on its harmony with all *Yin and Yang* aspects of the situation, which is "timely appropriateness". The action at the "timely appropriateness" is both connected and coordinated with the time and the changes of the circumstance. Such action can not only promote order and harmony, but also avoid deterioration that leads to misfortune.

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

2. Timely Appropriateness ("*Shizhong*", 时中)

In specific situation, a person can have either a correct or incorrect attitude toward time or opportunity. The best relationship between a person and the time should be a natural harmony, which one grasped the appropriate timing with the current circumstances. For example, in the *Qian* hexagram, the first line (初九) says, "*The Hidden dragon, do not act!*" It means that the dragon must conceal and conserve strength, and refrain from rash to action for this moment. In the *Kun* hexagram(坤卦), the third line (六三) says in its *Image Commentary* ("*daxiangzhuan*",《大象传》), "*With the latent virtue, one can be waiting for manifesting at the right time*." It emphasizes to judge the situation, grasp the opportunity, and act when the time comes. The *Gen* hexagram（艮卦） advises: "*Stop when it's the time to stop; act when it's the time to act*." That means whether one act or not must consider the "timely appropriateness".

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

2. Timely Appropriateness ("*Shizhong*", 时中)

Therefore, one must also understand "timely appropriateness" rather than only understand "time". "Timely appropriateness" carries meaningful guidance and practical functions for our decisions and behaviors. If one can act in accord with the times and his/her situations within the entire context, there is perfect in his/her life. A person with the virtue of "timely appropriateness" can flexibly apply their virtues and fully express human nature and energy in different environments. However, if one fails to act in accordance with the "timely appropriateness, the disaster will be brought upon oneself, which is called "missing the timing" ("*shishi*", 失时).

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

3. "Temporal Position"("*Shiwei*",时位)

The first chapter of *Xi Ci I* states, "*When understanding the principles governing all things under the Heaven, one can find his/her proper position within the Heaven and Earth*." It means that one can find a fitting place between Heaven and Earth if he/she has mastered the fundamental principles and great laws governing all things in the universe. The fitting place is the concept of "position" ("*wei*", 位) in *Zhou Yi*. The "position" is not purely spatial, but also temporal.

In fact, the spatiotemporal laws of the sixty-four hexagrams correspond to the spatiotemporal laws of Heaven and Earth. Once an individual masters the laws of change of Heaven and Earth, he/she can find the right position within the universe. *Xu Gua Zhuan(*《序卦传》), the commentary about the order of hexagrams, provides a creative explanation of the temporal sequence and spatial orientation of the eight trigrams, and endow them with the unifying factor of space and time.

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

3. "Temporal Position"("Shiwei",时位)

The first chapter of *Xi Ci I* states: "*The sage thinks the 'position' as the greatest treasure." Zhou Yi Ji Jie* (《周易集解》), the collected explanations on the *Zhou Yi*, states, "*The sages practice the Dao of the Yi, in the course of which they must follow the great virtues of Heaven and Earth, and cherish the celestial 'position'."* Considering the sixty-four hexagrams and their lines (yao, 爻), the "position" should be understood as "temporal position" ("*shiwei*", 时位). *I Ching* unites and combines both time and position. Each of the sixty-four hexagrams contains six temporal positions, which are six spatiotemporal points. For example, *Tuan Zhuan* (《彖传》) of *Qian* hexagram(乾卦) states, "*the six positions are completed under the times*" (六位时成). Only by conforming to the temporal positions of Heaven and Earth, the life can continuously generate and renew itself. *I Ching* emphasizes both "time" and "position", but comparatively, the "time" is more important than the "position", because whether good or bad and whether regret or shame are ultimately determined by the "time."

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

3. "Temporal Position"("Shiwei",时位)

Sometimes, the "time" refers to the right moment or timing, and also including the meaning of the environment, context, and specific conditions in which a hexagram occurs. *I Ching* expresses the changes of time, opportunity, and circumstances through the transformations of its hexagrams and lines. A hexagram represents time, while a line represents the change adapting to the time. The "time" represents the time of some certain "position". Each "position" is determined in the progress of time. Position exists within the dimension of time, and one cannot consider position without time. Therefore, both "time" and "position" contain each other. If time and position are not coordinated, problems arise. For example, the generational gap between parents and children occurs because parents overlook the growth and changes of their children and fail to keep up with the changes of their position. Hence, each "position" must be adjusted according to "time".

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

4. Seizing "the Right Timing"

Chapter 2 of *Xi Ci II* states, "*When things reach an extreme, they change; through change they become smooth; and when smooth, they endure*." Chapter 1 of *Xi Ci II* also says, "*Those who are adaptable are the men who follow times*." To bring about transformation and smooth progress, one must respond to the appropriate time. The appropriate time is timing or opportunity. *I Ching* strongly values the importance of seizing the right timing.

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

4. Seizing "the Right Timing"

Each "line statement" (*yaoci,* 爻辞) in the hexagrams conveys three key messages: first, each line' situation in which this point of time and position is located throughout the course of change; second, what action should be taken at this point of time and position; and third, what will happen as acting? This structure of hexagram helps us find appropriate ways to respond to the situation.

Chapter 8 of *Xi Ci I* states, "*Deliberate before taking action*". *Zhou Yi* can help one determine the "position" and "timing" in the midst of the changes of all things. It gives one a comprehensive, holistic, dynamic, and in-depth understanding of oneself and one's circumstances. Especially, it gives one a clear recognition of one's temporal and spatial position within the ongoing development, and so one has a rational judgment about whether the time is ripe or not.

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

4. Seizing "the Right Timing"

Chapter 10 of *Xi Ci I* also states, "*By Yi, the sages probe the depths and investigate subtle signs*." *Yi* is the tool used by sages to examine the subtle omens. *I Ching* and its commentaries frequently mention the "incipient awareness" ("*zhiji*", 知几), which emphasizes the importance of perceiving subtle signs and grasping fleeting opportunities. The term "incipience"("*ji*", 几) carries two meanings: first, it refers to subtlety or minuteness — something that is slight and barely perceptible; second, it is synonymous with "opportunity" or "timing". In the Eastern Jin dynasty, Han Kangbo annotated, "'*Incipience' is a subtle sign*". The "incipience" refers to the subtle sign that emerges in the very beginning of the change, so it is very faint, fleeting, and transient. The subtle sign is precisely timing or opportunity.

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

4. Seizing "the Right Timing"

The "incipience" represents a marvelous function of *Yi*, and it is also the wisdom of *Yi*. In *Yizhuan* (《易传》), Confucius stressed the importance of cultivating the ability of the "incipient awareness" ("*zhiji*", 知几). This ability can help one "*remain secure without forgetting danger, exist without forgetting extinction, and be orderly without forgetting chaos*" (Chapter 5, *Xi Ci II*). Those who have the ability of "incipient awareness" can grasp the fleeting opportunities from subtle premonitions. "*Yunzi (君子) acts with the 'incipience' ("jianjierzuo",见几而作); he does not wait till the end of the day.* " (Chapter 5, *Xi Ci II*) It means that as soon as *Junzi* perceives the faint signs of change, he immediately takes action without procrastination.

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

4. Seizing "the Right Timing"

The *Kun* hexagram(困卦) is the criterion for distinguishing morality. The "*Kun*" in *Kun* hexagram means difficulty or distress. Chapter 7 of *Xi Ci II* says, "*Difficulties can be used to distinguish virtues*." It is the time someone in troubles that his/her moral characters are clearly revealed. The *Kun* hexagram admonishes people how to try to get out of a difficult situation, and that it is a good time to test whether the person holds firmly to moral principles. Adversity is a timing to cultivate virtues.

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

Conclusion: Keeping Pace with the Times

Where there is change, there will be fortune and misfortune. In the midst of change, some situations contribute to one's success, while the others act as obstacles. If we can act according to the times and seize the favorable opportunity, we will be able to successfully achieve the goal, which is fortune; Otherwise, if we fail to seize the favorable opportunity, we cannot achieve the auspicious results, which is misfortune. In this way, whether fortune or misfortune depends on change and its temporal dimension. People who value and know how to use their time are more likely to succeed.

山东师范大学 SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY

Conclusion: Keeping Pace with the Times

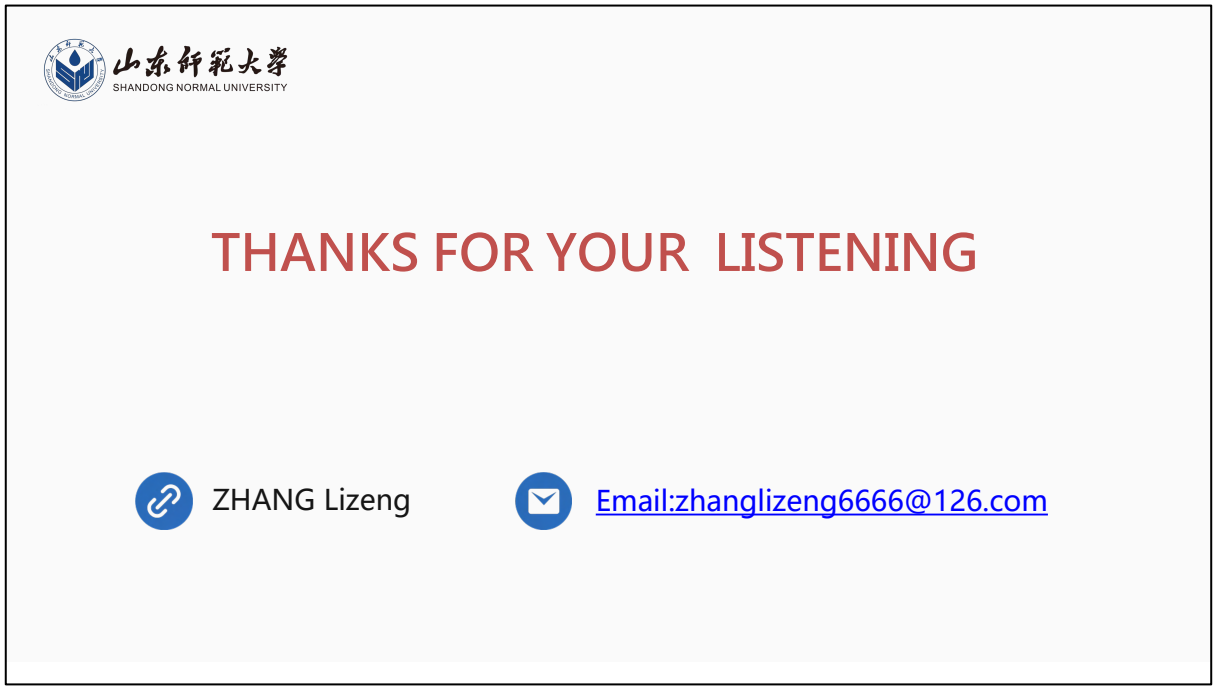
Therefore, the philosophical counseling based on the temporal wisdom in *Zhou Yi* can help clients understand the "time" and grasp "timing". In practice, philosophical counselors can remind clients of three aspects followed:

1) pay attention to the temporal dimension of change;

2) consider the "position" at a particular time and in the holistic context.

3) cultivate the ability of the "incipient awareness" ("*zhiji*"，知几), and seizing the right timing.

Overall, with the temporal wisdom in *Zhou Yi*, people can keep pace with the times and reach "the timely appropriateness"("*shizhong*", 时中) in a state of harmony.


山东师范大学
SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY
THANKS FOR YOUR LISTENING
ZHANG Lizeng
Email:zhanglizeng6666@126.com

Ning Zhao (Shanghai University)

"Time Anxiety in the Accelerated Society and the Philosophical Therapy of Wang Yangming's Xinxue(心学)"

1. The Triple Symptomatology of the Alienation of Time

The modern society of the 21st century, as designated by Hartmut Rosa, can be aptly characterized as an "accelerated society." Under the triple acceleration of technological iteration, social transformation, and the intensification of everyday life's tempo, both the social structure and the subjective experience of time have undergone profound transformation. Time is no longer perceived as the natural flow of life; instead, it is subsumed within a "time machine" composed of performance metrics, consumer cycles, and incessant information streams. Time has thus become not only a unit of efficiency and exchange but also a battleground for power, capital, and symbolic competition.

The alienation of time has emerged as a deep-rooted symptom of modernity, whose manifestation far exceeds the psychological category of "anxiety." Rather, it is a systemic crisis jointly produced by the conjunction of social structures and technological mechanisms. This chapter takes such a systemic perspective as its starting point, aiming to reveal the threefold symptomatology of the alienation of time in the accelerated society—namely, Performance Anxiety, consumer anxiety, and anxiety of meaning. Furthermore, this analysis will examine the underlying metaphysical structures from a philosophical standpoint, thus laying the groundwork for the subsequent theoretical construction of authentic time in Yangming xinxue.

1.1 Performance Anxiety: The Colonization of Life-Time

At the very core of the accelerated society lies the systematic colonization of one's life-time and the relentless discipline imposed by external objectives, leading individuals to fall into a state of persistent Performance Anxiety. As Rosa (2013, p. 155) has argued, the "slipping slope syndrome" is not a sporadic or subjective feeling, but rather a structural product endogenous to the modern social system. Under the dominance of the so-called "performance society," time comes to be treated as a resource that can be quantified, compressed, extracted, and exchanged. The entirety of human existence is thereby incorporated into the logic of production as prescribed by the capital–technology apparatus.

Performance assessment tools such as Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), Objectives and Key Results (OKRs), and data-driven evaluations fragment individual lives into calculable time units. Every minute and every second of a person's existence is appropriated by external systems as a metric for measuring value. The "legitimacy of existence" is thus defined by external outcomes and numerical achievements, leading individuals into an endless cycle of self-monitoring, self-competition, and self-denial.

Underlying all of this is a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of time in modern society: time is degraded into a controllable and consumable "tool," with its primordial dimension as the generative flow of life and the unfolding of meaning being completely forgotten.

Heidegger (1962, p. 167) offers a profound analysis of "das Man," or the "they-self," in which, when time is reduced to an external metric, one's mode of existence is transformed into a state of "busy yet hollow pursuit," losing the authentic potential for "being-towards-death." The root of performance anxiety lies precisely in the colonization of life-time by instrumental rationality. Psychological interventions such as mindfulness, meditation, and similar "self-help" techniques can only serve as superficial remedies within an already alienated structure; they fail to address the ontological root of performance anxiety—namely, the total deprivation of one's temporal agency by external institutions, digital capital, and social evaluation mechanisms (Han, 2015). As a result, the individual is trapped in a state of perpetual "never enough" and "always running out of time," ultimately falling into a spiritually unsustainable crisis of self-insufficiency.

1.2 Consumer Anxiety: Driven by the Fetishization of Novelty

If performance anxiety reflects the colonization of productive time by capital, then the fetishization of "novelty" signals the total control over temporal experience in the domain of consumption. As Jean Baudrillard (1998) incisively argues in The Consumer Society, contemporary individuals no longer consume the object itself, but rather its "sign value," with "novelty" constituting the very core of that signification. The incessant emergence of "the latest model," "limited edition," or "first release" commodities transforms time into the operative tool for distinguishing the sign value of objects. Digital platforms, social networks, and the fast-fashion industry collectively convert time into a production mechanism of perpetual "newness," compelling individuals to constantly acquire the latest products and experiences in order to fend off the anxiety of "obsolescence" and the fear of being left behind.

Bauman (2007, p. 69) captures this structure of anxiety through the notion of "liquid modernity": the individual must engage in ceaseless consumption and continual renewal of personal symbolic systems, or risk losing social belonging and existential meaning. The value of commodities—and, by extension, the value of persons themselves—is perpetually redefined by the labels "new," "fast," and "trending," even as they are simultaneously subjected to relentless abandonment and replacement. At its core, consumer anxiety is driven by a fear of the absence and uncontrollability of the future, an existential terror of being rendered obsolete by each successive cycle of product releases—a condition in which the "now" is flattened into the panic of becoming "outdated."

Building on Marx's analysis of the "commodity fetishism" (Marx, 1973), it becomes evident that the logic of capital not only alienates objects but also, through the mechanism of "timeliness," commodifies time itself. In contemporary consumer society, mechanisms such as trending searches, countdown sales, and the engineering of viral

products convert an individual's internal, lived time into an appendage of the external tempo of updates and renewals. As a result, the fetishization of novelty generates acute consumer anxiety—manifesting as anxiety over possession, fear of missing out, and a collective unease over being marginalized by the relentless march of the times. This phenomenon represents the profound embedding of capitalist and technological power into the very structure of human existence. The commodification of time dissolves the continuity and stability of lived experience, substituting the meaning of time with a fleeting sense of security and a persistent sense of loss derived from possessing the "latest."

1.3 Meaning Anxiety :Resulting from the Fragmentation of Time

The third symptom of the alienation of time in the accelerated society is the fragmentation of temporal experience induced by information technology and digital media, which produces a pervasive anxiety over existential meaning. Husserl (1991, pp. 25–26), in his analysis of "internal time-consciousness," has already pointed out that continuity and integration are fundamental to meaningful temporal experience. Yet, in an algorithm-driven attention economy dominated by short videos, rapid-fire news, and other such media forms, subjective time is carved into countless brief, isolated "information units." Individuals' attention is compulsively made to leap from one fragmentary "now" to the next, thereby forfeiting the possibilities for deep reflection, historical sedimentation, and future-oriented planning.

Sartre (1943) referred to the anxiety of existence, a phenomenon which, in the contemporary digital context, has been magnified into a syndrome of meaning-disjunction: individuals are no longer able to integrate themselves through reflection on the past and anticipation of the future, but instead are condemned to exist "immediately" within the pleasures and endless stimulations of the present moment. The perpetual "scrolling" and ceaseless "push notifications" engineered by digital platforms atomize temporal experience, depriving individuals of the duration and continuity necessary for the generation of meaning. In this context, the "presentness" of time is radically amplified, while both past and future are compressed into "meaningless history" and "unplannable void."

As Nicholas Carr (2010) demonstrates in The Shallows through neuroscientific evidence, the fragmentation of time is profoundly transforming the structure of human cognition. The capacities for deep reading and sustained, long-term thinking are in sharp decline, with existential continuity, historical consciousness, and future-oriented thinking increasingly replaced by instant feedback and fleeting stimuli. The root of meaning-anxiety, therefore, lies not merely in cognitive decline itself, but in the severance of the relationship between the self and time: individuals are no longer active constructors of meaning, but rather become passive consumers, swept along by the ceaseless "flow of information." Digital capitalism renders structures of meaning commodified, fragmented, and accelerated; the time of life itself is reduced to a market resource that can be infinitely partitioned and recombined. As a result, human

existence becomes deprived of belonging, self-sufficiency, and the possibility of unfolding deep meaning across history and the future.

Confronted with the pervasive and structural time-anxiety of the accelerated society, mainstream responses tend to focus on self-discipline and emotional regulation, encouraging individuals to adapt to the demands of the external environment. However, such strategies frequently shift the burden of systemic crisis onto individual responsibility and shame, paradoxically intensifying subjective distress. While these approaches may provide short-term relief, they fail to address the fundamental mechanisms underlying the alienation of time. Since the late twentieth century, Western philosophical counseling movements (such as those led by Gerd Achenbach, Lou Marinoff, and Oscar Brenifier) have attempted to transcend the limitations of psychological therapy by emphasizing the diagnostic, interrogative, and therapeutic functions of philosophy. They contend that genuine healing requires a return to fundamental metaphysical and ontological questioning, thereby enabling individuals to reconstruct their sovereignty and space of meaning. Yet, it must be noted that although these Western movements advocate an ontological turn in "philosophical therapy," their methods largely center on rational dialogue and conceptual clarification, lacking the embodied, affective, and sustained practical cultivation (gongfu 工夫) that is highly valued in traditional Chinese philosophy. Contemporary philosophical therapy, with its emphasis on the awakening of the rational subject, struggles to provide individuals with an enduring, daily pathway for integrated cultivation of body and mind.

2. The Transcendence of the Authentic Time in Xinxue (心学) Over the Alienated Time

2.1 The Presentness of Authentic Time

Building on the triple symptomatology of temporal alienation (performance, consumption, meaning anxiety), the dominant conception of time in contemporary society is essentially "future-driven" and externally regulated—an alienated conception of time. This paradigm transforms every present moment into a mere instrument for attaining future goals, performance outcomes, or consumption events, condemning individuals to live in a continuous state of anxiety marked by "preparing—waiting—pursuing." The lived experience of the present is repeatedly sacrificed for planning, anticipation, and self-denial, thereby severing the individual's authentic relationship with the flow of their own life. In this process, the sovereignty over time is surrendered to external institutions and the logic of capital. As Rosa (2013) observes, the "acceleration" of society gives rise to a structural "time poverty," rendering modern people perpetually "never in time."

Yangming's xinxue places liangzhi jianzai (良知见在, the ever-present awareness of innate moral knowledge) at the heart of its authentic time philosophy, fundamentally overturning the logic of alienated time. For Wang, time is not an independent objective

stream separate from xin (心, mind-heart), but is dynamically constituted through the presentness of liangzhi in every moment of conscious awareness. As Wang writes in the Chuanxilu (《传习录》, Instructions for Practical Living), “If one can always keep this xin (心) manifestly present, this is true learning. What use is there in dwelling on past or future matters? It is simply letting the xin (心) become lost.” In this context, jianzai (见在, “presentness”) signifies not only the continual presence of liangzhi, but that every present moment becomes the site for the generation of meaning and the realization of self-cultivation. Xinxue reconceives “the present” not as a passive waiting or a utilitarian tool, but as an active field of realization and awakening, thereby reestablishing the subject’s sovereignty over their own temporal experience.

Crucially, this authentic presentness is not merely psychological fullness, but is grounded in the capacity of liangzhi to make moral discernments and decisions in each thought and circumstance. Wang Yangming emphasizes, “If today liangzhi is present in this way, one should fully extend from today’s knowledge; if tomorrow there is a new awakening, then one should fully extend from tomorrow’s knowledge” (Wang Yangming Quanji《王阳明全集》, vol. 8). The jianzai of authentic time means that each moment’s decisions and actions become opportunities for self-transcendence and meaningful fulfillment, breaking the nihilistic cycle of alienated time in which the present is perpetually subordinated to an imagined future. In this way, the subject regains spiritual sovereignty over each present moment, overcoming the modern predicament of temporal fragmentation, procrastination, and existential emptiness imposed by goal-oriented time.

2.2 The Embodiment of Authentic Time

The second fundamental feature of the alienated conception of time in modernity is its “externalization” and “objectification.” Within regimes of digitalization, performance metrics, and consumer-driven systems, the rhythms of individual time and patterns of behavior are externally arranged, fragmented, and standardized. Daily activities gradually become passive executions in compliance with external clocks, performance evaluations, and algorithmic prompts. The body is reduced to a mere instrument for achieving external goals, and lived experience is fragmented into “task units.” As a result, the subject progressively loses both the capacity for deep experience of the flow of life and the ability for genuine self-mastery. The intensification of external control and automation has led to a crisis of body-mind division, experiential fragmentation, and profound alienation from the self for the modern individual.

In contrast, Wang Yangming’s xinxue establishes “unity of body and mind” (身心一体) and “practice through affairs” (事上磨炼) as practical guidelines, maintaining that authentic temporal experience can only be realized through concrete, embodied cultivation. The authentic time perspective in xinxue emphasizes that only through the

investment of the body and the enactment of action can the alienated flow of external time be transformed into the living flow and inner integration of one's own life.

2.3 The Moral Orientation of Authentic Time

The ultimate crisis of the alienated conception of time in modernity is its transformation into a neutral, exchangeable, and ultimately meaningless flow, thus severing its essential connection to value, meaning, and moral responsibility. Time becomes hollowed out by capital, performance regimes, and algorithmic calculation, such that each moment of existence is reduced to a fragment—mere data, target, or act of consumption. Individuals, in this process, become existentially exhausted and adrift within a vacuum of meaning.

As Wang Yangming writes in Chuanxilu (Section 94):

"Our efforts today are solely to correct the errors of the heart-mind, to constantly exercise self-restraint; upon seeing the good, to move toward it, and upon recognizing faults, to amend them" (p. 37).

In this perspective, the experience of time is transformed into an ongoing process of moral self-cultivation and correction—a direct response to the fragmentation of tasks that characterizes modernity. Within the framework of xinxue, the fundamental nature of time is continuous moral generativity: time is not merely the rise and fall of life, but is constantly endowed with meaning and self-actualization through each choice, practice, and act of reflection guided by liangzhi.

Wang Yangming further stresses:

"With every thought, one must preserve tianli (天理, Moral Principle)—this is what it means to establish resolve" (Wang Yangming Quanji, Vol. 5).

Every moment of choosing between good and evil is the site for self-perfection and the foundation of a settled, meaningful existence.

The authentic time in xinxue holds as its ideal the principle of daily sufficiency and constant clarity requiring the individual, in every moment and circumstance, to practice the gongfu (工夫) of realizing liangzhi (致良知 zhi liangzhi). In this way, time is transformed into the living practice of goodness and meaning-creation. The emptiness, fragmentation, and alienation of modern time find their fundamental critique in xinxue: only through continuous moral practice and present-moment discernment can the individual achieve fulfillment, freedom, and wholeness within the flow of time. Each present is no longer a passive void waiting for the future, but a concrete occasion for self-settling, value realization, and the fullness of meaning.

In summary, Yangming's xinxue articulates a triadic structure of authentic time—presentness, embodiment, and moral orientation —that fundamentally critiques and transcends the mechanism of modernity's alienated temporality.

3. Xinxue Gongfu as Therapeutic Response to Time Anxiety

3.1 Reclaiming Autonomy Over Time through Zhixing Heyi (知行合一)

In the Chuanxilu (《传习录·上》), Wang Yangming tells his disciple Xu Ai (徐爱): "Knowing is the beginning of acting, and acting is the completion of knowing. If one truly understands, then speaking only of knowing already contains acting; and speaking only of acting already contains knowing." Here, Wang Yangming unifies moral awareness and practical enactment in the present efficacy of liangzhi. He further stresses: "True knowing is itself acting; if one does not act, it cannot be called knowing" (Chuanxilu). Wang thus rejects the dualism of knowing and acting, insisting that the manifestation of liangzhi must always be accompanied by action; the two are fundamentally inseparable.

In contemporary workplaces, many individuals find themselves caught in a repetitive cycle of "planning–procrastination–anxiety." Faced with a mounting workload, they worry about not being able to complete tasks on time, yet are unable to take action. Wang Yangming's gongfu of zhixing heyi (知行合一, Unity of Knowledge and Action) offers a way out of this dilemma. When one becomes aware of the need to accomplish a particular task, instead of becoming entangled in excessive concern about outcomes or waiting for the "perfect moment," one should immediately begin to act. As Wang Yangming states in his Chuanxilu zhong ("Reply to Gu Dongqiao" in Chuanxilu, 《传习录·中·答顾东桥书》): "All that is called action simply means earnestly doing the thing at hand." Through such small but concrete actions, individuals can reclaim autonomy over their time by practicing in real-life circumstances (shi shang molian 事上磨炼), thus breaking the alienated structure in which the future holds the present hostage.

3.2 Restoring the Self-Sufficiency of Time through Cunli Quyu(存理去欲)

The anxiety over material desires in the accelerated society is manifested as an endless pursuit of consumption, novelty, and social comparison. Western psychology emphasizes self-control, delayed gratification, or recommends the establishment of "reasonable consumption plans." Philosophical therapy often resorts to rational deliberation or value clarification. However, such approaches remain largely at the level of behavioral regulation, failing to address the deeper ontological predicament of why the subject remains perpetually drawn to external objects—thereby becoming trapped in a recurring cycle of "repressing desire, temporary self-control, and eventual relapse."

During his exile in Longchang, Wang Yangming admonished himself with the phrase, "It is easy to drive away bandits from the mountains, but hard to drive away the bandits in the heart" (去山中贼易，去心中贼难, Wang Yangming Nianpu《王阳明年谱》). He further stated, "The substance of the mind is originally vast, impartial, and unmoving" (心体本自廓然大公，寂然不动, Chuanxilu zhong · da Lu Yuanjing shu

《传习录·中·答陆原静书》), indicating that the essence of material desire is the delusive pursuit that arises when liangzhi is obscured. He advocated, “If one eliminates selfish desires, one will recognize the Heavenly Principle (tianli 天理)” (去得人欲，便识天理, Chuanxilu · Xue Kan lu《传习录·薛侃录》), emphasizing the necessity of continuous gongfu in introspection and self-restraint, thereby restoring the original clarity of the mind.

In contemporary society, individuals are easily swept up in the consumption culture engineered by social media, with constant exposure to shopping prompts and influencer endorsements leading to impulsive purchases. For example, one may feel compelled to buy a newly released product from a popular brand, not out of genuine need, but due to herd mentality or the pursuit of fashion. Wang Yangming’s xinxue advocates active introspection: “From what thought does this desire arise? Does it accord with one’s original mind?” By engaging in daily, deep reflection on the motivations behind one’s desires, and maintaining the awareness that “as soon as a single thought arises, that is already action” (一念发动处便即是行了, Chuanxilu xia《传习录·下》), one gradually dissolves the dominance of external things over the heart-mind and recovers the self-sufficiency of temporal experience.

3.3 Attaining Temporal Fullness through Wanwu Yiti (万物一体)

A deeper manifestation of contemporary time anxiety lies in the individual’s experience of profound isolation and existential nihilism within the accelerated society. The logics of performance society and consumerism radically intensify individual atomization, leading people to inhabit increasingly fragmented lives, severed from genuine connection with others, the world, and even their own historical continuity. Contemporary psychology seeks to alleviate loneliness through strategies such as community participation, relational therapy, or meaning reconstruction; philosophical therapy encourages value reflection or meaning-seeking. Yet these methods still often fall short of addressing the existential impasse of “meaning absence” and “ruptured being-with” (co-existence) that characterizes the modern condition.

In Chinese philosophical tradition, both Confucian and Daoist thought regard the cultivation of virtue as essential for both moral flourishing and personal well-being: Confucians speak of “virtue nourishing the body” (de run shen 德润身) and “the benevolent live long” (ren zhe shou 仁者寿), while Daoists praise “the radiance of virtue in the ren” (ren zhe de zhi guang 仁者德之光). Wang Yangming equally advocated the inseparability of moral cultivation (yang de 养德) and self-nourishment (yang shen 养生). He famously stated: “Nourishing virtue and nourishing the body are but one thing; as long as the mind is clear and desires are few, then one’s vital energy

will naturally be harmonious and the spirit naturally strong and secure" (养德养身只是一事，但能清心寡欲，则心气当平和，精神自当完固矣; Shu Jingnan 束景南, Wang Yangming Nianpu Changbian《王阳明年谱长编》, 2017, pp. 895–896). In Daxuewen《大学问》, Wang Yangming opens by asserting, "A person of greatness is one who regards heaven, earth, and all beings as one body (yi ti 一体).

In contemporary society, young people are often afflicted by a sense of nihilism resulting from social and ecological alienation. Wang Yangming's xinxue proposes to break through the boundaries of self through the expansion of liangzhi—from daily care for family, to helping strangers, to cherishing all living beings, the individual's temporality becomes embedded within multiple relational networks.

In this way, xinxue advances a concrete and profound mode of healing that surpasses the limitations of Western psychological and philosophical approaches, restoring the individual's sense of connection, fullness of time, and existential anchorage within the greater network of life and meaning.

Wang Yangming's xinxue constructs a therapeutic system of both high operability and profound philosophical depth through its threefold praxis: unity of knowing and acting (知行合一), preserving Heavenly Principle [Tianli 天理] and eradicating human desires (存理去欲), and unity with all things (万物一体). This therapeutic framework addresses the symptoms of anxiety that arise under the alienation of time in the accelerated society. Its most significant advantage lies in not merely alleviating emotion or adjusting cognition, but in fundamentally reconstructing the individual's relationship with time, the world, and the self through concrete practice.

This gongfu mechanism not only inherits the wisdom of Chinese philosophy—"nourishing virtue and nourishing life are one and the same" (养德与养生是一件事)—but also transcends the partial focus on cognition and short-term emotion seen in Western psychological and philosophical therapies. The therapeutic practices of xinxue offer modern individuals a systematic, feasible, and profoundly Eastern philosophical framework for recovering authentic time, attaining psycho-physical anchorage, and realizing a sense of existential fulfillment.

References

Achenbach, G. B. (2002). Philosophische Praxis: Grundlagen – Erfahrungen – Perspektiven [Philosophical Practice: Foundations – Experiences – Perspectives]. Stuttgart: Reclam.

Baudrillard, J. (1998). The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures (C. Turner, Trans.). London: Sage. (Original work published 1970)

Bauman, Z. (2007). Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty. Cambridge: Polity.

Carr, N. (2010). The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Foucault, M. (1975). Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (A. Sheridan, Trans.). New York: Vintage Books. (Original work published 1975)

Han, B.-C. (Han, Byung-Chul) (2015). The Burnout Society (E. Butler, Trans.). Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Heidegger, M. (1962). Being and Time (J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson, Trans.). New York: Harper & Row. (Original work published 1927)

Husserl, E. (1991). On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1893–1917) (J. B. Brough, Trans.). Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Marinoff, L. (2019). Philosophical Practice: An Alternative to Counseling and Psychotherapy. London: Penguin Books.

Marx, K. (1973). Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (M. Nicolaus, Trans.). New York: Vintage Books. (Original work written 1857–1858)

Rosa, H. (2013). Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity (J. Trejo-Mathys, Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press.

Sartre, J.-P. (1943). Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology (H. E. Barnes, Trans.). New York: Washington Square Press.

Wang, S. [Wang Shouren, 王守仁]. (2012). Chuanxilu [Instructions for Practical Living]. In Wang Yangming Quanji [The Complete Works of Wang Yangming] (Vols. 1–8). Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Press. (Original works written 16th century)

Zheng, Z.-M. (郑泽绵). (2022). Wang Yangming's "Conscience in the Present" (Liangzhi Jianzai 良知见在) and the Breakthrough of Confucian Time Consciousness. Wen Shi Zhe (Journal of Literature, History and Philosophy), 2, 1–15.

Confucius. (1992). The Analects (D. C. Lau, Trans.). Hong Kong: Chinese University Press.

Shu, J.-N. (束景南). (2017). A Detailed Chronicle of Wang Yangming's Life [王阳明年谱长编]. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Press.

EASPP2025

Time Anxiety in the Accelerated Society and the Philosophical Therapy of Wang Yangming's Xinxue (心学)

Zhao Ning Shanghai University

CONTENTS

壹 Introduction

贰 The Triple Symptomatology of Time Anxiety

叁 The Structure of Authentic Time in Wang Yangming's Xinxue心学

肆 Xinxue Gongfu心学工夫 as Philosophical Therapy

伍 Conclusion & Implications

2025

Part 01

Introduction

Research Background

Technological Impact

The technological revolution in the 21st century has reshaped human experience of time. Digital technology accelerates daily life, while performance- driven institutions and consumerism dominate individual practices, leading to time anxiety.

Western Approaches Limitations

Western psychotherapy and philosophical counseling focus on cognitive regulation and emotional management, but fail to address the structural alienation of time in modern society.

Part 02

The Triple Symptomatology of Time Anxiety

Performance Anxiety

KPI Tyranny

Performance anxiety arises from external standards and quantified assessments. Individuals become "performance machines," losing sovereignty over their time and falling into a "never enough" syndrome.

Heideggerian Analysis

Heidegger argues that when time is reduced to an external metric, individuals engage in a "busy yet hollow pursuit," losing their authentic potential for "being- towards- death."

Consumer Anxiety

Fetishization of Novelty

Consumer anxiety stems from the cult of novelty, where technological platforms and media capital constantly manufacture the pursuit of the "new" and "fast," making it difficult for individuals to secure intrinsic value.

Liquid Modernity

Bauman notes that individuals must engage in ceaseless consumption and renewal to avoid social exclusion and existential meaninglessness, driven by a fear of obsolescence.

Meaning Anxiety

01

Fragmentation of Time

Meaning anxiety results from the fragmentation of time by information technology and digital media. Individuals' attention is fragmented into brief "information units," losing the capacity for deep reflection and historical continuity.

02

Neuroscientific Evidence

Carr's research shows that the fragmentation of time alters human cognition, diminishing capacities for deep reading and long- term thinking, and severing the relationship between self and time.

Part 03

The Structure of Authentic Time in Wang Yangming's Xinxue

Core Framework of Xinxue

Liangzhi as Foundation

Xinxue centers on liangzhi (良知, innate moral knowing). Time is dynamically constituted through the present act of knowing and doing, emphasizing presentness, embodiment, and moral orientation.

Three Dimensions of Authentic Time

Presentness (当下性): Every moment is a site for meaning and self- cultivation.
Embodiment (具身性): Time is experienced through bodily action and practice.
Moral Orientation (道德性): Time is endowed with meaning through moral discernment and practice.

1.The Presentness of Authentic Time

Rejection of Future-Driven Temporality

Dynamic Constitution of Time

Wang Yangming emphasizes "liangzhi jianzai (良知见在)," rejecting future- oriented time. Each moment is a site for meaning realization, restoring temporal sovereignty.

Time is dynamically constituted through the presence of liangzhi in every moment. Each decision and action becomes an opportunity for self- transcendence and fulfillment, breaking the cycle of alienated time.

2.The Embodiment of Authentic Time

01 Unity of Body and Mind

Xinxue advocates "unity of body and mind (身心一体)," asserting that no act of consciousness can exist apart from the body. Time experience is inseparable from bodily perception.

02 Shi Shang Molian

Through "shi shang molian (事上磨炼)," abstract time is transformed into an actual process of moral becoming and self- perfection. Embodied action becomes a site of temporal fulfillment.

3.The Moral Orientation of Authentic Time

Moral Generativity

Xinxue transforms time into an ongoing process of moral self- cultivation. Time is endowed with meaning and self- actualization through each choice, practice, and reflection guided by liangzhi.

Daily Sufficiency

Wang Yangming emphasizes "daily sufficiency," requiring individuals to practice the gongfu 工夫 of realizing liangzhi in every moment, transforming time into a living practice of goodness.

Part 04

Xinxue Gongfu心学工夫 as Philosophical Therapy

Overview: The Three Gongfu of **X**inxue

Zhixing Heyi**知行合一**

"Knowing is the beginning of acting, and acting is the completion of knowing." Unity of knowledge and action restores present sovereignty and breaks the alienation of the future.

Cunli Quyu**存理去欲**

"If one eliminates selfish desires, one will recognize the Heavenly Principle (天理)." Introspection and moderation restore the clarity of the mind and the self-sufficiency of temporal experience.

Wanwu Yiti**万物一体**

"A person of greatness regards heaven, earth, and all things as one body (一体)." Extending compassion fosters deep connections and existential fulfillment.

1. Zhixing Heyi **知行合一**: Reclaiming Autonomy Over Time

Immediate Action

Immediate action on good intentions (e.g., Pomodoro method) helps transform each act into a creation of meaning in the present, reducing anxiety about the future.

Practicing in Concrete Affairs

Treating daily life events as practice arenas for cultivating liangzhi restores the intrinsic wholeness of time through embodied action.

2.Cunli Quyu 存理去欲: Restoring the Self-Sufficiency of Time

Daily Introspection

Daily introspection on the motivations behind desires helps dissolve the dominance of external things over the heart- mind. Keeping a “desire inventory” avoids forced repression.

Minimalist Return-to-Origin

Regular decluttering and a 48- hour cooling- off period before purchases reduce impulse buying and restore the self-sufficiency of temporal experience.

3.Wanwu Yiti 万物一体: Attaining Temporal Fullness

Empathic Contemplation

Practicing empathy by perceiving and attending to the needs of others helps individuals experience the profound connection of life. Keeping an “empathy journal” enhances this practice.



Extension of Ren 仁

Extending kindness from close relationships to broader social and natural domains fosters deep connections and existential fulfillment through action.

Part 05

Conclusion & Implications

Summary of Contributions

1.Holistic Wisdom

Wang Yangming's xinxue offers a holistic approach to restoring authentic time, integrating cognition, emotion, and meaning. It provides a profound philosophical framework for addressing modern time anxiety.

2.Future Implications

The gongfu practices of xinxue offer a sustainable path for human flourishing in technological societies. They emphasize the ongoing cultivation of liangzhi and the restoration of temporal sovereignty for existential fulfillment.

Comparison with Western Approaches

- Holistic Cultivation
- New Paths for Philosophical Counseling
- Unlike Western therapies that focus on rational adjustment or emotional management, xinxue offers holistic cultivation: self, society, history, cosmos.
- Xinxue opens new paths for philosophical counseling in a technological age, emphasizing ontological and practical transformation.

Contemporary Relevance

01 Restoring Authentic Time

Restoring "authentic time" is crucial for meaning, autonomy, and flourishing in the digital era. Ongoing cultivation of liangzhi and temporal sovereignty is essential for existential wholeness.

02 Future Directions

Xinxue provides valuable insights for addressing time anxiety and existential meaning in future technological societies, offering a unique contribution of Chinese philosophy.

THANK YOU

赵宁 Zhao Ning

C2

Miaomiao Du · Xiaojun Ding (Xi'an Jiaotong University)

"Rational Resilience Argumentation(RRA): A Philosophical Framework for Self-Healing in Depressive States"

1. Introduction

Depressive states have become one of the central issues in contemporary mental health research. Worldwide, more than 300 million people suffer from a depressive disorder (Bayes, 2024). Core features of depression include persistent low mood, impaired cognitive function, motivational deficits, and social withdrawal—symptoms often sustained by a range of irrational beliefs (Sabshin, 1968). Irrational beliefs are considered to be pertinent particularly in the etiopathology of depression, as they commonly manifest as cognitive distortions such as catastrophizing, self-deprecation, and absolutist demands (Khan, 2024). These distorted thinking patterns form the foundational structure of depressive experiences (Dryden, 1994). As highlighted by Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), emotional distress is not caused directly by external events, but rather by the individual's interpretations and evaluative judgments of those events (Nordgaard et al., 2021).

This perspective echoes insights from ancient philosophy, where the common denominator of the mentally ill is the deficient and disturbed functioning of the rational soul (Ahonen, 2014). From this view, mental suffering stems not merely from external circumstances, but from internal disruptions in rational thought and evaluative coherence. Such a conception aligns with modern cognitive theories that attribute emotional dysfunction to distorted beliefs and flawed reasoning patterns.

Despite the robust empirical support for CBT's effectiveness in clinical settings, several limitations persist. On the one hand, uneven distribution of mental health resources and the high cost of professional services hinder sustained access to therapy for many individuals. On the other hand, cultural variations significantly influence the acceptance and perceived legitimacy of psychotherapeutic interventions (Wampold, 2013). Furthermore, standardized emotional interventions often prioritize procedural techniques over philosophical reflection on belief systems, thereby constraining the development of individuals' autonomous self-regulation capacities. Logic-Based Therapy (LBT), a philosophically enriched extension of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) (Cohen, 2025), aims to bridge these gaps. While retaining REBT's foundational assumption that irrational beliefs cause emotional disturbances, LBT enhances the therapeutic process through formal logical analysis, philosophical taxonomy, and value clarification, helping individuals construct coherent and reflective belief systems (Marinoff, 2001).

Building on these insights, this paper proposes the Rational Resilience Argumentation (RRA) framework, designed to integrate philosophical theories of argumentation with practical psychological interventions. RRA is proposed as a self-guided approach to emotional therapy. The paper begins by examining the limitations of traditional therapeutic methods—such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)—across key dimensions including cultural adaptability, accessibility, and philosophical depth, thereby establishing the theoretical necessity for the RRA framework. Subsequently, it draws upon several foundational theories in argumentation: Toulmin's argumentative structure model (Toulmin, 1958), Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's theory of rhetorical rationality (Kozy, 1970), Freeman's framework for analyzing argumentative validity (Freeman, 2011), and the pragma-dialectical principles developed by Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004). These theoretical foundations provide a multidimensional perspective—spanning logic, rhetoric, and pragmatics—for critically reflecting on, reorganizing, and replacing internalized beliefs. Based on these insights, the "Rational Resilient Argumentation" (RRA) framework is constructed, incorporating an eight-element argumentation format and a Critical Question Chain (CQs). Furthermore, AI-generated virtual cases—such as interventions for test anxiety—are used to illustrate its four-step process of "belief manifestation → resilience consolidation." Finally, the paper systematically evaluates the framework's theoretical innovations, practical advantages, and challenges in clinical translation—such as cognitive resource constraints and empirical gaps—and proposes pathways for hierarchical intervention and three-blind randomized controlled trial (RCT) validation.

Unlike conventional therapeutic models, RRA does not depend on continuous guidance from professional therapists. Instead, it equips individuals with tools to independently identify, question, and replace irrational beliefs, enabling them to achieve dual objectives through structured reasoning: alleviating current emotional distress (e.g., catastrophic thinking) while simultaneously fostering long-term psychological resilience.As an operational philosophical practice, RRA is particularly well-suited for contexts characterized by high cognitive engagement and frequent value-based inquiries, such as adolescent academic anxiety, workplace stress management, and existential life crises. It offers a novel paradigm for self-directed healing that combines theoretical rigor with practical flexibility.

2. Theoretical Foundations: From Philosophical Argumentation to Psychotherapeutic Application

The incorporation of philosophical practice into psychotherapeutic intervention is deeply rooted in the rational-critical tradition represented by Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). In particular, Logic-Based Therapy (LBT), as a philosophical extension of Rational–Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), introduces formal logic tools to systematically interpret irrational beliefs as logical fallacies. This approach constructs an analyzable and revisable framework for cognitive restructuring (Cohen, 2003). The theoretical contribution of LBT lies in two main aspects: first, it combines philosophical

logic with psychological intervention, endowing emotional reasoning with a formalized and testable structure; second, it focuses on reasoning dysfunctions in emotional disturbance, emphasizing the phenomenon of emotional reasoning—whereby individuals use subjective emotional states as premises to form judgments about themselves and the world.

More specifically, LBT formalizes emotional responses into a syllogistic structure by modeling the process as an "Object of Concern (O) – Evaluative Judgment (R)" framework. The rule follows the form: “If O, then R”; the report is “O occurs”; and the conclusion is “Therefore, R.” This model assists individuals in identifying the logical architecture of their own reasoning processes and clarifying implicit irrational premises, thus offering an operational path for cognitive revision. Empirical studies have also demonstrated a negative correlation between the level of Formal Logical Function (FLF) and emotional disorders such as depression and anxiety. Individuals with higher FLF exhibit greater consistency in reasoning and greater psychological resilience when confronting cognitive conflict (Nordgaard et al., 2021).

However, the syllogistic structure central to LBT also reveals several theoretical and practical limitations. First, its modeling of emotional reasoning tends to be overly linear, reducing complex psychological processes to a simplistic “objective event–evaluative reaction” causal chain. This reduction often overlooks the multidimensional mechanisms underpinning cognition (Ellis, 1962). For instance, failure in the workplace is rarely an isolated event; the resulting self-deprecating emotions are typically intertwined with long-standing self-schemas, pressure from others' evaluations, and affective residues of past failures (Beck, 1979). Furthermore, human cognition does not rely solely on deductive logic but frequently involves analogies, metaphors, and contextual associations (Sloman, 1996). For example, an individual might interpret a failed project as the “collapse of an entire life,” a cognitive mode that resists capture by LBT’s formal logical framework.

Second, LBT struggles with contextual sensitivity and implicit assumptions. The model relies primarily on the extraction and formal validation of explicit premises, making it difficult to analyze the unspoken contextual presuppositions and deep-seated motivations embedded in reasoning processes (Cohen, 2007). For instance, the root of social anxiety may lie not in the event of attending a social gathering, but in an individual's unconscious beliefs related to social comparison, tendencies toward self-devaluation, and hypersensitivity to evaluation. These formative but implicit assumptions often remain unstated, yet they play a decisive role in emotional reasoning. LBT’s capacity to address such hidden cognitive elements is limited, which may result in insufficient explanatory power and constrained therapeutic efficacy in practice.

While LBT is effective in identifying logical fallacies, its reliance on syllogistic analysis often renders it inadequate for detecting context-dependent, motivation-laden implicit assumptions. When analyzing pathological cognitive structures, the framework risks missing key blind spots embedded in context, as well as overlooking the argumentative intentions and psychological drivers behind the reasoning process.

To address these limitations, the introduction of argumentation schemes from informal logic—alongside their corresponding critical questioning mechanisms—offers a crucial theoretical expansion. Informal logic emphasizes the reasonableness of arguments in natural contexts and highlights the dynamic interplay between pragmatic conditions and argumentative strategies (Walton et al., 2008). This approach has three key methodological advantages:

First, it enables dynamic reconstruction. According to the "logical minimum – pragmatic maximum" principle proposed by Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004), argument analysis involves supplementing unstated or omitted premises based on contextual judgment to achieve argumentative completeness.

Second, it allows for precise targeting. Argumentation schemes, when paired with critical questions, facilitate the identification of common cognitive distortions such as catastrophizing, overgeneralization, and unrealistic expectations (Walton, 2010). For instance, by asking, "Is the outcome truly unbearable?" one can expose irrational belief structures embedded in an individual's thought process.

Third, argumentation schemes exhibit dialectical therapeutic potential. By engaging with structured argument forms, individuals are not only able to identify logical gaps but also to uncover the cognitive biases and mechanisms of self-deception underlying their reasoning—such as attributing failure to intrinsic flaws as a means of avoiding responsibility (Cohen, 2013). This philosophically grounded dialectical process supports deep cognitive transformation and emotional healing.

Argumentation schemes are essentially structured reasoning frameworks that not only contain premises and conclusions but also specify the inferential mechanisms that connect them (Wu, 2013). Compared to traditional premise-conclusion formats, these schemes highlight the systemic presentation of implicit elements and serve as effective tools for uncovering hidden assumptions within arguments (Miller, 2017). In everyday internal dialogues, irrational beliefs rarely appear as explicit propositions but are instead embedded as tacit premises within reasoning. As argumentation theorists have noted, one reason for concealing such premises is to "prevent the audience from attending to all parts of the content, thereby reducing the risk of being challenged or rejected" (Edoardo & Viviana, 2014). Thus, uncovering these hidden structures is crucial to identifying irrational beliefs—particularly for individuals experiencing depressive states, where such analysis may offer a pathway toward cognitive liberation and emotional repair (Maio, 2018).

Building on this, Van Eemeren and colleagues further argue that in cases of ambiguous argumentation, one should presume the existence of unexpressed premises; even in clearer contexts, adopting this assumption can help reveal and reconstruct the logical gaps in reasoning (Van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004). Accordingly, argumentation schemes offer not only structural tools but also analytical principles that empower individuals to critically reconstruct their belief systems through both linguistic and logical lenses when navigating emotional distress (Hahn, 2007).

In summary, integrating LBT's strength in formal logic with the contextual sensitivity of informal logic lays the theoretical groundwork for a more philosophically robust and

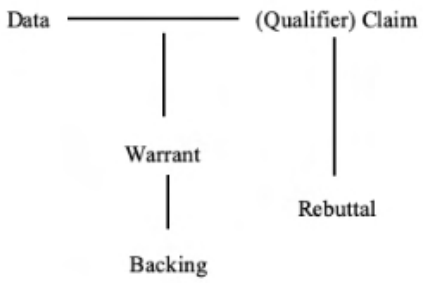
practically feasible model of psychotherapeutic intervention—namely, the Rational Resilience Argumentation (RRA) framework proposed in this paper. By incorporating multiple forms of argumentation, RRA seeks to bridge formal reasoning with practical dialectic, responding to the complex cognitive architecture of emotional suffering while equipping individuals with the agency to examine and restructure their own beliefs (Mercier, 2011).

3. RRA Construction

3.1 The Eight-Element Argumentation Scheme of RRA

This study integrates the Toulmin argumentation model (Toulmin, 1958) and pragmatic argumentation (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004), manifests cognitive fallacies in depressive states through a structured argumentation framework, and constructs a rational resilience argumentation model (RRA) consisting of eight core elements.

Figure 1:Toulmin argumentation model



As a classic form of argumentation, the Turmin model reconstructs the argument through six elements, as illustrated in Figure 1. This paper aims at the core goal of identifying unreasonable beliefs, combined with the needs of mining implicit hypotheses and cultivating cognitive resilience in the research of depressive states, adds two new elements, "Backing Data" and "Purpose", on the basis of the original model, redefines the functions of each element, and constructs a more applicable argumentation form. That is, the RRA eight-element argumentation form, as illustrated in Figure 2. The eight elements are specifically as follows:

1) **Claim:** The conclusion that the arguer seeks to establish—typically representing a core expression of cognitive distortion in depressive reasoning (e.g., “Life is meaningless”). It is crucial to note that the claim is a subjective cognitive judgment, not an objective fact.
2) **Data:** The original evidence or information that supports the claim, serving as the logical starting point of the argument. Individuals experiencing depressive states often engage in selective attention to negative data (e.g., “I failed an exam”), while disregarding positive evidence (e.g., “I passed other exams before”).
3) **Warrant:** The implicit rule or assumption that connects the data to the claim. It is often the breeding ground for cognitive fallacies (e.g., “Because I failed this exam, my life is worthless”).

4) **Backing:** Statements that lend credibility to the warrant by invoking deeper legitimizing sources such as cultural norms or social values. It provides the underlying justification for the warrant (e.g., internalized societal expectations of success).
5) **Backing Data:** Supplementary evidence that supports the original data, offering further factual context.
6) **Rebuttal:** Exception conditions that negate the claim or the warrant, often introduced with qualifiers such as "unless." Rebuttals help falsify absolutist beliefs by offering counterexamples (e.g., "Some people fail exams and still achieve success").
7) **Qualifier:** A linguistic modifier that limits the scope or probability of the claim (e.g., "possibly," "sometimes," "to some extent"). For example, changing "I always fail" to "I failed this exam and might need to change my study methods" reduces overgeneralization and fosters rational reinterpretation.
8) **Purpose:** The underlying intent or psychological motivation behind the argument (e.g., "to prove that life is meaningless"). This component explores strategic reasoning patterns such as self-handicapping or emotional avoidance (e.g., denying self-worth to evade effort), and redirects the argumentative process from pathology rationalization toward growth orientation.

The function of each component in identifying specific cognitive fallacies is outlined in Table1.

Figure 2: The eight element argumentation scheme of rational resilience argumentation

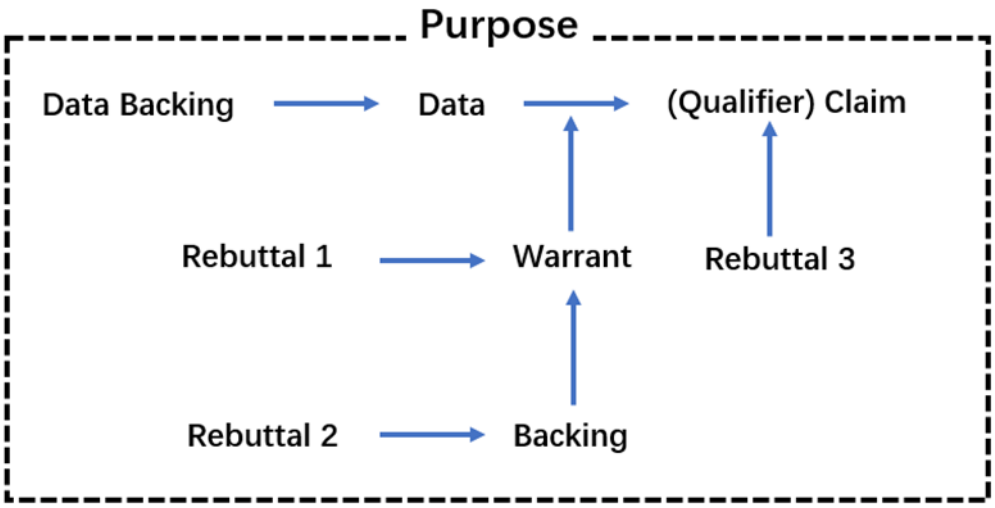


Table 1: The fallacy-identification function undertaken by the eight elements.

Element	Fallacy-identification function
Claim	Identifying absolutist conclusions (e.g., "I am bound to fail")
Data	Exposing selective attention to partial facts (e.g., focusing only on negative events while ignoring positive ones)
Warrant	**Core target: Deconstructing hidden rules (e.g., "Failing an exam = Incompetence," "Being rejected = Loss of self-worth")**

Element	Fallacy-identification function
Backing	Revealing cultural biases (e.g., "Society must recognize success," "Parental expectations define personal mission")
Data Backing	Filling data blind spots (e.g., overlooking personal strengths, past achievements, and other positive evidence)
Rebuttal	Generating counter-evidence (e.g., "Even successful people experience failure," "Depressive states can be improved through intervention")
Qualifier	Correcting overgeneralization (e.g., reframing "I always fail" as "I sometimes encounter setbacks")
Purpose	Uncovering strategic motives (e.g., using self-deprecation to avoid challenges, or catastrophizing to rationalize withdrawal)

3.2 Fallacy Excavation Through Critical Questions

Building upon the eight-element structure of the RRA model, this section introduces a hierarchical set of Critical Questions (CQs) designed to systematically uncover implicit assumptions and deconstruct cognitive fallacies in depressive reasoning. These CQs function as structured prompts to interrogate each element of the argument and bring latent distortions into awareness.

1) Claim Level CQs

CQ1: Does the conclusion exclude alternative possibilities?

Example: Does the statement "I am worthless" overlook other personal qualities? → Challenges absolutist thinking (e.g., "must," "always," "entirely").

CQ2: Is there evidence supporting an opposing conclusion?

Example: Can cases such as "socially valuable individuals who failed" (e.g., Stephen Hawking overcoming illness) be cited? → Refutes false dichotomies and black-and-white thinking.

CQ3: Does the conclusion lead to a logical contradiction?

Example: Does "I am worthless" contradict "I am still loved by my family"? → Triggers internal dissonance and reveals cognitive disjunctions.

2) Data Level CQs

CQ1: Does the selected data represent the full picture?

Example: Does focusing only on "failing a class" ignore positive experiences like "winning a competition"? → Exposes confirmation bias.

CQ2: Is the data source reliable?

Example: Is "my colleague says I'm incompetent" based on subjective opinion or supported by objective performance data? → Challenges emotional evidence fallacies.

CQ3: Is there a confusion between facts and subjective inference?

Example: Does "my manager didn't reply" justify the conclusion "they dislike me," or could other factors (e.g., workload) explain it? → Counters mind-reading fallacies.

3) Warrant Level CQs

CQ1: Are there counterexamples that challenge the rule?

Example: Does “all failures are worthless” collapse in light of Lincoln’s repeated failures before becoming president? → Refutes overgeneralization.

CQ2: Does the argument conflate possibility with certainty?

Example: Is “I might be rejected” distorted into “I will definitely be humiliated”? → Disrupts catastrophic thinking.

CQ3: Is the reasoning based on a false causal link?

Example: Does “being single” equate to “being a failure”? → Unravels post hoc fallacies and false causality.

4) Backing Level CQs

CQ1: Is the supporting belief aligned with reality?

Example: Is “society demands perfection” an actual universal norm or a personal misinterpretation? → Debunks cultural mythologizing.

CQ2: Is the backing belief context- or time-sensitive?

Example: Does the academic standard “my parents expect me to be top of the class” still apply in a professional work setting? → Challenges rigid standards.

CQ3: Are alternative belief systems possible?

Example: How do Eastern notions of “moderation” contrast with Western “elitism” in defining success? → Activates value pluralism and widens cognitive perspective.

5) Backing Data Level CQs

CQ1: Is any favorable data being overlooked?

Example: Does the focus on “a failed speech” ignore prior successful ones? → Fills evidence blind spots and restores balance.

CQ2: Is the weighting of data distorted?

Example: Is one piece of criticism overemphasized while multiple instances of praise are dismissed? → Corrects cognitive misweighting.

CQ3: Can the data be independently verified?

Example: Does “everyone hates me” rely on concrete evidence or subjective impression? → Promotes reality testing over speculative beliefs.

6) Rebuttal Level CQs

CQ1: Are there clear counterexamples that refute the claim?

Example: Can the idea “exam failure = life failure” be disproven by Einstein, who failed in school yet changed science? → Generates disconfirming evidence.

CQ2: Are the counterexamples generalizable?

Example: Does Edison’s repeated failure before inventing the light bulb suggest a broader principle (“failure breeds success”)? → Establishes hope anchors.

CQ3: If the rebuttal holds, how should the argument be revised?

Example: Adding “unless I learn from it” to “failure = worthlessness” restructures the logic. → Fosters cognitive flexibility.

7) Qualifier Level CQs

CQ1: Does the conclusion require probabilistic limits?

Example: Is “inevitable destruction” better reframed as “possible setbacks”? → Replaces absolutism with probabilistic thinking.

CQ2: Is the scope of the conclusion reasonable?

Example: Is “always incompetent” more accurately stated as “sometimes feel incapable”? → Sets cognitive boundaries.

CQ3: Does the qualifier reflect real-world uncertainty?

Example: Is “0% chance” more realistically “60% success rate”? → Anchors thinking in risk realism.

8) Purpose Level CQs

CQ1: Does the argument serve avoidant behavior?

Example: Is insisting “I’m incompetent” a way to escape job-seeking anxiety? → Reveals self-protective fallacies.

CQ2: Is the intention of the argument in conflict with long-term goals?

Example: Does “avoiding criticism” now undermine future “career growth”? → Exposes motivational contradictions.

CQ3: If the intention shifts, how would the reasoning change?

Example: Reframing from “proving self-worth” to “exploring potential” may reshape the logic of the argument. → Initiates meaning transformation.

3.3 Structured Process of RRA

3.3.1 The Core Three-Phase Mechanism: Disclosure, Disruption, and Reconstruction

The Rational Resilience Argumentation (RRA) framework, grounded in philosophical theories of argumentation, facilitates systematic psychotherapeutic intervention through a structured cognitive process of Disclosure – Disruption – Reconstruction. Each phase leverages the RRA’s eight-element argumentation scheme and its corresponding critical question chains (CQs), creating an intervention pathway that is both philosophically grounded and practically operational. The logic of this process is outlined as follows:

Phase	Core Tool	Pathway of Fallacy Disruption	Philosophical Shift in Cognition
1. Disclosure	Eight-Element Argumentation Scheme	Reveal hidden premises → Expose logical discontinuities	From “unconscious control” to “conscious scrutiny”
2. Disruption	Critical Question Chain (CQs)	Falsify with counterexamples → Apply probabilistic qualifiers → Uncover motivational bias	From “absolutist cognition” to “dialectical inquiry”
3. Reconstruction	Evidence-based belief system	Integrate new evidence → Reframe purpose → Iterate cognitive framework	From “irrational defense” to “rational resilience construction”

In the disclosure phase, the eight-element argumentation model serves to formalize the internal reasoning process and surface previously implicit premises, thereby laying the groundwork for critical engagement. The disruption phase mobilizes the CQ framework to systematically interrogate these elements—especially key fallacy-bearing components such as warrants and backings—through targeted questioning. Finally, the reconstruction phase synthesizes insights from the prior stages into a revised belief system by integrating counterexamples, probabilistic qualifiers, and revised intentions into a cognitively upgraded structure.
This tripartite mechanism of formal deconstruction – critical elimination – integrative reconstruction preserves the logical analytic tradition of Logic-Based Therapy (LBT), while extending it through the dynamic interactivity of argumentation schemes. In doing so, RRA introduces philosophical dialectics into the heart of cognitive healing, achieving a full-cycle transformation from fallacy identification to resilience cultivation.

3.3.2 Structured Implementation Process of RRA

RRA operationalizes the therapeutic process into a four-step dialectical cycle to ensure standardization and reproducibility. This closed-loop process moves systematically from cognitive deconstruction to behavioral verification.

Step 1: Argument Reconstruction (Belief Explicitation)

Operational Goal: To extract implicit premises through dialogical interaction and formalize them into the eight-element argumentation map, with a focus on surfacing key fallacy carriers—namely the *warrant (W)* and *purpose (P)*. Starting with the *claim (C)*, a chain of probing questions helps complete the evidential structure:

- “How did you arrive at the conclusion that failing an exam = life has no value?” (to extract *data*, D);
- “What makes you believe that academic performance determines life’s worth?” (to locate the *warrant*, W);
- “Does holding this belief help you avoid certain pressures?” (to explore the *purpose*, P).

Missing components (e.g., *rebuttal* R or *qualifier* Q) are noted and mapped into a visual argument diagram (see Figure 1).

Step 2: Fallacy Diagnostics

Operational Goal: To identify and localize pathological reasoning patterns using the Critical Question (CQ) framework, and to flag logical vulnerabilities within the argument. The diagnostic process involves three sub-steps:

- First, retrieve targeted CQs. For example, when examining the *warrant* (W), ask: “Are there counterexamples of individuals who failed academically yet led meaningful lives?” (e.g., the case of Vincent van Gogh).

- Second, perform fallacy matching. If the response is, “Everyone who fails is worthless,” it indicates an *overgeneralization* fallacy, with *warrant (W)* as the target.
- Third, visualize the diagnostic results by marking logical flaws in red (e.g., flawed warrant) and evidential distortions (e.g., biased data D) in yellow on the argument map.

Step 3: Evidence-Based Replacement (Constructive Substitution)
Operational Goal: To replace faulty premises with philosophically grounded, evidence-informed alternatives, thus transforming cognitive refutation into meaningful reconstruction. The reconstruction procedure includes:

- Introducing new evidence (e.g., rebuttal R) to refute the original warrant: for instance, citing Churchill’s setbacks to challenge “nervousness = incompetence”;
- Rebuilding the warrant through philosophical reframing: drawing on Stoic principles of controllability to establish a new warrant—“What I control is preparation, not outcome”;
- Refining the conclusion using a *qualifier (Q)* such as “possibly,” producing a resilient new claim like:
  “Nervousness may affect performance but does not define my ability.”

Step 4: Cognitive-Behavioral Experiment (Resilience Consolidation)
Operational Goal: To verify the restructured belief system through quantifiable behavioral experiments, thereby reinforcing the *cognition-behavior* loop corresponding to the *reconstruction* phase described in Section 3.3.1. The design logic includes two main dimensions:

- First, designing actionable experiments to falsify prior fallacies (e.g., catastrophizing or overgeneralization);
- Second, collecting disconfirming evidence through measurable behavioral outcomes, thus directly challenging imagined fears with real-world data.

4. Methodology and Case Analysis: Application of the Simulated Dialogue Method

Due to time and policy limitations, the effectiveness of RRA was not verified through real consultation cases in this study. To fully present the operation process of RRA, this study adopts the virtual dialogue method (Tait, 2025; Cohen, 2015), that is, to simulate the consultation process through preset situations and virtual character dialogues. Specifically, this study uses ChatGPT to generate case dialogues, and the prompt words are set as:
Suppose you are a philosophical practitioner. Please use the RRA method (as described in the attachment) to help a student who feels hopeless about life after failing

an exam. Fully reproduce the consultation dialogue and demonstrate the full-process application of RRA.
The generated dialogue strictly adheres to the four stages of RRA (belief explicit, fallacy diagnosis, constructive substitution, and resilience consolidation), aiming to demonstrate the practical application of this method in identifying and transforming irrational beliefs through structured reasoning.

Characters:

- **Philosophical Practitioner (P)**
- **Student (S)**: emotionally distressed，reporting “life is hopeless due to exam failure”

Step 1: Argument Reconstruction
P: You mentioned that failing the exam makes you feel life is hopeless. Could you tell me how you arrived at that conclusion?
S: I messed up the exam, and not for the first time. I feel like I’m incapable, and I’m doomed to have a worthless life.
P: I see. Would you say you hold a belief like, “Academic performance determines life value”?

S: Yes. If you don’t get good grades，your future is ruined. No one will respect you.

P: Let me ask: does holding onto this belief help you avoid some other pressures, such as competition or career choices?
S: …Maybe. I just feel like I’d fail anyway, so I might as well give up.
P: Great insight. Let’s try to structure your belief as an argument diagram:

- **Conclusion (C)**: “I failed the exam, so my life has no value.”
- **Data (D)**: “I’ve failed several exams in a row.”
- **Warrant (W)**: “Exam results determine a person’s life value.”
- **Purpose (P)**: “To avoid facing uncertain future and competition.”
- Missing elements: **Rebuttal (R)**, **Qualifier (Q)**, **Backing (B),Data Backing(DB)**

Step 2: Fallacy Diagnostics
P: Let’s examine this argument step-by-step. Do you think there are counterexamples to the belief “failing an exam = having no value”?
S: I suppose so. I’ve heard that Stephen Hawking didn’t perform well in school at first...
P: That’s a strong example. So not all who fail are worthless, right? Now, do you think failing a few exams truly defines your entire worth as a person?
S: …Maybe not.
P: Also, you mentioned “repeated failure.” Is it possible you’re selectively focusing on negative experiences? What about other aspects—like being diligent, helping classmates, or doing well in some other courses?

S: I haven't really paid attention to those…
P: That's what we call **confirmation bias**—when your mind filters in only negative information. It doesn't reflect the whole picture.
P: Let's dig deeper. You said, "Failing exams means a hopeless future." Is that a possibility—or an absolute certainty?
S: It's probably just a possibility… but I always feel like it's inevitable.
P: That's the effect of **catastrophizing**—where we exaggerate the worst-case scenario and mistake it for destiny.

Step 3: Evidence-Based Replacement
P: Let's consider a Stoic perspective: "What's under my control is preparation, not the outcome." What do you think of that?
S: I think that makes sense. But I always focus too much on the result—I feel like only success matters.
P: Suppose you internalized that Stoic idea. Then your argument could be restructured as:

- **Data**: I failed this exam, but in some areas, I did improve (e.g., tried harder than last time).
- **Warrant**: A person's value isn't defined by a single result, but by a willingness to keep learning.
- **Conclusion**: Exam failure ≠ Life failure. It simply shows where I have room to grow.
- **Purpose**: To shift focus from fearing failure to exploring personal development.

Step 4: Cognitive-Behavioral Experiment
P: To make this new belief more tangible, would you be willing to try some behavioral experiments?
S: Sure.
P:

- **Experiment 1: Counterexample Collection**
  - **Task**: Interview 3 senior students who've failed exams before. Find out how they got through it and what they're doing now.
  - **Goal**: Refute "failure = life collapse."
- **Experiment 2: Controllability Checklist**
  - **Task**: Make a review plan. For example:
    - Analyze one incorrect question each day.
    - Meet a teacher once a week to ask questions.
  - **Goal**: Shift to a process-oriented mindset and focus on controllable efforts.

Closing Reflection

P: Looking back now, does the idea “exam failure = hopeless life” still seem as absolute as before?
S: Not really… It was just how I felt in the moment. In reality, I still have things I can work on.
P: That’s wonderful. Remember, the goal of RRA isn’t to dismiss your feelings, but to help you understand the hidden beliefs behind them—and empower you to choose which ones to keep.

5. Discussion: Paradigmatic Innovations and Challenges of RRA

5.1 Theoretical Innovations

The theoretical novelty of the Rational Resilience Argumentation (RRA) framework lies primarily in its systematic integration of argumentation schemes. It transforms the static elements of Toulmin’s model—such as claims, warrants, and rebuttals—into a dynamic dialectical process. For example, chains of rebuttals evolve iteratively, shifting from isolated counterarguments to the construction of broader evidential networks. In terms of philosophical instrumentalization, RRA addresses three long-standing difficulties in applied philosophy:

(1) It converts abstract concepts into fill-in-the-blank style argumentation templates, making philosophical reasoning a practical tool for self-healing;
(2) It operationalizes fallacy analysis through critical question chains (CQs), facilitating a self-guided “fallacy tribunal”;
(3) It develops a three-phase intervention model—Disclosure, Disruption, Reconstruction—realized through four steps: Argument Reconstruction, Fallacy Diagnostics, Evidence-Based Replacement, and Cognitive-Behavioral Experimentation.

These steps form a coherent loop from theory to practice: beginning with the explication of hidden assumptions (disclosure) via argument structure, moving to the dismantling of faulty reasoning (disruption) through targeted CQs, and culminating in the implantation of evidence-based beliefs and behavioral consolidation (reconstruction). In this way, RRA extends the logical analytic tradition of LBT while embedding philosophical dialectics into the structure of cognitive healing.

5.2 Practical Advantages

RRA demonstrates both low entry barriers and a high degree of autonomy in practice. Unlike traditional therapies, which often rely on the expert to identify fallacies, RRA empowers individuals to independently uncover flaws in their own warrants (e.g., implicit rules such as “academic failure = life failure”). The generation of replacement beliefs also shifts from expert provision to personalized construction, wherein individuals use their own experiences to build counterevidence chains. This marks a form of “philosophical democratization”: Descartes’ methodic doubt becomes an

operable chain of CQs, while Aristotelian phronesis is embodied through the calibration of qualifiers—thus restoring philosophical agency to the individual.

5.3 Potential Challenges

Despite its strengths, RRA faces two primary challenges in application. First, individuals experiencing severe depressive episodes may lack the cognitive resources to engage in structured self-argumentation. A possible solution lies in *tiered intervention design*:

- **Phase 1**: AI-assisted argument reconstruction;
- **Phase 2**: Simplification of the eight-element model to its core triad (*claim–warrant–rebuttal*);
- **Phase 3**: Gradual transition to full self-led reasoning.

Second, at present, the validity verification of RRA mainly relies on theoretical derivation and virtual cases, lacking strict empirical research support. In the future, this gap needs to be filled through multi-dimensional experimental design. Specifically, the three-blind randomized controlled trial (RCT) method can be adopted. After screening the subjects through the BDI-II-C and PHQ-9 scales, they are divided into the "RRA+ psychological counseling" experimental group, the "RRA+ AI-assisted" control group and the waiting list group for a 4-week intervention. The combined approach of quantitative assessment (scale retesting) and qualitative analysis (in-depth interviews) was adopted to systematically investigate the effects of RRA in improving depressive symptoms, correcting irrational beliefs, and enhancing psychological resilience. At the same time, it is necessary to explore the differences in the applicability of RRA in different cultural backgrounds, as well as the application potential of AI technology in assisting in argumentation reconstruction and counterexample generation. Thus providing more comprehensive and reliable empirical evidence for the clinical application of RRA.

6. Conclusion

This study proposes the Rational Resilience Argumentation (RRA) framework as a novel integration of philosophical argumentation theory and psychotherapeutic practice, offering a rigorous yet practical method for self-guided intervention in depressive states. Using an eight-element argumentation scheme, RRA guides individuals through a three-phase mechanism—surfacing hidden assumptions, deconstructing cognitive fallacies, and reconstructing rational belief systems. The abstract deliberations of philosophy are thus translated into a structured, operational form of cognitive self-healing.

At the theoretical level, RRA overcomes traditional cognitive therapy’s limitations in contextual sensitivity and intention detection, enabling a deeper fusion of logical tools and emotional regulation. Practically, a simulated case demonstrates how the CQ

framework disarms irrational beliefs such as “exam failure = life failure,” revealing RRA’s potential to democratize philosophical reflection and promote autonomous healing.

With future empirical validation and the integration of intelligent technologies, RRA may become a viable bridge between philosophical theory and mental health practice—offering sustainable support for individuals navigating cognitive distress and cultivating a coexistence of rationality and resilience.

Reference

[1] Bayes, J., Schloss, J., & Sibbritt, D. (2024). The use of diet for preventing and treating depression in young men: current evidence and existing challenges. British Journal of Nutrition, 131(2), 214–218. doi:10.1017/S000711452300168X

[2] Rupke, S. J., Blecke, D., & Renfrow, M. (2006). Cognitive therapy for depression. American family physician, 73(1), 83-86.

[3] Dryden, W., & Bond, F. W. (1994). Reason and emotion in psychotherapy: Albert Ellis. The British Journal of Psychiatry, 165(1), 131-135.

[4] Freeman, J. B. (2011). Dialectics and the macrostructure of arguments: A theory of argument structure (Vol. 10). Walter de Gruyter.

[5] Kozy Jr, J. (1970). The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation.

[6] Marinoff, L. (2001). Philosophical practice. Elsevier.

[7] Toulmin, S. (1958). The uses of argument. Cambridge University Press.

[8] Van Eemeren, F. H., Grootendorst, R., & Grootendorst, R. (2004). A systematic theory of argumentation: The pragma-dialectical approach. Cambridge University Press.

[9] Wampold, B. E. (2013). The great psychotherapy debate: Models, methods, and findings. Routledge.

[10] 武宏志. (2003). 论证的图尔敏模式——兼评国内若干论著的误释. 华南师范大学学报: 社会科学版, (5), 23-27.

[11] 莫晓红. (2004). 图尔敏论证模式研究 (Doctoral dissertation, 广州: 华南师范大学政法学院).

[12] Beck, A. T. (1979). Cognitive therapy and the emotional disorders. Penguin.

[13] Cohen, E. D. (2003). What would Aristotle do?: self-control through the power of reason. Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic.

[14] Cohen, E. D. (2007). The new rational therapy: Thinking your way to serenity, success, and profound happiness. Rowman & Littlefield.

[15] Cohen, E. D. (2016). Logic-based therapy and everyday emotions: A case-based approach. Lexington Books.

[16] Ellis, A. (1962). Reason and emotion in psychotherapy.

[17] Nordgaard, J., Gravesen-Jensen, M., Buch-Pedersen, M., & Parnas, J. (2021). Formal thought disorder and self-disorder: an empirical study. Frontiers in psychiatry, 12, 640921.

[18] Sloman, S. A. (1996). The empirical case for two systems of reasoning. Psychological bulletin, 119(1), 3.

[19] Walton, D. (2010). Why fallacies appear to be better arguments than they are. Informal logic, 30(2), 159-184.

[20] Walton, D., Reed, C., & Macagno, F. (2008). Argumentation schemes. Cambridge University Press.

[21] Miller, D., & Zalta, E. N. (2017). The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford, CA.

[22] Edoardo L V , Viviana M . Implicitness impact : Measuring texts [J] . Journal of Pragmatics ,

2014 , 61

[23] Maio, G. R., Verplanken, B., & Haddock, G. (2018). The psychology of attitudes and attitude change.

[24] Hahn, U., & Oaksford, M. (2007). The rationality of informal argumentation: a Bayesian approach to reasoning fallacies. Psychological review, 114(3), 704.

[25] Mercier, H., & Sperber, D. (2011). Why do humans reason? Arguments for an argumentative theory. Behavioral and brain sciences, 34(2), 57-74.

[26] Khan, M. A., Rahim, A., Haroon, Z., Aziz, A., Ahmad, M., & Abid, M.(2024) Irrational Beliefs and Depressive Symptoms in Adolescents: Examining the Mediating Role of Self Image. International Journal of Multicultural Education (IJME), 26(1).

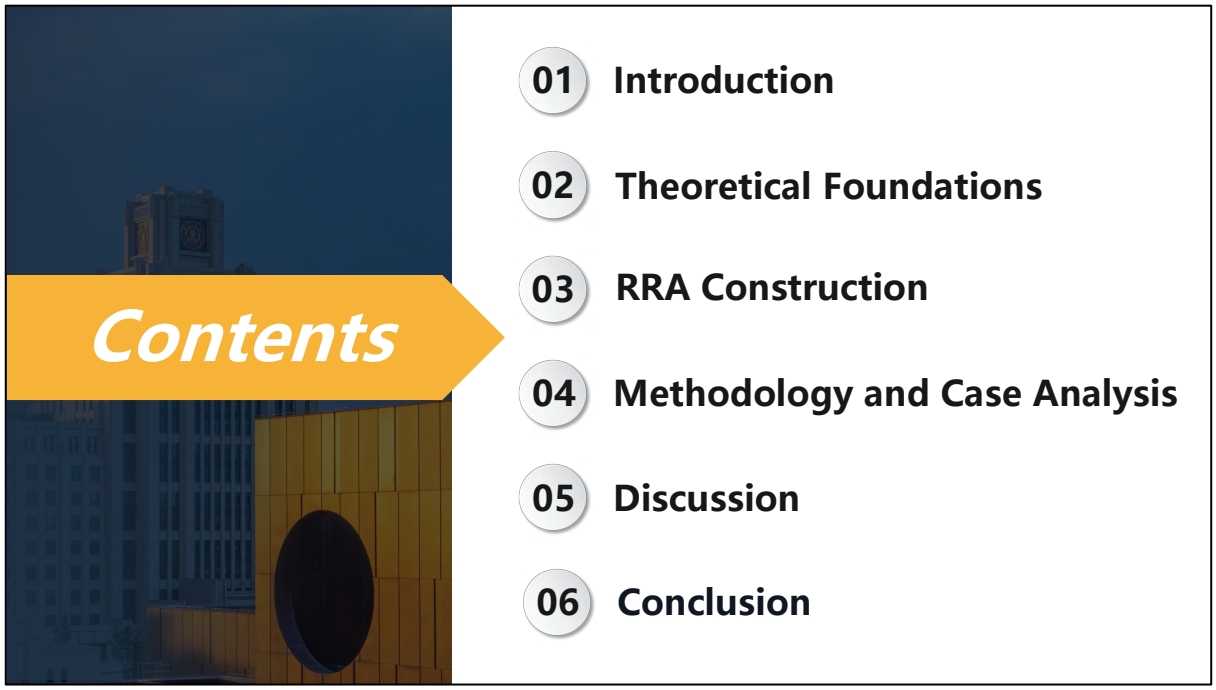
[27] Sabshin, M. (1968). Depression: Clinical, Experimental and Theoretical Aspects. Archives of General Psychiatry, 19(6), 766-767.

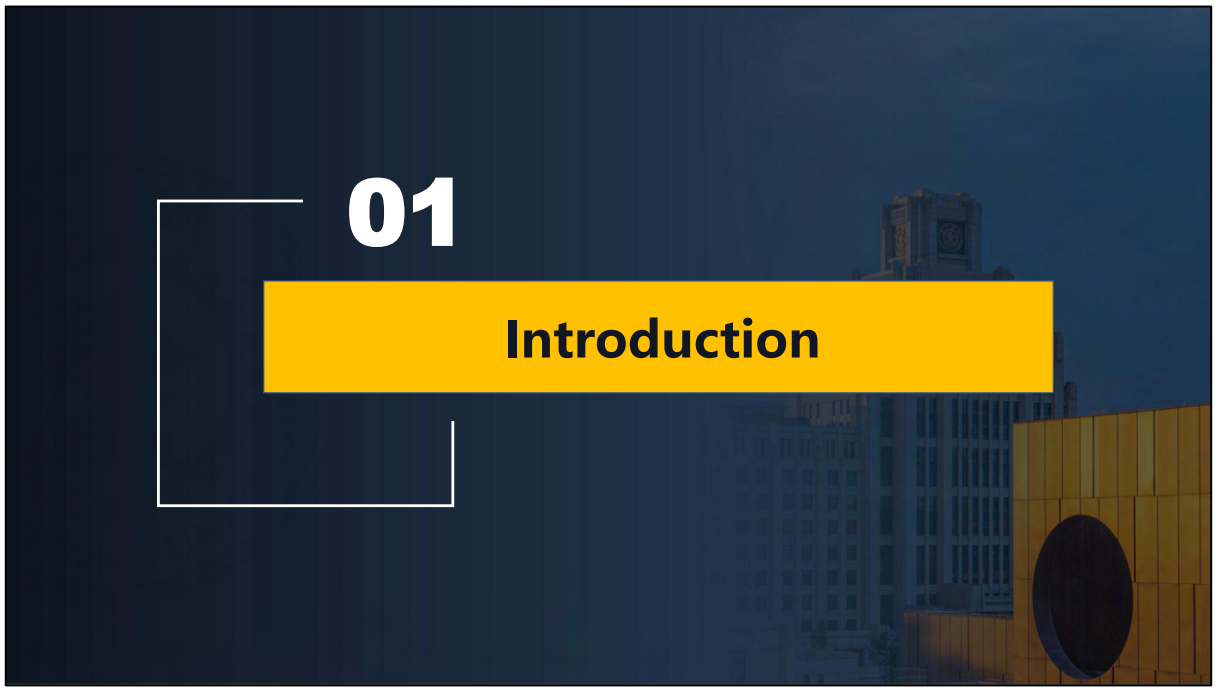
[28] Cohen, E. D. (2025). Interconnectivity in Logic-Based Therapy. Religions, 16(2), 188.

[29]Tait, D., & Rossner, M. (2025). Imagining the metaverse court: A conversation between science fiction and Shakespeare.Frontiers in Sociology,10, 1552706.

[30]Cohen, E. D. (2015). Counseling Hume: Using Logic-Based Therapy to address generalized anxiety disorder. International Journal of Philosophical Practice, 3(4), 28–38.


西安交通大学
XI'AN JIAOTONG UNIVERSITY
Rational Resilience Argumentation(RRA): A Philosophical Argumentation-Based Framework for Self-healing in Depression
Miaomiao Du & Xiaojun Ding
2025-07-10

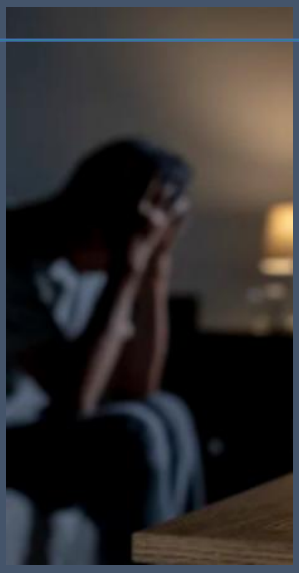

Contents
01 Introduction
02 Theoretical Foundations
03 RRA Construction
04 Methodology and Case Analysis
05 Discussion
06 Conclusion



Introduction

>300 million affected globally (Bayes, 2024).

- Core Problem: Depression is a central issue in contemporary mental health research (Bayes, 2024).
- Core Symptoms (Sabshin, 1968):
  - Persistent low mood
  - Impaired cognitive function
  - Motivational deficits
  - Social withdrawal
- Key Pathological Factor: **Irrational Beliefs are central to symptom maintenance** (Khan, 2024; Dryden, 1994).





Theoretical Foundations

Core Insight (CBT/Nordgaard et al., 2021):

Emotional distress stems from an individual's interpretations and evaluations of events, not the events themselves.

Philosophical Echo (Ahonen, 2014):

Mental suffering arises from internal dysfunction of rational faculties ("rational soul" disturbance).

Modern Cognitive Theory Consensus:

Emotional dysfunction is attributed to distorted beliefs and flawed reasoning patterns.

Theoretical Foundations

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

Strength: Robust empirical support for clinical effectiveness.

Limitations:

1. Uneven resource distribution & high cost of professional services → Poor accessibility.
2. Cultural variations impact acceptance and perceived legitimacy (Wampold, 2013).
3. Standardized interventions often prioritize techniques over philosophical reflection on belief systems → Constrains development of autonomous self-regulation capacities.

Theoretical Foundations

Towards Integration: Insights from Logic-Based Therapy (LBT)

A philosophically enriched extension of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) (Cohen, 2025).

Core Inheritance: Irrational beliefs cause emotional disturbances.

Key Enhancements (Marinoff, 2001):

- Formal logical analysis
- Philosophical taxonomy
- Value clarification

Goal: Help individuals construct coherent, reflective belief systems.

Significance: Provides a bridge integrating philosophical depth with practical intervention.

RRA Construction

Proposing a New Framework: Rational Resilience Argumentation (RRA) (Core Innovation)

Goal: Integrate philosophical argumentation theory with practical psychological intervention to offer a self-guided path for emotional healing.

Theoretical Foundation (Multidimensional Argumentation Perspective):

Logical Structure: Toulmin's Model of Argumentation (1958) - (Claim, Data/Evidence, Warrant, Backing, Qualifier, Rebuttal)

Rhetorical Rationality: Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca's Rhetorical Theory (Kozy, 1970) - (Audience, Consensus, Values)

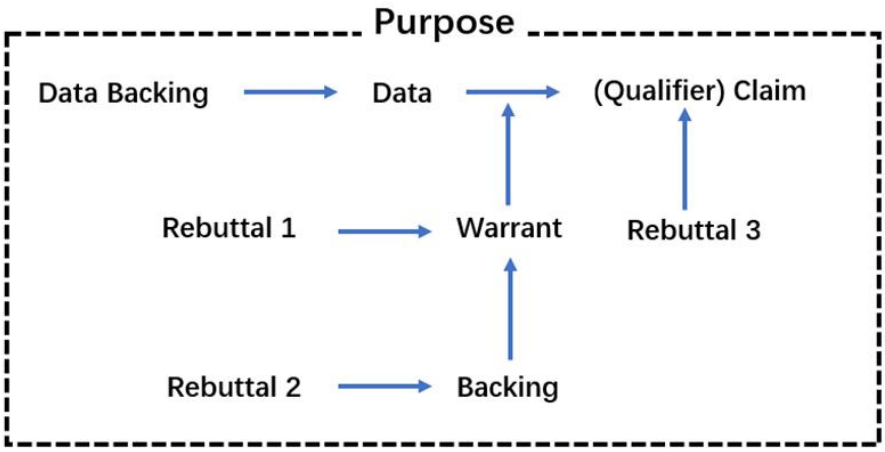
Argument Validity: Freeman's Analytical Framework (2011) - (Premise Acceptability, Relevance, Sufficiency)

Dialectical Procedure: Van Eemeren & Grootendorst's Pragma-Dialectical Principles (2004) - (Rules for Critical Discussion)



RRA Construction

The eight element argumentation scheme of rational resilience argumentation



RRA Construction

The fallacy-identification function undertaken by the eight elements

Element	Fallacy-identification function
Claim	Identifying absolutist conclusions (e.g., "I am bound to fail")
Data	Exposing selective attention to partial facts (e.g., focusing only on negative events while ignoring positive ones)
Warrant	Core target: Deconstructing hidden rules (e.g., "Failing an exam = Incompetence," "Being rejected = Loss of self-worth")
Backing	Revealing cultural biases (e.g., "Society must recognize success," "Parental expectations define personal mission")
Data Backing	Filling data blind spots (e.g., overlooking personal strengths, past achievements, and other positive evidence)
Rebuttal	Generating counter-evidence (e.g., "Even successful people experience failure," "Depressive states can be improved through intervention")
Qualifier	Correcting overgeneralization (e.g., reframing "I always fail" as "I sometimes encounter setbacks")
Purpose	Uncovering strategic motives (e.g., using self-deprecation to avoid challenges, or catastrophizing to rationalize withdrawal)

RRA Construction

Fallacy Excavation Through Critical Questions

1. **Data Level CQs**

CQ1: Does the selected data represent the full picture?

Example: Does focusing only on "failing a class" ignore positive experiences like "winning a competition"? → Exposes confirmation bias.

CQ2: Is the data source reliable?

Example: Is "my colleague says I'm incompetent" based on subjective opinion or supported by objective performance data? → Challenges emotional evidence fallacies.

CQ3: Is there a confusion between facts and subjective inference?

Example: Does "my manager didn't reply" justify the conclusion "they dislike me," or could other factors (e.g., workload) explain it? → Counters mind-reading fallacies.

RRA Construction

Fallacy Excavation Through Critical Questions

2. **Claim Level CQs**

CQ1: Does the conclusion exclude alternative possibilities?

Example: Does the statement "I am worthless" overlook other personal qualities? → Challenges absolutist thinking (e.g., "must," "always," "entirely").

CQ2: Is there evidence supporting an opposing conclusion?

Example: Can cases such as "socially valuable individuals who failed" (e.g., Stephen Hawking overcoming illness) be cited? → Refutes false dichotomies and black-and-white thinking.

CQ3: Does the conclusion lead to a logical contradiction?

Example: Does "I am worthless" contradict "I am still loved by my family"? → Triggers internal dissonance and reveals cognitive disjunctions.

RRA Construction

Fallacy Excavation Through Critical Questions

3. Warrant Level CQs

CQ1: Are there counterexamples that challenge the rule?

Example: Does "all failures are worthless" collapse in light of Lincoln's repeated failures before becoming president? → Refutes overgeneralization.

CQ2: Does the argument conflate possibility with certainty?

Example: Is "I might be rejected" distorted into "I will definitely be humiliated"? → Disrupts catastrophic thinking.

CQ3: Is the reasoning based on a false causal link?

Example: Does "being single" equate to "being a failure"? → Unravels post hoc fallacies and false causality.

RRA Construction

Fallacy Excavation Through Critical Questions

4. Backing Level CQs

CQ1: Is the supporting belief aligned with reality?

Example: Is "society demands perfection" an actual universal norm or a personal misinterpretation? → Debunks cultural mythologizing.

CQ2: Is the backing belief context- or time-sensitive?

Example: Does the academic standard "my parents expect me to be top of the class" still apply in a professional work setting? → Challenges rigid standards.

CQ3: Are alternative belief systems possible?

Example: How do Eastern notions of "moderation" contrast with Western "elitism" in defining success? → Activates value pluralism and widens cognitive perspective.

RRA Construction

Fallacy Excavation Through Critical Questions

5. **Backing Data Level CQs**

CQ1: Is any favorable data being overlooked?

Example: Does the focus on "a failed speech" ignore prior successful ones? → Fills evidence blind spots and restores balance.

CQ2: Is the weighting of data distorted?

Example: Is one piece of criticism overemphasized while multiple instances of praise are dismissed? → Corrects cognitive misweighting.

CQ3: Can the data be independently verified?

Example: Does "everyone hates me" rely on concrete evidence or subjective impression? → Promotes reality testing over speculative beliefs.

RRA Construction

Fallacy Excavation Through Critical Questions

6. **Rebuttal Level CQs**

CQ1: Are there clear counterexamples that refute the claim?

Example: Can the idea "exam failure = life failure" be disproven by Einstein, who failed in school yet changed science? → Generates disconfirming evidence.

CQ2: Are the counterexamples generalizable?

Example: Does Edison's repeated failure before inventing the light bulb suggest a broader principle ("failure breeds success")? → Establishes hope anchors.

CQ3: If the rebuttal holds, how should the argument be revised?

Example: Adding "unless I learn from it" to "failure = worthlessness" restructures the logic. → Fosters cognitive flexibility.

RRA Construction

Fallacy Excavation Through Critical Questions

7. Qualifier Level CQs

CQ1: Does the conclusion require probabilistic limits?

Example: Is "inevitable destruction" better reframed as "possible setbacks"? → Replaces absolutism with probabilistic thinking.

CQ2: Is the scope of the conclusion reasonable?

Example: Is "always incompetent" more accurately stated as "sometimes feel incapable"? → Sets cognitive boundaries.

CQ3: Does the qualifier reflect real-world uncertainty?

Example: Is "0% chance" more realistically "60% success rate"? → Anchors thinking in risk realism.

RRA Construction

Fallacy Excavation Through Critical Questions

8. Purpose Level CQs

CQ1: Does the argument serve avoidant behavior?

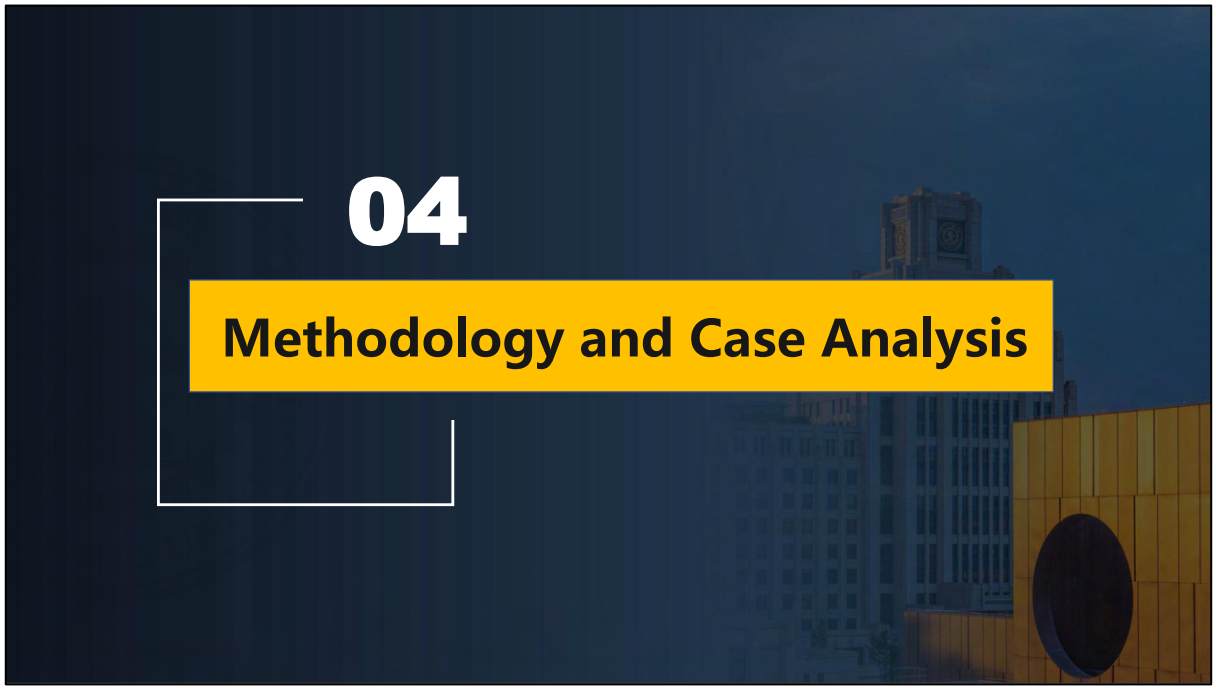
Example: Is insisting "I'm incompetent" a way to escape job-seeking anxiety? → Reveals self-protective fallacies.

CQ2: Is the intention of the argument in conflict with long-term goals?

Example: Does "avoiding criticism" now undermine future "career growth"? → Exposes motivational contradictions.

CQ3: If the intention shifts, how would the reasoning change?

Example: Reframing from "proving self-worth" to "exploring potential" may reshape the logic of the argument. → Initiates meaning transformation.



Methodology and Case Analysis

Phase	Core Tool	Pathway of Fallacy Disruption	Philosophical Shift in Cognition
1. Disclosure	Eight-Element Argumentation Scheme	Reveal hidden premises → Expose logical discontinuities	From "unconscious control" to "conscious scrutiny"
2. Disruption	Critical Question Chain (CQs)	Falsify with counterexamples → Apply probabilistic qualifiers → Uncover motivational bias	From "absolutist cognition" to "dialectical inquiry"
3. Reconstruction	Evidence-based belief system	Integrate new evidence → Reframe purpose → Iterate cognitive framework	From "irrational defense" to "rational resilience construction"

Methodology and Case Analysis

Step 1: Argument Reconstruction (Belief Explicitation)

Operational Goal: To extract implicit premises through dialogical interaction and formalize them into the eight-element argumentation map, with a focus on surfacing key fallacy carriers—namely the *warrant (W)* and *purpose (P)*. Starting with the *claim (C)*, a chain of probing questions helps complete the evidential structure:

- "How did you arrive at the conclusion that failing an exam = life has no value?" (to extract *data*, D);
- "What makes you believe that academic performance determines life's worth?" (to locate the *warrant*, W);
- "Does holding this belief help you avoid certain pressures?" (to explore the *purpose*, P).

Missing components (e.g., *rebuttal* R or *qualifier* Q) are noted and mapped into a visual argument diagram (see Figure 1).

Methodology and Case Analysis

Step 2: Fallacy Diagnostics

Operational Goal: To identify and localize pathological reasoning patterns using the Critical Question (CQ) framework, and to flag logical vulnerabilities within the argument. The diagnostic process involves three sub-steps:

- First, retrieve targeted CQs. For example, when examining the *warrant* (W), ask: "Are there counterexamples of individuals who failed academically yet led meaningful lives?" (e.g., the case of Vincent van Gogh).
- Second, perform fallacy matching. If the response is, "Everyone who fails is worthless," it indicates an *overgeneralization* fallacy, with *warrant (W)* as the target.
- Third, visualize the diagnostic results by marking logical flaws in red (e.g., flawed warrant) and evidential distortions (e.g., biased data D) in yellow on the argument map.

Methodology and Case Analysis

Step 3: Evidence-Based Replacement (Constructive Substitution)

Operational Goal: To replace faulty premises with philosophically grounded, evidence-informed alternatives, thus transforming cognitive refutation into meaningful reconstruction. The reconstruction procedure includes:

- Introducing new evidence (e.g., rebuttal R) to refute the original warrant: for instance, citing Churchill's setbacks to challenge "nervousness = incompetence";
- Rebuilding the warrant through philosophical reframing: drawing on Stoic principles of controllability to establish a new warrant—"What I control is preparation, not outcome";
- Refining the conclusion using a *qualifier (Q)* such as "possibly," producing a resilient new claim like:

"Nervousness may affect performance but does not define my ability."

Methodology and Case Analysis

Step 4: Cognitive-Behavioral Experiment (Resilience Consolidation)

Operational Goal: To verify the restructured belief system through quantifiable behavioral experiments, thereby reinforcing the *cognition-behavior* loop corresponding to the *reconstruction* phase described in Section 3.3.1. The design logic includes two main dimensions:

- First, designing actionable experiments to falsify prior fallacies (e.g., catastrophizing or overgeneralization);
- Second, collecting disconfirming evidence through measurable behavioral outcomes, thus directly challenging imagined fears with real-world data.

Case Analysis

Step 1: Argument Reconstruction

P: You mentioned that failing the exam makes you feel life is hopeless. Could you tell me how you arrived at that conclusion?

S: I messed up the exam, and not for the first time. I feel like I'm incapable, and I'm doomed to have a worthless life.

P: I see. Would you say you hold a belief like, "Academic performance determines life value"?

S: Yes. If you don't get good grades, your future is ruined. No one will respect you.

P: Let me ask: does holding onto this belief help you avoid some other pressures, such as competition or career choices?

S: …Maybe. I just feel like I'd fail anyway, so I might as well give up.

P: Great insight. Let's try to structure your belief as an argument diagram:

- **Conclusion (C)**: "I failed the exam, so my life has no value."
- **Data (D)**: "I've failed several exams in a row."
- **Warrant (W)**: "Exam results determine a person's life value."
- **Purpose (P)**: "To avoid facing uncertain future and competition."
- Missing elements: **Rebuttal (R)**, **Qualifier (Q)**, **Backing (B),Data Backing(DB)**

Case Analysis

Step 2: Fallacy Diagnostics

P: Let's examine this argument step-by-step. Do you think there are counterexamples to the belief "failing an exam = having no value"?

S: I suppose so. I've heard that Stephen Hawking didn't perform well in school at first...

P: That's a strong example. So not all who fail are worthless, right? Now, do you think failing a few exams truly defines your entire worth as a person?

S: …Maybe not.

P: Also, you mentioned "repeated failure." Is it possible you're selectively focusing on negative experiences? What about other aspects—like being diligent, helping classmates, or doing well in some other courses?

S: I haven't really paid attention to those…

P: That's what we call **confirmation bias**—when your mind filters in only negative information. It doesn't reflect the whole picture.

P: Let's dig deeper. You said, "Failing exams means a hopeless future." Is that a possibility—or an absolute certainty?

S: It's probably just a possibility… but I always feel like it's inevitable.

P: That's the effect of **catastrophizing**—where we exaggerate the worst-case scenario and mistake it for destiny.

Case Analysis

Step 3: Evidence-Based Replacement

P: Let's consider a Stoic perspective: "What's under my control is preparation, not the outcome." What do you think of that?

S: I think that makes sense. But I always focus too much on the result—I feel like only success matters.

P: Suppose you internalized that Stoic idea. Then your argument could be restructured as:

- **Data**: I failed this exam, but in some areas, I did improve (e.g., tried harder than last time).
- **Warrant**: A person's value isn't defined by a single result, but by a willingness to keep learning.
- **Conclusion**: Exam failure ≠ Life failure. It simply shows where I have room to grow.
- **Purpose**: To shift focus from fearing failure to exploring personal development.

Case Analysis

Step 4: Cognitive-Behavioral Experiment

P: To make this new belief more tangible, would you be willing to try some behavioral experiments?

S: Sure.

P:

- **Experiment 1: Counterexample Collection**
  - **Task**: Interview 3 senior students who've failed exams before. Find out how they got through it and what they're doing now.
  - **Goal**: Refute "failure = life collapse."
- **Experiment 2: Controllability Checklist**
  - **Task**: Make a review plan. For example:
    - Analyze one incorrect question each day.
    - Meet a teacher once a week to ask questions.
  - **Goal**: Shift to a process-oriented mindset and focus on controllable efforts.

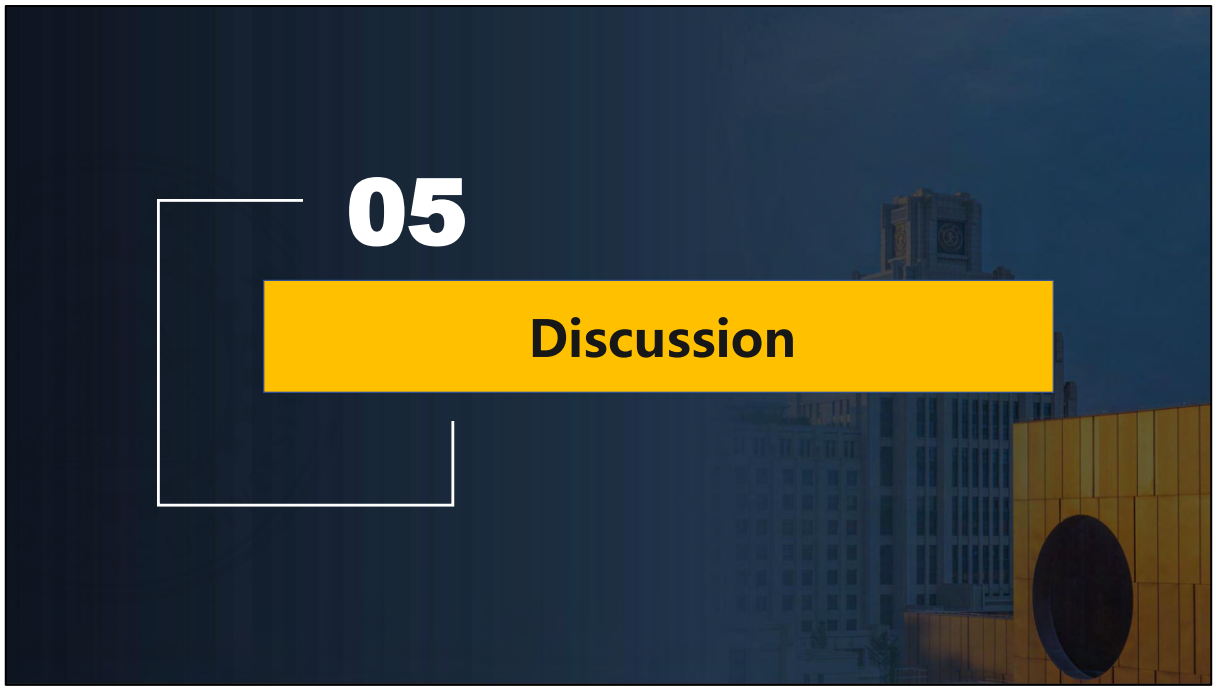
Case Analysis

Closing Reflection

P: Looking back now, does the idea "exam failure = hopeless life" still seem as absolute as before?

S: Not really… It was just how I felt in the moment. In reality, I still have things I can work on.

P: That's wonderful. Remember, the goal of RRA isn't to dismiss your feelings, but to help you understand the hidden beliefs behind them—and empower you to choose which ones to keep.



Discussion

5.1 Theoretical Innovations

✓ Turns philosophical reasoning into tangible procedures

✓ Creates self-sustaining cognitive audit mechanism

✓ Delivers end-to-end belief transformation protocol

5.2 Practical Advantages

Core Innovation 1: Self-empowered ☑ Expert-dependent ✗

Core Innovation 2: Personalized counterevidence construction ☑

Philosophical Democratization: Restoring philosophical agency to individuals

Discussion

5.3 Potential Challenges

1. individuals experiencing **severe depressive** episodes may lack the cognitive resources to engage in structured self-argumentation.

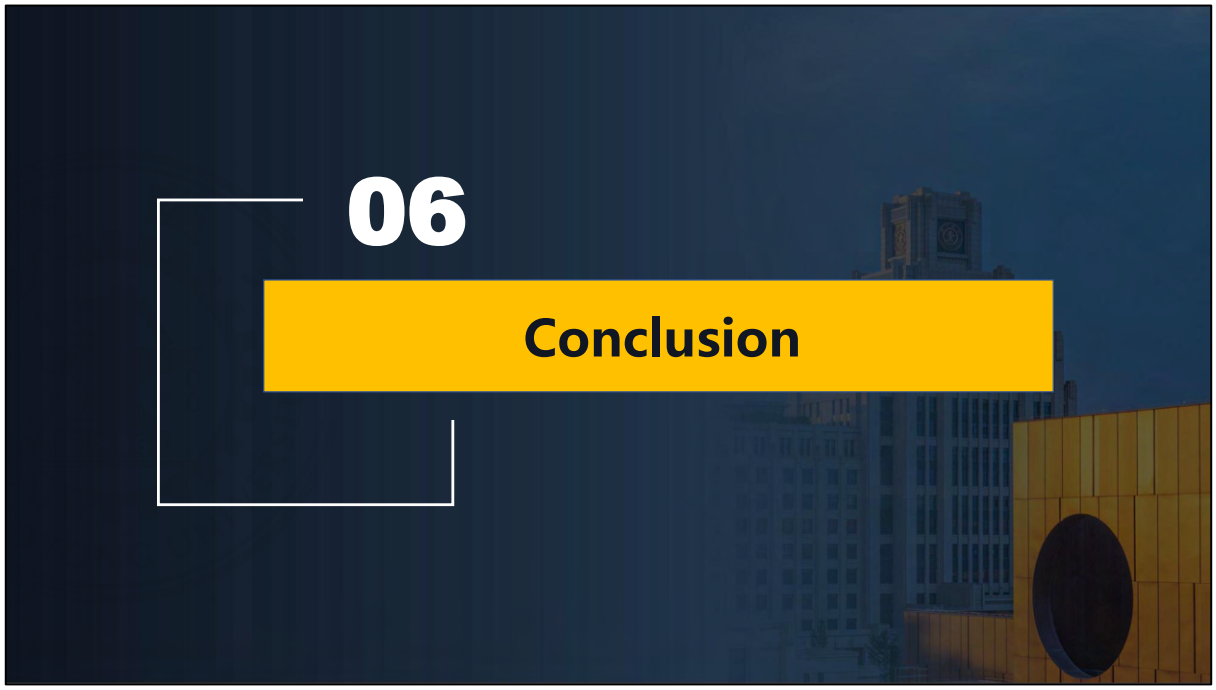
2. the empirical validation of RRA remains limited

- Over-reliance:

  Theoretical derivation & virtual cases

- Critical Gap:

  Lack of rigorous empirical validation



Conclusion

1. Core Contribution:

- **Proposes the RRA Framework**: A rigorous integration of philosophical argumentation theory and psychotherapeutic practice.
- **Offers a Self-Guided Method**: Provides a structured, operational tool for autonomous intervention in depressive states.

Conclusion

2. Key Mechanism & Innovation:

Structured Process: Utilizes an eight-element argumentation scheme.

Three-Phase Healing:

1. Surfacing hidden assumptions.
2. Deconstructing cognitive fallacies.
3. Reconstructing rational belief systems.

Translates Philosophy: Converts abstract deliberation into actionable cognitive self-healing.

Conclusion

3. Theoretical & Practical Advantages:

- **Overcomes Traditional Limits:** Enhances contextual sensitivity & intention detection beyond standard cognitive therapy.
- **Deeper Integration:** Fuses logical tools with emotional regulation effectively.
- **Proven Potential (Simulated Case):** Successfully deconstructed irrational beliefs (e.g., "Exam failure = Life failure").
- **Democratizes Healing:** Empowers individuals through accessible philosophical reflection and autonomous recovery.

Conclusion

4. Future Vision:

Empirical Validation: Next step requires robust clinical testing.

Technological Integration: Potential synergy with intelligent technologies (AI, apps).

Sustainable Bridge: Aims to be a viable pathway connecting philosophical rigor with real-world mental health practice.

Ultimate Goal: Foster sustainable support for cognitive distress, cultivating coexistence of rationality and resilience.



Yaokai Jin (Zhejiang University)

"The Modernity Implication of The "Chun-qiu-san-shi"(The Three Emphases of Spring and Autumn)"

"Chun-qiu-san-shi"(The Three Emphases of Spring and Autumn) is derived from "Zheng-de, Li-yong, Hou-sheng must be harmonized" in "Shangshu · Dayumo". Huang Kan regards "Chun-qiu-san-shi" as the meta-category of human knowledge system, and believes that "all human knowledge should be based on the three virtues of Zheng-de,Li-yong,Hou-sheng."[1] Zhang Dainian positioned it as the guiding principle of real life, believing that "taking Zheng-de,Li-yong,Hou-sheng as three emphases is indeed seen in the great task of life."[2] From the perspective of the occurrence of civilization, Nan Huaijin believed that "Zheng-de,Li-yong,Hou-sheng include all Chinese culture,"[3] and promoted the "Chun-qiu-san-shi" to the height of the source of Chinese civilization. This cognitive evolution from knowledge system, life practice to civilization ontology shows the significance of "Chun-qiu-san-shi" to the Chinese nation and human society. At a time when the wave of globalization has encountered clashes of civilizations and the erosion of humanistic values by instrumental rationality, it is particularly urgent to re-examine and explore the concept of rooted civilization represented by the "Chun-qiu-san-shi." This not only helps to reflect on and avoid the dilemma of Western modernization, but also provides profound cultural support for Chinese modernization, so that it can contribute unique Oriental wisdom to the sustainable development of human society while maintaining its own civilized characteristics.

1. "Chun-qiu-san-shi" and Its Ancient Annotations

"Chun-qiu-san-shi"is the important task of governing the country put forward by Dayu when Emperor Shun talked about the governance of the world with the three ministers of Dayu, Boyi and Gaoyao :

Yu said: "Water, fire, metal, wood, earth, and grain must be properly regulated. Zheng-de , Li-yong , Hou-sheng must be harmonized. "[4]

The expression of "Six treasuries and Three emphases" is also seen in the remonstrance of Xi Que, a Jin general, to Chief Minister Zhao Xuanzi in the "The Zuo zhuan (Duke Wen, Year 7)":

---

[1] Cheng Qianfan and Tang Wen. *Supplement to the Records of Liangshoulu Studies: The Life and Scholarship of Huang Kan. Beijing*: SDX Joint Publishing Company, 1985, 77.

[2] *The Complete Works of Zhang Dainian*, vol. 1. Shijiazhuang: Hebei People's Publishing House, 1996, 341.

[3] Nan Huai-chin. *Lectures by Nan Huai-chin*. Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2014, 129.

[4] Kong Anguo (commentary), Kong Yingda et al. (subcommentary). *Shangshu Zhengyi*. In *Ruzang (Jinghua Bian)*, edited by Editorial and Research Center of Confucian Canon,PKU, vol. 12. Beijing: Peking University Press, 2014, 101.

The Six Treasuries and the Three Emphases together constitute the Nine Achievements.The Six Treasuries refer to: water, fire, metal, wood, earth, and grain.The Three Emphases refer to: Zheng-de , Li-yong , Hou-sheng.[5]

The relevant discourse on the “Chun-qiu-san-shi” is also documented in classical sources. As recorded in “The Zuo zhuan (Duke Cheng, Year 16)”, the Chu statesman Shen Shushi expounded on the proper conduct of military affairs: “When the people’s livelihood is prosperous, their virtue becomes upright; when resources are properly utilized, affairs attain order; when seasons are observed, all things achieve completion.”[6] Similarly, in “The Zuo zhuan (Duke Xiang, Year 28)”, Yanzi responded to Ziwei’s inquiry regarding the rejection of excessive wealth accumulation: “For the people, abundant livelihood and material benefits must be regulated through the cultivation of proper virtue. This restraint prevents indulgence and excesses, constituting what is termed ‘moderated prosperity’.”[7]

From the above, it can be seen that the appearance of the civilization paradigm of “Chun-qiu-san-shi” has a dual dimension: at the epistemological level, the interpretation framework of “Six treasuries and Three emphases” integrates natural philosophy with political philosophy ; at the methodological level, the records of “Zuo Zhuan” are interpreted from the aspects of military ethics and economic regulation. This “total-sub” text structure reflects the construction track of the “three generations of ideals” in the pre-Qin period. However, whether it is the embellishment of “Shangshu · Dayumo” or the related records of “Zuo Zhuan”, the specific connotation of “Chun-qiu-san-shi” has not been clearly stated, which leaves more space for future generations to interpret. Therefore, it is helpful to clarify and grasp the specific connotation of “Chun-qiu-san-shi” by systematically combing the interpretation and elaboration of “Six treasuries and Three emphases” by the main annotators of “Shangshu.”

In order to facilitate a more accurate understanding of the connotation of the “Chun-qiu-san-shi,” this paper examines the “twenty-six kinds of scriptures” compiled by the “Editorial and Research Center of Confucian Canon,PKU” and selects six of them to interpret the connotation of the “Chun-qiu-san-shi,” including Kong Yingda’s “Shangshu Zhengyi,” Su Shi’s “Shuzhuan,” Lin Zhiqi’s “Shangshu Quanjie,” Cai Shen’s “Shujizhuan,” Jin Lvxiang’s “Shangshu Biaozhu,” Xu Qian’s “ Dushu Congshuo.”

From the perspective of its content, the focus of the six annotations is different. The Tang Dynasty focused on exegesis, the Song Dynasty focused on the development of righteousness, and the Yuan Dynasty rose to institutional analysis. This process reflects the changes in economic development, political environment, and academic thought in ancient China.

---

[5] Du Yu (commentary), Kong Yingda (subcommentary). *Chunqiu Zuozhuan Zhengyi*. In *Ruzang (Jinghua Bian)*, vol. 74. Beijing: Peking University Press, 2016, 535.

[6] Du Yu, Kong Yingda. *Chunqiu Zuozhuan Zhengyi*. In *Ruzang (Jinghua Bian)*, vol. 74. Beijing: Peking University Press, 2016, 774.

[7] Du Yu , Kong Yingda. *Chunqiu Zuozhuan Zhengyi*. In *Ruzang (Jinghua Bian)*, vol. 75. Beijing: Peking University Press, 2016, 1060-61.

As far as “Zheng-de” is concerned, Kong Yingda emphasizes the moral cultivation of rulers as paradigmatic exemplars. Su Shi quoted Guan Zhong’s economic ethics from “Guanzi·Mumin,” and established the “Zheng-de” in the spiritual field on the basis of “granary” and “sufficient food and clothing” in the material field, but this explanation seems to be more in line with “Li-yong.” Lin Zhiqi directly quoted Mencius’s theory of kingcraft to King Hui of Wei to explain, pointing to three levels of family ethics, political ethics and social ethics. Cai Shen narrows “Zheng-de” to familial ethics through Confucian self-cultivation theory. By the Song era, “Zheng-de” thus encompassed economic, familial, political, and social ethics. Jin Lvxiang and Xu Qian shift toward institutional analysis, interpreting it as “codifying rituals” through the Rites of “Zhou LI,” transforming philosophical hermeneutics into statecraft.

As far as “Li-yong” is concerned, Kong Yingda focuses on fiscal governance, advocating thrift and rational resource allocation to enrich state coffers while meeting public needs and eliminating harms. Su Shi takes the literal meaning as “optimizing tool utility.” Lin Zhiqi, again citing Mencius, emphasizes agricultural/forestry/fishery outputs but neglects commerce. Cai Shen bifurcates “Li-yong” into artisanal tools and commercial finance. Jin Lvxiang and Xu Qian, cross-referencing the Classic of Documents, highlight “trade to balance surpluses” , reflecting market mechanisms. This evolution—from fiscal control to goods-and-capital to market regulation—mirrors Song-era commercial expansion, developing into an integrated economic theory encompassing metrology and market institutions.

As far as “Hou-sheng” is concerned, all six scholars converge here. Kong Yingda prioritizes agricultural policies: light corvée/taxes and respecting farming seasons to ensure material sufficiency. Su Shi adapts Confucius’s “Nine Standards” : “seasonal labor and light taxes to encourage the people.” Lin Zhiqi and Cai Shen both cite Mencius’s kingly governance—Lin stresses agricultural timing (overlapping his “Li-yong” view), while Cai links hou-sheng to agrarian outcomes, contrasting li-yong’s commercial focus. Jin Lvxiang and Xu Qian further introduced the idea of “equal distribution” in the “Zhou Li,” that is, the idea of reasonable distribution and regulation. Jin’s use of the word “accumulation of equipment” to emphasize the importance of accumulating goods and goods for future needs. “Hou-sheng” has thus become a livelihood system project including taxation policy, agricultural production, social security, and resource reserves.

2. The New Interpretation of the Connotation of “Chun-qiu-san-shi”

On the basis of the six interpretations, combined with other Confucian classics and pre-Confucian expositions, we should make a more in-depth exposition of the “Chun-qiu-san-shi” and their interrelationships.

“Zheng-de,” synthesized from six classical commentaries, operates through two dimensions: the subjective cultivation of moral character and the functional practice of governance. In its subjective dimension, “Zheng-de” emphasizes the ruler’s establishment of moral exemplarity through inner virtue cultivation, requiring the

construction of ethical subjectivity within the framework of the “interface between Heaven and humanity.” This aligns with the introspective practice of “rectifying the mind” in the “Liji·Daxue” and Wang Yangming’s Neo-Confucian maxim, “rectify the unrectified to return to rectitude.” Functionally, “Zheng-de” externalizes moral virtue into normative governance. This transformation from “inner sageliness to outer kingliness” resonates with Confucius’s dictum, “If the ruler is upright, orders become unnecessary”, and the pedagogical paradigm of “benefiting through educating people,” forming a governance system of “self-cultivation— social harmony—universal peace.”

“Li-yong” in Confucian classics exhibits dual interpretive dimensions. First, the ruler and the people in the subjective dimension. In terms of agency, “Shangshu: Dayu Mo” commentaries define “Li-yong” as rulers optimizing tools and material resources for public welfare. However, The relevant annotations of “Zuo Zhuan” turn the subject to the people, and clarify the relationship between “Li-yong” and “Zheng-de” and “Hou-sheng.” Here, “Li”(“benefit” or “profit”) necessitates restraint through “Zheng-de”, while “yong” (“material utility”) is indispensable for prosperity. Second, the purpose and means of the practical dimension. The term “Li-yong” frequently appears in Confucian classics, particularly in the Book of Changes. Examples include:

Hexagram Xu : “beneficial to persevere,” Hexagram Qian: “favorable for military campaigns,” Hexagram Shihe : “advantageous for adjudicating lawsuits.” etc. Here, “Li” signifies “that which is advantageous”, representing abstract goal-setting and value orientation at the conceptual level. “Yong” retains its literal meaning as “application,” denoting tangible means and sustained actions in practical execution.[8] Thus, “Li-yong” functions not only as a critical instrument for “Hou-sheng,” but also embodies value manifestations governed by “Zheng-de,” harmonizing idealism and pragmatism within Confucian statecraft.

“Hou-sheng” refers to a governance objective aimed at improving people’s livelihoods through material security and institutional optimization. Its conceptual framework operates on two levels: cosmological and sociopolitical. From a cosmological perspective, “Hou-sheng” embodies the recognition of the universal principle articulated in the Book of Changes : “The great virtue of Heaven and Earth is giving life” . It advocates aligning governance with natural laws as a foundational premise. This reflects the natural philosophical wisdom of “not contravening agricultural seasons”, emphasizing harmony with nature. From a sociopolitical perspective, “Hou-sheng” emphasizes the proactive agency of rulers. This aligns with the “Shangshu · Dayumo”, which prioritizes “virtue lies in benevolent governance, and governance lies in nourishing the people” before introducing the “Chun-qiu-san-shi.” While these two dimensions differ methodologically, both integrate the triad of “Heaven, Earth, and Humanity,” achieving the governance goal of nourishing the people through “observing celestial patterns to regulate time,” “adapting policies to local conditions,” and “establishing rites to moderate expenditures.”

[8] Yuan Yongfei. “Connotation Analysis of the 'Three Affairs’ in Shu Zhuan.” *Central Plains Culture Forum* 4 (2019).

"Wei-he" denotes the ideal state of mutual coordination among the "Three Emphases" and their harmonious application in governance. The Qing thinker Yan Yuan critiqued earlier Confucian commentaries for failing to clarify the interrelations of the "Three Emphases" : "Zheng-de rectifies the virtue of utilizing resources and enriching life; Li-yong benefits the virtue and life-enrichment; Hou-sheng enriches the virtue and resource utilization."[9] The Book of Rites elevates "He" to a metaphysical and affective plane: "When joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure are not yet expressed, it is called 'Centrality' ; when expressed in due measure, it is called 'Harmony' . Centrality is the great root of the world; Harmony is the universal path. Attaining Centrality and Harmony, Heaven and Earth maintain their order, and all things are nourished." Integrating these ideas, "Wei-he" constitutes the thematic foundation of the "Three Emphases." Rather than operating in isolation, Zheng-de, Li-yong, Hou-sheng must synergize under the principle of "He," ensuring each fulfills its role while mutually reinforcing the others.

3. The Modern Value of "Chun-qiu-san-shi"

As the cultural foundation of the Chinese nation for thousands of years, the "Chun-qiu-san-shi" has rich connotation and implication. Its adherence to moral rationality, early warning of technological alienation, and concern for the well-being of people's livelihood not only provide historical and cultural elements for the Chinese nation to embark on the road of modernization different from the West, but also provide a unique thinking dimension and useful reference for the treatment of modernity and the promotion of the benign and orderly operation of modern society. This kind of primitive civilization characteristic of "precocity but not premature aging" basically covers the goal demands of modern society in terms of spirit, material and system.

3.1 From the Perspective of Modern Society's Spiritual Orientation

In the context of modernity, while Enlightenment rationality dismantled religious authority through "disenchantment," promoting individual autonomy and social progress, it has paradoxically reverted to a form of "re-enchantment" during secularization—rationality reduced to an instrument of domination, and culture subordinated to capital. Intriguingly, this spiritual void and disorientation have catalyzed deeper demands for East-West civilizational dialogue. Since the 20th century, Western thinkers like Bertrand Russell and Arnold Toynbee turned to Eastern wisdom for remedies, underscoring the modern relevance of Chinese civilization's spiritual resources. Within this framework, Zheng-de, as the core dimension of moral rationality, holds unique significance for elevating the spiritual realm of modern citizens.

(1) Individual Dimension: "Zheng-de" as the Foundation of Spiritual Identity

[9] Chen Shanbang, ed. *Selected Educational Works of the Yan-Li School*. Beijing: People's Education Press, 2015, 411.

"Zheng-de" anchors the human spirit by establishing value coherence. While Western modernity, driven by Enlightenment rationality, it also led to moral relativism. Ma Yifu, a leading Neo-Confucian scholar, noted: "The teachings of Eastern sages flow from innate moral nature, whereas European philosophy, ancient or modern, is constructed from habitual conventions."[10] This reveals the fundamental divergence between Confucian virtue ethics and Western rationalism: the former originates from authentic moral self-awareness, while the latter, constrained by habitual thinking, obscures the source of virtue. In modernity, where human "virtue" is overshadowed by "habits," and the loss of life's inherent meaning erodes the pursuit of excellence, blurring distinctions between nobility and baseness, beauty and ugliness, individuals must safeguard their innate moral potential and reawaken reverence for ethical conscience.

(2) Societal Dimension: Dynamic Equilibrium Between "Zheng-de," "Li-yong,"and "Hou-sheng"

Historically, two polarized stances dominated debates on the relationship among the Three Emphases:

- Moral Prioritization: Emphasizing "Zheng-de" while marginalizing "Li-yong" and "Hou-sheng," as seen in Cheng-Zhu and Lu-Wang Neo-Confucianism.
- Utilitarian Pragmatism: Prioritizing "Li-yong" and "Hou-sheng" while neglecting "Zheng-de," exemplified by Ye Shi and Chen Liang.

Yet, divorcing "Zheng-de" from "Li-yong" and "Hou-sheng" risks moral absolutism, whereas excluding "Zheng-de" from material pursuits leads to technological alienation and utilitarianism. In modernity, the latter imbalance predominates, manifesting in the hegemony of technical rationality and capital logic eroding value rationality. In the face of such practical challenges, it is urgent to reconstruct the "Wei-he" mechanism of "Zheng-de," "Li-yong" and "Hou-sheng." For example, at the level of economic development, we should integrate the correct values into the market mechanism and build a modern economic system that takes into account both efficiency and fairness; in the field of scientific and technological innovation, establish an ethical review mechanism for the development of cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence, and ensure the inclusive application of scientific and technological achievements; etc.

3.2 From the Perspective of Modern Society's material practice

As an endogenous driver of social progress, the sustained development of productive forces has not only fulfilled humanity's basic material needs but also generated unprecedented material civilizational achievements. However, while expanding material wealth, this development has simultaneously engendered the alienation dilemma identified by Marx: "The increase in the value of the world of things proceeds

[10] *Complete Works of Ma Yifu*, vol. 2. Hangzhou: Zhejiang Ancient Books Publishing House, 2013, 414.

in direct proportion to the devaluation of the world of humans."[11] To address this paradox, it is imperative to recalibrate the internal dynamics of productive forces by strategically applying the instrumental rationality of "Li-yong" across three dimensions—means of labor, objects of labor, and laborers—to foster sustainable material production.

(1) Means of Labor: "Li-yong" Embodies the Ethical Unity of Dao and Technology
"Li-yong" emphasizes "preparing materials for practical use and creating tools to benefit the world," requiring technological innovation to serve human needs rather than reducing humans to tools. Modern advancements in production tools—marked by the "sorcery-like". Yet, without ethical guidance, such progress risks technological alienation. "Li-yong"'s techno-ethical framework provides a critical normative standard: technology must align with human dignity and collective welfare, avoiding the pitfalls of dehumanizing efficiency.

(2) Objects of Labor: "Li-yong" Advocates Intergenerational Ecological Justice
Industrial exploitation of natural resources, while generating wealth, has precipitated overproduction, resource depletion, and ecological collapse. "Li-yong" advocates "moderation in extraction and thrift in utilization," insisting that material production respect ecological thresholds to harmonize economic, environmental, and social benefits. This ecological wisdom demands a balance between present needs and future sustainability, ensuring natural systems remain stable for generations.

(3) Laborers: "Li-yong" Seeks the Unity of Virtue and Well-being
Modern production systems often reduce laborers to "human resources," marginalizing their dignity, happiness, and sense of purpose through hyper-specialization, efficiency-centric management, and quantified metrics. "Li-yong," guided by "Zheng-de," integrates moral imperatives with material pursuits, asserting that "righteousness" is the harmony of "benefits." By prioritizing "Hou-sheng," it ensures equitable wealth distribution and elevates living standards, affirming laborers as the true agents of productivity. This synthesis of ethical cultivation and material fulfillment counters the reduction of humans to mere variables in production functions, offering a human-centric labor ethic."Li-yong," as a holistic praxis, reconciles instrumental rationality with Confucian moral philosophy. By embedding ethical constraints into technological innovation, ecological stewardship into resource utilization, and human dignity into labor relations, it charts a path toward sustainable modernity.

3.3 The Structural Dilemma of Modern Institutional Design

[11] *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 1. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2009, 156.

From the perspective of modern societal institutional design, the modern institutional system shaped by Enlightenment rationality and the logic of capital, while achieving a modern transformation in state governance through scientization and democratization, is fundamentally structured around industrialization and marketization. It serves capitalist modes of production and remains entrenched in the structural dilemma of "domination by capital logic." Consequently, the promises of freedom, equality, and justice embedded within these institutions have been reduced to an illusion of formal justice in practice. In contrast, the "Chun-qiu-san-shi" offers a relatively comprehensive paradigmatic reference for modern institutional design.

(1) "Zheng-de" as the Ethical Foundation of Institutional Design: A Framework for Modern Virtue Politics

Theoratically, modern virtue politics transforms moral imperatives into an ethical pre-procedure for institutional design, embedding the value of "Hou-sheng" into governance systems. Practically, it advocates integrating virtue-based governance with rule of law to advance modernization. This approach transcends the reductionist "rational actor" assumptions of Western social contract theory while avoiding the risks of moral absolutism inherent in traditional virtue-centric governance.

(2) "Li-yong" as the Methodological Principle: Synthesizing Instrumental and Value Rationality

The principle of "optimizing utility" embodies the dialectical unity of instrumental and value rationality. "Utility of tools" emphasizes the foundational role of technology; "utility of resources" prioritizes sustainability and rational allocation; and "utility for the people" defines the ultimate purpose of institutions. This tripartite structure implicitly aligns with the historical materialist logic of adjusting production relations to fit productive forces and refining superstructures to match economic foundations. It reflects a systemic mindset that balances diverse demands to ensure long-term institutional efficacy. Such an institutional framework could mitigate or minimize the damage of modern economic crises.

(3) "Hou-sheng" as the Teleological Aim: A Pathway to Distributive Justice

Under the hegemony of capital logic, neoliberal tax reforms and financialization have exacerbated the Matthew Effect. The "high-tax, high-welfare" policies in some European nations not only dampen productivity but also trap citizens in welfare dependency, exposing structural flaws in modern distributive systems. The principle of "Hou-sheng" integrates the Confucian ideal of "taking from excess to supplement scarcity, balancing resources equitably" into institutional design. By harmonizing redistribution with recognition of legitimate wealth disparities, this vision of distributive justice—emphasizing shared developmental gains—offers a pragmatic reference for achieving common prosperity.

浙江大学 ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY



The Modernity Implication of The "Chun-qiu-san-shi" (The Three Emphases of Spring and Autumn)

Jin Yaokai 金姚炫
(Zhejiang University, Hangzhou 310058, China)

2025.07.10



TITLE
Contents

01 "Chun-qiu-san-shi" and Its Ancient Annotations

02 The New Interpretation of the Connotation of "Chun-qiu-san-shi"

03 The Modern Value of "Chun-qiu-san-shi"

浙江大學 ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY



01

TITLE

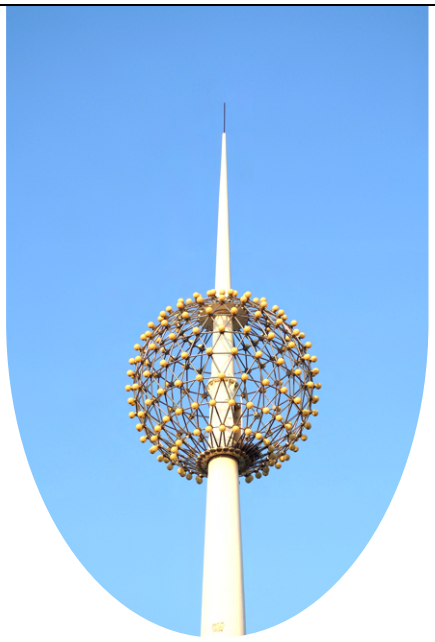
"Chun-qiu-san-shi" and Its Ancient Annotations

浙江大學 ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

"Chun-qiu-san-shi"is the important task of governing the country put forward by Dayu when Emperor Shun talked about the governance of the world with the three ministers of Dayu, Boyi and Gaoyao :

Yu said: "Ah! O Emperor, bear this in mind. Virtue lies in good governance, and governance consists in nurturing the people. Water, fire, metal, wood, earth, and grain must be properly regulated. *Zheng-de , Li-yong , Hou-sheng* must be harmonized. The nine tasks should be orderly arranged; when the nine arrangements are perfected, they will be celebrated in song. Admonish with encouragement, supervise with authority, and inspire through the nine songs to preserve these institutions from decay."

The Emperor said: "So it is! When the land is leveled and heaven's work completed, the six treasuries and three emphases are truly well-governed. This achievement shall benefit ten thousand generations eternally - this is your merit."



浙江大学 ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

The relevant discourse on the "Chun-qiu-san-shi" is also documented in classical sources.

1. the expression of "Six treasuries and Three emphases" is seen in the remonstrance of Xi Que, a Jin general, to Chief Minister Zhao Xuanzi in the "The Zuo zhuan (Duke Wen, Year 7)"



2. the Chu statesman Shen Shushi expounded on the proper conduct of military affairs in the "The Zuo zhuan (Duke Cheng, Year 16)"

3. Yanzi responded to Ziwei's inquiry regarding the rejection of excessive wealth accumulation in the "The Zuo zhuan (Duke Xiang, Year 28)"

浙江大学 ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

It can be seen that the appearance of the civilization paradigm of "Chun-qiu-san-shi" has a dual dimension: the epistemological level and the methodological level. **This text structure reflects the construction track of the "three generations of ideals" in the pre-Qin period.**

In order to facilitate a more accurate understanding of the connotation of the "Chun-qiu-san-shi," this paper examines the "twenty-six kinds of scriptures" compiled by the "Editorial and Research Center of Confucian Canon,PKU" and selects six of them to interpret the connotation of the "Chun-qiu-san-shi," including Kong Yingda's "Shangshu Zhengyi," Su Shi's "Shuzhuan," Lin Zhiqi's "Shangshu Quanjie," Cai Shen's "Shujizhuan," Jin Lvxiang's "Shangshu Biaozhu," Xu Qian's " Dushu Congshuo."

浙江大学 ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

As far as "*Zheng-de*" is concerned,

Kong Yingda emphasizes the moral cultivation of rulers as paradigmatic exemplars.

Su Shi quoted Guan Zhong's economic ethics from "Guanzi·Mumin."

Lin Zhiqi directly quoted Mencius's theory of kingcraft to King Hui of Wei to explain, pointing to three levels of family ethics, political ethics and social ethics.

Cai Shen narrows "Zheng-de" to familial ethics through Confucian self-cultivation theory.

Jin Lvxiang and Xu Qian shift toward institutional analysis, interpreting it as "codifying rituals" through the Rites of "Zhou LI."

浙江大学 ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

As far as "*Li-yong*" is concerned,

Kong Yingda focuses on fiscal governance, advocating thrift and rational resource allocation to enrich state coffers while meeting public needs and eliminating harms.

Su Shi takes the literal meaning as "optimizing tool utility."

Lin Zhiqi, again citing Mencius, emphasizes agricultural/forestry/fishery outputs but neglects commerce.

Cai Shen bifurcates "*Li-yong*" into artisanal tools and commercial finance.

Jin Lvxiang and Xu Qian cross-referencing the Classic of Documents, highlight "trade to balance surpluses", reflecting market mechanisms.

浙江大学 ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

As far as "*Hou-sheng*" is concerned,

Kong Yingda prioritizes agricultural policies: light taxes and respecting farming seasons to ensure material sufficiency.

Su Shi adapts Confucius's "Nine Standards" ("Liji·Zhongyong") .

Lin Zhiqi and Cai Shen both cite Mencius's kingly governance.

Jin Lvxiang and Xu Qian further introduced the idea of "equal distribution" in the "Zhou Li," that is, the idea of reasonable distribution and regulation.

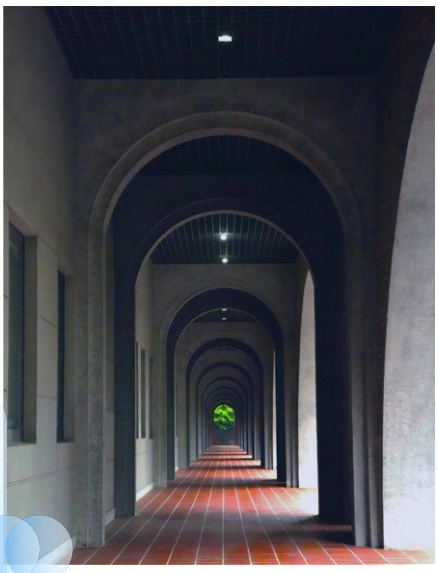
浙江大学 ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY



02

TITLE

The New Interpretation of the Connotation of "Chun-qiu-san-shi"



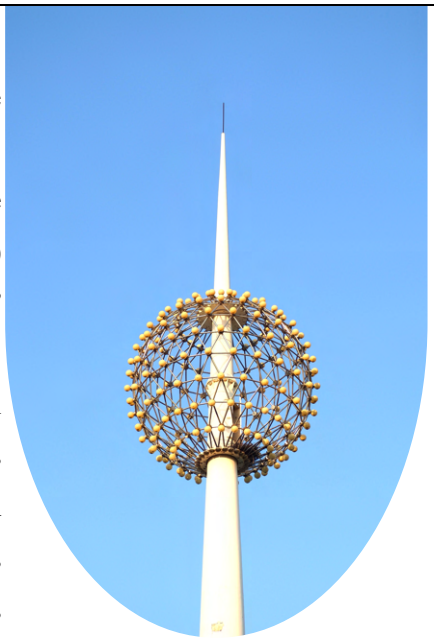
"Zheng-de," synthesized from six classical commentaries, operates through two dimensions: **the subjective cultivation of moral character and the functional practice of governance.**

In its subjective dimension, "Zheng-de" emphasizes the ruler's establishment of moral exemplarity through inner virtue cultivation, requiring the construction of ethical subjectivity within the framework of the "interface between Heaven and humanity."Functionally, Zheng-de externalizes moral virtue into normative governance.

"Li-yong" in Confucian classics exhibits dual interpretive dimensions.

First, the ruler and the people in the subjective dimension. Here, imension."Li"("benefit" or "profit") necessitates restraint through "Zheng-de", while "yong" ("material utility") is indispensable for prosperity.

Second, the purpose and means of the practical dimension. Here,"Li" signifies "that which is advantageous", representing abstract goal-setting and value orientation at the conceptual level. "Yong" retains its literal meaning as "application," denoting tangible means and sustained actions in practical execution.



浙江大学 ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY



"Hou-sheng" refers to a governance objective aimed at improving people's livelihoods through material security and institutional optimization. Its conceptual framework operates on two levels: **cosmological and sociopolitical.**

From a cosmological perspective, *"Hou-sheng"* embodies the recognition of the universal principle articulated in the Book of Changes : "The great virtue of Heaven and Earth is giving life" ("Xici I").

From a sociopolitical perspective, *"Hou-sheng"* emphasizes the proactive agency of rulers.

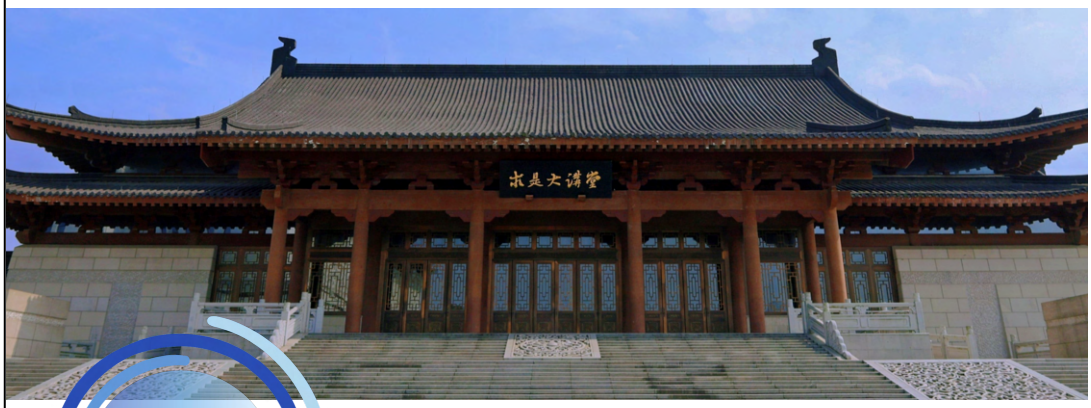
浙江大学 ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

"Wei-he" denotes the ideal state of mutual coordination among the "Three Emphases" and their harmonious application in governance.

Combined with the thought of "Zhongyong," "Wei-he" constitutes the thematic foundation of the "Three Emphases." Rather than operating in isolation, ***Zheng-de, Li-yong, Hou-sheng*** **must synergize under the principle of "He,"** ensuring each fulfills its role while mutually reinforcing the others.



浙江大学 ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY



03

TITLE

The Modern Value of "Chun-qiu-san-shi"

浙江大学 ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

3.1 From the Perspective of Modern Society's Spiritual Orientation





"Zheng-de," as the core dimension of moral rationality, holds unique significance for elevating the spiritual realm of modern citizens.

(1) Individual Dimension: Zheng-de as the Foundation of Spiritual Identity

(2) Societal Dimension: Dynamic Equilibrium Between "Zheng-de," "Li-yong,"and "Hou-sheng"

浙江大学 ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

3.2 From the Perspective of Modern Society's material practice



It is imperative to recalibrate the internal dynamics of productive forces by strategically applying the instrumental rationality of ***"Li-yong"*** across three dimensions—means of labor, objects of labor, and laborers—to foster sustainable material production.

(1) Means of Labor: "Li-yong" Embodies the Ethical Unity of Dao and Technology

(2) Objects of Labor: "Li-yong" Advocates Intergenerational Ecological Justice

(3) Laborers: "Li-yong" Seeks the Unity of Virtue and Well-being

浙江大学 ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

3.3 From the perspective of modern societal institutional design



(1) "Zheng-de" as the Ethical Foundation of Institutional Design: A Framework for Modern Virtue Politics

(2) "Li-yong" as the Methodological Principle: Synthesizing Instrumental and Value Rationality

(3) "Hou-sheng" as the Teleological Aim: A Pathway to Distributive Justice

4. Conclusion

Unlike Western modernity, which is dominated by Enlightenment rationality and the logic of capital, the "Chun-qiu-san-shi" embodies a "humanistic modernity" paradigm characterized by virtue-oriented leadership, technological adaptation, and a people-centered approach, which has contributed to the "harmonious synthesis" of Chinese-style modernization.

Future explorations of societal modernization should fully engage with the intellectual wisdom of ***Zheng-de, Li-yong and Hou-sheng***. By fostering their mutual coordination, organic unity and harmony, humanity may transcend the dichotomy between instrumental and value rationality, reconcile individual and collective interests, and **advance toward a more inclusive, sustainable, and humanistic vision of modernity.**



THANK YOU

Xianrui Meng (Anhui University)

"Care as the Foundation: Integrating Daoist Philosophy into Contemporary Psychotherapy"

1.Introduction

In today's context of psychological counseling and mental health interventions, the limitations of a solely Western approach to therapy are becoming increasingly evident. Mental health issues are increasingly apparent around the world, especially in the aftermath of the international crises of recent years. Because of this, there seems to realize what is called culturally-adapted and philosophically-inclusive therapies (Chen & Ma, 2022). This has generated a resurgence of interest in modern psychotherapeutic practice, including an array of psychotherapeutic philosophies based ancient wisdom civilizations, Daoist being one of the most promising.

Daoist philosophy has a lineage of more than 2500 years in the context of Chinese civilization and offers an alternative lens through which human beings and their psychological well-being can be understood, as well as in terms of the ways in which all lives on, related to a particular environment. Western therapy practices often stress symptom reduction and cognitive restructuring. Rather, Daoist philosophy supports more holistic approaches that recognize one's natural and effortless alignment to course of action and engage with the relationship of all existence (Li, 2024). Principles like these offer more than philosophical conversations for contemporary practices of modern therapy to engage in an exchange of sorts in the interest of working with psychological struggles that are more present in everyday life.

Moreover, the integration of Daoist systems into modern psychotherapy is the exchange of culture-relativism or cross-cultural exchange, it proposes a fundamental reconceptualization of the practice of therapy itself.In his examination of "Daoist liberalism," Xie (2022) points out that the notion of wu-wei provides a structure for understanding human action that stretches beyond the rigid boundaries of intervention and passivity that characterize transnational Western therapeutic practice. As a philosophical underpinning, it provides a different vantage point for both the therapist and the client to consider psychological distress and where the journey of healing lies.

Within contemporary mental health practice, Daoist philosophical lenses are especially apparent in how we regard the human-nature relationship. Liu and Liu (2024) suggest the traditional Chinese understanding of harmony between humanity and nature has important cultural resources we can draw upon to address the ecological and psychological emergencies of modernity. In the face of urbanization, technological saturation, and disconnection from nature, Daoism situates ecological harmony within not just the interpretation of modern psychological distress but the therapy needed to heal it.

In addition, the Daoist concept of tianren heyi (天人合一) is located in addressing existential concerns that would not be met in traditional talk therapies. Wang and Cao (2024) explain that this principle is more than a metaphysical principle, but a way of

life, that can affect, for better or worse, humanity's well-being. With the perspective of recognizing one's self as part of a cosmic whole, the solitude and meaninglessness that dimension modern life, evaporates.

This article will be a systematic engagement of how, we can build practice utilizing these three important and fundamental principles of Daoism—wu-wei, harmony with nature, and tianren heyi—in contemporary psychotherapeutic practice. We will highlight, through theory and application, that Daoist philosophy can not only offer techniques to compliment practice, but reflect to a significant shift of any therapeutic practice that is responsive to profound needs of persons suffering the psychological demands and diminutiveness of modernity.

This is a pressing integration at this moment of history with an alertness of the need for a sensitivity and philosophically aware response in mental health practice.Liu and Wang (2022) show in their critique of counseling in China that the integration of traditional thinkers and their wisdom into modern psychotherapy practice can demonstrate viable progress for human flourishing and the general psychological applications. Recently, the fad of mindfulness and contemplative practice, combined with a world dealing with ecological and social collapse and political instability, demonstrates an openness to these Daoist principles in contemporary practice.

The integration of Daoist principles presents regarding existential concerns is timely in modernity for social and cultural implications beyond the individual experience. We live in crisis, environmentally dispect, disintegration of social, capabilities, collective disruption, and overwhelming uncertainty regarding all aspects of our lives. The visions that Daoism expresses in harmony, balance, and natural order provides resources not only for individuals, but reimagining the role of psychotherapy in society. As Hua (2022) argues, the convergence of Daoist thought and contemporary concern for human flourishing in the Anthropocene suggests an ancient wisdom is built to confront modernity requiring intervention.

2. Wu-Wei: The Art of Natural Action

2.1 The Philosophical Essence of Wu-Wei

The idea of wu-wei, commonly rendered as“non-action” or “effortless action” ,is one of the most complex and often misinterpreted concepts within Daoist thought. Rather than suggesting passivity or inaction, wu-wei reflects an advanced notion of how to interact with the world through patterns and rhythms of nature that are in agreement with them instead of directly confronting them through action (Ye, 2023). Grounded in the Daoist worldview of the universe, this notion is significant in today’s psychotherapeutic practice.

At the philosophical level, wu-wei is derived from the Daoist view of the Tao itself as the principle of everything. It should be understood as Li (2024) articulates in his examination of Confucian and Daoist governing philosophies, as a way of living which relates to and honors the tendencies or patterns of the situation rather than imposing order externally by forceful action. This notion of wu-wei creates tension with the

Western emphasis on active control and manipulation of the moment as seen in daily life and in the intentions of the therapist.

The historical progression of the notion of wu-wei offers useful insight into the complexity of this idea. In the Dao De Jing, Laozi discusses wu-wei as the ultimate virtue of the sage ruler who does not coerce others but leads by example, inviting efforts and subsequent outcomes on the virtue of not moving towards them. (Feng, 2022).This suggests a deeper truth about the nature of skillful action: the most significant changes come when we stop trying to force the natural systems around us to change, and instead, figure out how to be co-operants within those systems. Zheng (2023) traces the development of the concept of a “wu-wei” from its earlier articulation in the Laozi, through to a larger discussion in later texts such as the Han Feizi. This historical perspective shows that “wu-wei” cannot be reduced to a singular or unitary notion, but rather functions as principle that can be put into practice at the multiple domains of human experience, from how a government can enact wu-wei to how a person can cultivate wu-wei within herself. The comparison between the wu-wei of the “ruler”,and that of all persons is particularly illustrative of words function across all domains of human existence, including the therapeutic encounter.

There is a philosophical sophistication to the concept of “wu-wei” once we examine its relations to intentionality and spontaneity. Importantly, wu-wei is not synonymous with a passive stance to whatever is happening. wu-wei signifies a level of sensitivity, sophistication, and action within the play of things where the actor coordinates their actions appropriately without having a previously designed agenda to impose on the act. Gao and Li (2020) indicate that contemporary transformation of wu-wei introduces a divergence from the modern tendency to emphasize instrumental rationality and the goal-oriented actions that contribute to the very problems that modernity attempts to address.

In the discussion of psychological flourishing, wu-wei signals a radically different orientation from striving, goal-oriented psychology fostered much of modern life, and paradoxically, in many contemporary therapies. Wu-wei suggests that psychological flourishing does not happen by change to oneself or simply improving the situation you find yourself in; rather, it happens by synchronously aligning with yourself and the natural flow of life. This notion is congruent with modern developments in acceptance theories, although theoretically and philosophically, wu-wei is grounded in many centuries of contemplative practice.

2.2 Integrating Wu-Wei into Psychotherapeutic Practice

The process of moving wu-wei from a principle of philosophy into an application of therapy is necessitating close attention to its theoretical underpinnings and practical implications. In a psychotherapeutic sense, wu-wei refers to an acceptance of whatever is happening and a natural unfolding of the process, where the therapist is focused on creating an atmosphere for a person's natural healing, rather than facilitating change (Lu, 2024). This bridging of concepts challenges many of the assumptions embedded in Western psychotherapeutic structure, while at the same

time bringing new possilbilities for the engagement in psychotherapy as meaningful change occurs or develops in a person's life.

One of the most pronounced applications of wu-wei is regarding the therapeutic relationship. Rather than seeing the therapist as the expert who is diagnosing the pathology and treating the patient, the wu-wei-informed method assumes the therapeutic conditions for natural healing processes to develop and unfold. By engaging in the principles of wu-wei, Chen and Ma (2022) found that therapists were less likely to experience empathic fatigue and could establish better patterns of sustainability in the practice of therapy.

Moreover, the bureaucratic notion of therapeutic intervention is also disrupted. Where therapy often strives to eliminate symptoms or restructure cognitions, or other aggressive interventions, a wu-wei approach assumes that many of the psychological difficulties people experience are based on too much striving and attempting to control that which cannot be controlled. This idea is supported by He (2018) and their commentary on the many dimensions of wu-wei thought, which demonstrate that effective action will come from receptive awareness rather than aggressive intervention. In pragmatic poses, and using wu-wei in psychotherapy implies a series of practices one must engage in. First, the therapist must embody their own engagement in wu-wei, developing the capacity to be present in the most full-filling and genuine way without imposing their own agenda and attempts to coerce control or realizing desired outcomes. This will take a great deal of individual work and letting go of ones own, but often unconscious, urge to maintain control even in professional helping alliances. Second, the therapist must learn to identify the organic and natural rhythms of the therapeutic process, such as identifying when he or she should engage or be active, and when to create space for the wisdom of the client to come forth.

The wu-wei philosophy also influences specific therapeutic techniques and interventions. For example, instead of immediately challenging the interpretation of dysfunctional thoughts or behaviors, a wu-wei therapist would first want to know and speak to the organic thoughts or logic that exists naturally behind the behavior or responses, in part because they were attempts of adaptation that have simply lived past relevance or usefulness. This, as evidenced by Xie and Jia (2021) in their study of therapeutic relationships in university counseling, supports more collaborative and less hierarchical therapeutic relationships.

Case conceptualization illustrates the practical application of wu-wei in therapeutic contexts. For example, a client experiencing anxiety or panic attacks that have struggled to reduce or eliminate them have employed various methods of controlling and eliminating their worry or anxiety, often with the result we could predict (the panic, worry, or other symptoms often seem to simply worsen). The process of working from a wu-wei engagement encourages clients to acknowledge and understand this inconsistency, and, instead of thinking they need to fight the panic or worry, to simply be with it in a different way. The shift from opposition and struggle to learning to accept their anxiety leads to adaptive resolution of symptoms.

The application of wu-wei also requires us to address how we define therapeutic processes, goals, and outcome measures in the therapy or counselling process. Rather than illustrating success through symptom removal of predetermined goals of treatment, a wu-wei perspective values the development of harmony, balance or congruence regulatory to one's true nature. As seen in Traditional Daoist texts, the complementary perspective, or contemporary nature of health, recognizes the healing journey in therapy often takes on this acceptance and integration of experience, not an avoidance of those same areas (Xu, 2024).

2.3 Wu-Wei as a Solution to Modern Psychological Struggles

The significance of wu-wei to present-day psychological struggles becomes particularly visible when considering the nature of modern suffering. Most of the psychological problems that people seek therapy for—anxiety, depression, burnout, and existential distress—are incurred as a result of striving, attempting to control the uncontrollable, and resisting the flow of life (Yin, 2021). Wu-wei provides a diagnostic framework for understanding these difficulties, as well as a therapeutic path toward resolution.

The modern epidemic of anxiety demonstrates in a clear manner how wu-wei principles can address contemporary psychological problems. Anxiety often involves worrying about the future, and attempts to control an uncertain outcome through mental practice, and hyper-vigilance. While understandable, these strategies lead to more anxiety by creating additional tension, and re-enforcing the comforting and false idea that 'safety can be achieved with enough mental effort'. Wu-wei describes an alternative strategy: instead to having full control, we learn to recognize when we are simply not in control, and learn to value natural processes, while acting whenever there is a true opportunity to intervene. Depression could similarly be understood through wu-wei. Many depressed individuals engage in exhausting struggles against their emotional state. They judge themselves harshly for not being able to ‘snap out of it’ and they force themselves to maintain an appearance of normalcy. This internal battle depletes their energy and ultimately feeds despair.

A wu-wei approach to depression means recognizing the reality of one’s current experience and then gently inquiring into what might support the natural movement towards a more vital engagement in life.The experience of burnout, increasingly more viral pervasive in contemporary societies, clearly illustrates the end result of violating wu-wei principles. Burnout occurs when an individual has been in a continual state of overexertion, attempting to maintain a level of productivity that cannot be sustained, while ignoring natural rhythms of resting and renewing. Contributing to the decline in psychological and physical health is the modern loss of natural cycles of activity and rest as noted by Wang (2019) in the same paper that analyzed Confucian and Daoist conceptions of "unity of heaven and humanity". Wu-wei offers a systematic way of recognizing and respecting these rhythms, and is an important and potentially pre-emptive support to burnout.Another area of psychological concern with which wu-wei principles address are the existential issues of meaning, purpose, and one's place in

the cosmos. The contemporary crisis of meaning primarily stems from separation from patterns and sense of larger purpose, which leads to feelings of isolation and insignificance. Wu-wei, especially in terms of the Daoist attributions of human recourse within the Tao, offers a sense of purpose through alignment with natural orders rather than imposed, artificial purposes.

Applying wu-wei to psychological implications of contemporary experiences extends beyond the individual treatment and also includes an understanding of the social and cultural healing implications. The comparative focus in modern society on achievement and competition contribute to human environments that consistently violate wu-wei principles, amplifying psychological distress for many people. Indeed, recognizing this continuing dynamic indicates that work related to therapeutic process must consider both individual processes are also the cultural processes that make effort to engage with wu-wei difficult. The expansion of this different consideration of therapeutic processes is supportive of the movements to be more socially engaged and culturally/sensitive mental health practice.

While clinical outcomes to date related to wu-wei based interventions are correlational and their empirically supported outcomes remain limited, review of these studies yield promising results. Studies using Daoist principles in clinical practice and psychotherapy demonstrated decreases in symptoms of anxiety, depression, and improved well-being, with maximal effects observed in attaining a decrease in the struggle and resistance associated with psychological symptoms. Through these discoveries, we are demonstrating that wu-wei representation is not simply philosophical reflection, but a manner of practice that may serve as an antidote to modern forms of suffering.

3. Harmony with Nature: Reconnecting through Ecological Wisdom

3.1 Daoist Philosophy on Human-Nature Integration

The Daoist conception of the human-nature relationship represents one of the most important contributions of the tradition to human thought and presents important relevance for contemporary psychotherapy. Unlike many western philosophical traditions that place humans either outside nature or in positions of superiority over it, Daoism understands that humans are a part of, and act with, nature, and with nature in mind we are bound by the same principles and patterns that govern existence (Chen, 2024). This understanding has important implications for making sense of psychological health and the therapeutic relationship.

At the core of Daoist ecological philosophy is the understanding that human beings are not individual isolated beings, but rather they are nodes in a vast web of relationships that includes all of nature. This understanding is present in classical writings and prepared throughout the tradition, and places in question the anthropocentric perspective that supports much of modern civilization, and by extension, mental health approaches to treatment. As Yan and Zhang (2024), state in their general analysis of the Chinese modernization path, the traditional wisdom of

human-nature harmony supports essential expenditure for engaging with contemporary challenges, both ecologically and psychologically.

The Daoist understanding of nature deserves careful consideration. Often translated as “nature” or “naturalness”, ziran means literally, “self-so”or“of-itself-so”, and refers to the spontaneous, self-generating quality of things in nature.The comprehension of nature not merely as a collection of objects, but as a self-organizing, dynamic, and information processing system, has major implications for our understanding of human psychology and healing. Just as nature operates in meaningful patterns towards balance and health, so do we have our own natural form of psychological life.

The beautiful principle of following nature is a central principle to Daoist practice and is foundational to some form of therapeutic work. This principle says that, as humans, the wisest course of action is to learn how to recognize and follow a course of nature instead of simply imposing our will upon nature. With respect to mental health, this implies that psychological symptoms represent natural responses to unnatural conditions and that healing has more to do with restoring alignment with natural patterns than imposing removal of symptoms.

The classical Daoist literature is abundant with natural imagery relating to principles of psychological health. Water, perhaps the most referenced element of nature in Daoist writings, is an illustration of many qualities necessary for psychological health, including flexibility, persistence, ability to find the path of least resistance, and the strength to yield rather than push. These natural metaphors are more than poetical vocabulary, they more accurately reflect indicators of how human beings might live closer to the Tao.

The Daoist view of seasonal cycles and natural rhythms also has significant value in considering psychological health. Just as nature, moves through cycles of growth, fruition, decay, and renewal, so do we have our own natural rhythms in psychological life. In the modern world, with artificial lights, temperature control, and seasonal productivity demands, we often live outside of these natural cycles, which likely contributes to higher levels of psychological unrest and distress. Recognizing and honoring these natural rhythms is also an important part of therapeutic work connected to the Tao.

3.2 Ecological Therapy: Merging Daoist Principles with Counseling

The employment of Daoist ecological beliefs into psychotherapy has led to the development of new practices that use nature connection as a principal means of healing work. Although these approaches are quite wide ranging in practical applications, they have in common a basic understanding that the human-nature connection is a substantive factor in human psychological health that can be made an active part of our therapeutic work (Chen, 2024).

One of the most straightforward applications of Daoist ecological beliefs in therapy enters the area of natural settings for therapeutic work itself. In other words, instead of utilizing the familiar therapeutic space of office practice, practitioners influenced by Daoist beliefs experience utilizing gardens, parks, forests, and other natural

environments as therapeutic places. The choice of natural settings for therapeutic work is more than surface-level, it reflects a fundamental understanding that clipping clients to experience their connection with nature within therapy. Research has demonstrated that nature-based practices can attenuate anxiety, depression, and stress, and enhance overall well-being.

“Forest bathing”, although originating in Japan, aligns significantly with Daoist principles and has been incorporated into therapeutic practice with positive results. Forest bathing involves taking time to immerse ourselves in contemplative attention to forest environments, allowing the sights and sounds and smells and textures of the forest to do “go work” without a specific agenda or aim.From a Daoist perspective, this intervention illustrates wu-wei in practice, as healing occurs not by trying hard to change something but rather by simply allowing ourselves to be present in nature's healing, inherently restorative embrace.

Gardening, or horticultural therapy, is another rather powerful example of applying Daoist ecological principles. When we garden, we experience the cycles of nature, such as “growth, decay, ingratitude, nourishing,”we learn to wait and accept the pace of nature, we learn by doing through plunging our hands into the earth, we experience nurturing and nurture at the same time. For clients dealing with depression, anxiety or trauma encouragement for their healing would come with a plant, then planting seeds and nurturing a plant offers a powerful metaphor for them healing and also to have a genuine connection with living beings beyond human experience.

There are also rich possibilities to incorporate ecological awareness into talk therapy that has not focused on an experience in nature. Therapists could ask clients to share their relationship with nature, early memories of nature, current relationship to nature, and what they think or feel in regard to nature phenomena. Often, uncovering a disconnection with nature, leads to understanding disconnection with other relationships in their life and how being connected with nature can be a healing resource that can restoring even further relationships.

Animal assisted therapy, seen through a Daoist lens, has additional dimensions. If animals are beings that live more harmoniously with natural patterns, then they can also become teachers and a source of healing for humans who have become unconnected with their own natural wisdom, nudged by their own animal nature. Animal's non-judgmental presence, spontaneity and authenticity, and genuine connection without human social dynamics demonstrates Daoist values and can provide healing in unique ways.

Natural materials and elements used in therapy spaces also demonstrate Daoist principles. Using plants, water environments, natural light, natural materials like wood and stone, creates a space for therapeutic engagement that can support natural, healing process. Natural materials and elements are not simply decoration, but become part of the process, suggesting to clients their connections to a greater, natural world and to reclaiming a sense of balance.

3.3 Nature Harmony as a Remedy for Modern Disconnection

The epidemic of disconnection from nature in contemporary societies is a primary origin of psychological distress that Daoist-informed therapy can help to address. This disconnection is evident not merely through physical displacement from nature, but in detachment from natural rhythms, relationships, and ways-of-being (Chen, 2024). Understanding and addressing disconnection from nature is will be critical in a practice of therapy that is informed by Daoism in the modern world.

The symptoms of disconnection from nature can be various; however, they are recognizable: feeling rootlessness and distance, difficulties going to calm and being present, over-reliance on artificial, overstimulating environments, detachment from bodily wisdom, and an overwhelming sense of meaninglessness. In the current climate of acknowledging mental health symptoms as psychological diagnoses, these symptoms of disconnection from nature can be understood in a more holistic manner as symptoms rooted in one's disconnection to the natural matrix that supports human life. Daoist philosophy presents as both a system of understanding disconnection from nature and a practice to heal disconnections.

Urban living offers many benefits, but can exacerbate the disconnection from nature. In particular, the designed environment, with it's cult of human control and the need to create predictability, has created a condition that can be referred to as “nature deficit disorder”: a diagnosis that is not present in the DSM, but is more frequently being made by mental health practitioners. It is important to understand that Daoist-informed therapy addresses nature deficit disorder as not just taking short visits to nature, but as a fundamental re-orientation to the relationship between self and nature.Technology, in itself, does not have to be problematic, but it can mediate and displace direct experience of nature in a way that brings psychological distress. Ongoing stimulation from screens, the pace of digital communication, and the virtual essence of many of our modern relationships serves to separate us from natural rhythms and relationships. From a Daoist perspective, the solution is not to deny technology; it is to find ways to preserve a sense of connection to nature, within technological societies.

The healing of nature disconnect can happen in several ways through nature-informed Daoist therapy. First, there is the physical aspect, which includes an increase in the time spent in nature, as well as behaviors which re-attune the body to natural rhythms. Second, on the psychological level, it includes recognizing and healing the beliefs and patterns of behavior that serve to maintain separation from nature. Finally, there is the spiritual factor, which traces our relationship to nature as it exists in the larger web of life, and finding meaning within that.

Throughout the case study examples, the potential for significant change is illustrated when nature disconnection is addressed. Clients who enter therapy feeling isolated, anxious, or without purpose, often exhibit change for the better after a new connection to nature is established. Sometimes, the new nature-related engagement can be as simple as watching the sunrise, re-potting a houseplant, or simply spending time in the local park, and then growing from there, to other, more extreme engagements with

wild nature. The new relationship to nature often extends way beyond the immediate symptom relief, to a new orientation toward life itself.

Finally, we must not forget the possible social dimensions of nature reconnection. Many traditional cultures, particularly those influenced by Daoist principles, do not embrace nature connection as an individual practice, but rather as a communal practice. Healing nature disconnect extends from individual practice, to finding or developing communities that value and build human-nature relationships. Communities might include gardening groups, hiking clubs, or other organizations whose purpose is to build relationships to nature with social support as part of the healing process.

4. Tianren Heyi: The Unity of Man and Tao

4.1 The Philosophical Core of Tianren Heyi

The notion of tianren heyi (天人合一) usually translated as “he unity of heaven and humanity” or “the unity of man and cosmos”,perhaps represents the most profound and comprehensive principle in Daoist philosophy. This notion, which has evolved through Chinese intellectual history, represents a radical reconceptualization of human existence with serious implications for psychological well-being and therapeutic practice (Li, 2023). An understanding of tianren heyi requires moving beyond dualistic thinking in the West to adopt a world-view where what appear to be oppositional elements, dualities or contradictions are recognized as complementary forms of a greater whole.

At the most basic level, tianren heyi claims that human beings and the cosmos are not separate entities but rather various manifestations of the same underlying reality, which is the Dao. This unity is not simply a philosophical concept but a real existing, lived experience that can be directly experienced and cultivated. As Wang and Cao (2024) articulate in their discussion of Confucian derivations of this notion, tianren heyi is both a statement about reality as it truly is, and an ideal state of consciousness to be achieved through practice.

The historical evolution of tianren heyi shows that its significance is multi-dimensional. While the concept has its roots in ancient Chinese cosmology, it has been elaborated and developed over centuries of philosophical discourse. In Daoist thinking specifically, tianren heyi is inherently intertwined with the idea of the Dao as the source and pattern of all existence. As microcosms of the universal macrocosm, humans contain within themselves all the principles and potentials of the cosmos. The realization of this unity is not about creating something new but experiencing what has always already been.

The implications of tianren heyi in the philosophical sense presents a challenge to many of the assumptions underlying Western psychology and psychotherapy. Rather than objectively viewing individuals as separate entities fighting against exterior and internal forces, tianren heyi imagines that psychological suffering is often the perception of separation, and healing is the process of recognizing you are

fundamentally one with the whole, beyond just individuals. In this way, the reciprocity of the mind and body's experience of suffering, anxiety, depression and existential concerns over meaning and purpose could be radically reframed.

In his analysis, Li (2021) highlights what makes tianren heyi different from an ideal or simple nature worship thinking or romanticized notions of nature. The whole that people speak of is not simply emotional or aesthetic but ontological; the relationship between existence itself. This is what matters operationally, if people are indeed one with the cosmos, the principles of harmony governing the cosmos apply to human psychology. The idea becomes that health is about one aligning with principles of the Tao, rather than meeting an arbitrary standard of normal.

There are also significant experiential features of tianren heyi that are pertinent to therapeutic practice. While it can be intellectually discussed, the greater meaning of tianren heyi speaks to the direct experience. Hence, Daoist practices, including meditation, qigong, and internal alchemy, in their essence attempt to create the experience of tianren heyi. The emphasis on experience coincides with contemporary notions in psychotherapy around the limitations of cognition alone and the significant importance of embodied and experiential learning.

4.2 Integrating Tianren Heyi into Psychotherapeutic Theory

The incorporation of tianren heyi into psychotherapeutic theory entails a basic transformation in our conceptualization of human psychology and the therapeutic process. Such incorporation interrogates the individualistic implications of much of Western psychology while simultaneously situating human existence within cosmic spaces (Hong, 2021). The theoretical implications of tianren heyi extend to our consideration of psychological symptoms, the nature of healing, and the goals of therapy itself.

From a tianren heyi perspective, psychological symptoms can be conceptualized as manifestations of disconnection from cosmic unity. For example, anxiety may be viewed not merely as a disorder of neurotransmitters, or cognitive patterns, but as the natural consequence of feeling one’s self separate and vulnerable in a seemingly threatening universe. Depression may be seen as the stagnation that arises from attempting to fabricate an unrealistic separate self rather than flowing freely with cosmic energies. This reframing provides the opportunity for a variety of approaches to therapeutic interventions that address the disillusionment of separation rather than merely symptom management.

The therapeutic relationship, itself, takes on new dimensions from the perspective of tianren heyi. Rather than a relationship between two distinct individuals, or the therapist and the client, the therapeutic relationship may be regarded as an encounter in which cosmic unity may be recognized and embodied. The therapist’s role shifts from that of expert dealing pathology, to that of guide facilitating their client’s awareness of their cosmic nature.This transformation has implications for the ways in which therapy should be practiced, stressing presence, resonance, and creating the conditions for natural unfolding instead of directive intervention.

Within a tianren heyi context, diagnostic categories and treatment planning also need to be viewed anew. There is no claim being made here that diagnostic guidelines are invalid in their relative utility for communication and research purposes, however a tianren heyi orientation acknowledges the provisional and possibly constraining nature of these categories in understanding human suffering. Rather than aiming to cluster symptomatology, assessment might be about examining the ways in which clients perceive that they have separated from cosmic unity, and how they specifically pattern this perception in their own experience.

The aims of the therapy shift in significant ways with an understanding of tianren heyi. Rather than having the primary aim of reducing symptoms or improving functioning, the aim of therapy has now become modulating and facilitating the client's recognition and embodiment of their connection to cosmic unity. The expanded aim of therapy is not to suggest that alleviating suffering is somehow irrelevant, but to locate symptom reduction in a more significant context of spiritual realization and cosmic fit. In addition to standardized outcome measures of success, we might include an understand of success in therapy as the degree to which clients perceive themselves as a part of the cosmic whole.

There also are practical techniques that are informed by the realization of tianren heyi to facilitate the clients realization of tianren heyi, which draws upon both traditional Daoist practices and contemporary therapeutic innovation. For example, there would be meditation practices to cultivate awareness of how the self and cosmos inter-penetrate, breathing exercises that synchronize an individual rhythm to a cosmic rhythm, movement practices that embody cosmic principles are also central to a tianren heyi-informed approach. Thus, these techniques are not simply adjuncts to talking therapy, they are interventions that are at the heart of the healing process in tianren heyi.

The incorporation of tianren heyi also has implications for therapist training and development. Therapists can not meaningfully facilitate the client’s realization of unity in the cosmos unless they have some direct understanding of unity in the cosmos themselves. Thus, therapist training that is infused with tianren heyi principles must include a sufficiently experiential component, which would possibly include meditation, qigong, or other techniques to facilitate direct experience and knowledge of unity in the cosmos. This represents a considerable shift in therapist training that is primarily theoretical knowledge and acquisition of therapeutic techniques.

4.3 Tianren Heyi as a Solution to Existential Challenges

The existential dilemmas that both contemporary society and modern individuals face—questions concerning meaning, purpose, identity, and mortality—find a profound response through the concept of tianren heyi. In a fragmented, alienated, and meaning-starved society, tianren heyi provides not only philosophical consolation but a real path toward existential resolution (Li, 2023). This cosmic orientation provides resources for grappling with the profound spiritual hunger underlying many modernized expressions of psychological suffering.

The meaning crisis that plagues many modern individuals can be said to directly stem from the loss of cosmic connection. When individuals experience themselves to be isolated entities within a mechanistic universe, life can - with little effort - feel meaningless, pointless, and absurd. Tianren heyi provides a radically different undertaking: instead of creating or discovering meaning, meaning is created in one's engagement in cosmic processes. The unique expression of the Tao speaks to each individual, and the experience of any individual has deep significance within the cosmos that transcends personal successes or failures.

Discussions of identity and self-worth—the very basis for the most therapeutic conversations—are redefined by adopting a tianren heyi perspective. Instead of the potentially exhausting task of constructing and maintaining a compelling self-concept, individuals can claim their identity in honor of their cosmic nature. The transition from an ego-centered identity to a cosmic identity can be liberating as individuals no longer expend exhaustible effort in constructing self-beings that always disappoint.Authentic self-worth is understood to be given, rather than earned, and derived from one's being as an expression of the cosmos itself.

Mortality and the fear of death--perhaps the greatest existential concern--are uniquely addressed through tianren heyi. From this perspective, death is not the end of an apparently isolated person but a transition in the broader cosmic process. Just as waves arise from and return to the ocean without the ocean being decreased in some way, individual lives arise from and return to the Tao. When one recognizes this transitive nature as real rather than merely conceptual, the relationship to mortality can be drastically altered, creating acceptance and even curiosity about this transition to nature.

Alienation, which is pervasive in modern society, has a direct association with forgetting tianren heyi. When humans experience themselves as fundamentally separate, loneliness becomes a condition of existence than a condition of the moment. Tianren heyi reveals this sense of separation to be illusory in nature: once one sees themselves as part of the cosmic whole, it is never possible to be truly alone. This recognition does not undermine our human impulse to seek relationships as a basic need, but situates them in a larger reality of cosmic belonging.

Practical efforts to support actualizing tianren heyi to respond to existential problems may be partly contemplative and partly active engagement with life. Meditation practice that expands awareness beyond the personal self, contemplation of natural phenomena with principles of the cosmos, or participating in activities that embody cosmic conditions can help to enact tianren heyi as a lived experience rather than mere word. Contemplative and experiential work can be useful in therapy to move from conceptualization to lived experience.

The case examples reveal the transformative potential of tianren heyi to respond to existential concerns. Clients suffering from severe existential depression with no meaning or purpose often experience fundamental shifts of orientation when presented with experiences that reveal their cosmic nature. This may begin with simple practices like witnessing the stars at night or feeling one's connection to the earth as

they walk, and can deepen into more formal contemplative practices. The resulting changes are often more than symptom alleviation and represent a more fundamental reorientation to existence itself.

5. Conclusion

The incorporation of Daoist philosophy into the field of modern psychotherapy goes beyond simply integrating techniques — it radically transforms our understanding of human nature, psychological suffering, and the process of healing to respond to the limitations of modern Western practices. For example, Daoist traditions have provided theoretical frameworks and lived understandings to engage with current psychological predicaments: wu-wei contests the action-oriented bias of modern psychotherapies, suggesting active engagement with natural processes as a remedy for the intoxicating distress from over-control; Harmony with Nature responds to the isolation of modern life via ecological therapies, recognizing that mental health cannot be separated from our relationality with nature; Tianren heyi reconceives existence, responding to existential dread via cosmic oneness to engender metamorphotic shifts beyond mere remission of symptoms. This inclusion of Daoist philosophy will shift how psychotherapists will be trained, how therapists and clients will relate, and the desired outcomes of therapy — from solely directed symptom reduction to harmony and a wider engagement with the cosmic; potentially leading to greater avenues for research, shifts in practice, and extensions into social/cultural healing through approaching psychological distress as symptoms of cultural patterns. Future directions could include: qualitative investigations; empirical studies; developing training and course-based material; engaging with an integrative model; and discussions of cultural sensitivity to preserve the roots of Daoism within a modern context. Ultimately, however, this established relationship reorients the field from a hyper-psychologized treatment approach towards a more meaningful engagement with the act of psychological healing, to respond to mental health challenges, by linking ancient wisdom from Daoism to contemporary practices for restoring a sense of harmony and balance within each other, society, nature, and the cosmos, thereby creating dignified spaces to ensure the longevity of a human future on Earth in a conducive way.

References

Chen, H., & Ma, X. (2022). The relationship between trait mindfulness, coping styles and empathy fatigue among psychological counselors. Chinese Journal of Clinical Psychology, 30(6), 1510-1514.

Chen, Y. (2024). Model exploration of building a modernization of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature: An investigation based on academic history. Journal of Nanjing Normal University (Social Science Edition), (1), 91-101.

Feng, L. (2022). The new construction of world order based on Dao: On Laozi's concept of tianxia. History of Chinese Philosophy, (5), 27-33.

Gao, W., & Li, Y. (2020). The modern transformation of the Daoist concept of “wu-wei”. Zhongzhou Academic Journal, (9), 7.

He, D. (2018). On the four dimensions of Dong Zhongshu's “wu-wei” thought. Confucius Studies, (1), 7.

Hong, M. (2021). On Cheng Yi's ecological wisdom of “unity of heaven and humanity” and its contemporary value. Journal of Xiangtan University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition), 45(4), 130-133.

Hua, Y. (2022). Coinciding with the Dao: The theoretical and practical relevance of Daoist thought to the Anthropocene. Chinese Comparative Literature, (3), 52-67.

Li, B. (2024). Nature and artifice: The philosophical origins of Daoism and Confucianism. Literature, History and Philosophy, (2).

Li, D. (2024). Virtue governance and wu-wei: The complementarity of Confucian and Daoist governance thought from a rule of law perspective. Confucius Studies, (2), 16-24.

Li, R. (2021). “Revering nature” or “unity of heaven and humanity”. Philosophical Analysis, 12(6), 3-14.

Li, W. (2023). The inverted heaven and humanity: Problems in the demonstration of “unity of heaven and humanity” and the resetting of the heaven-human relationship. Social Science Research, (2), 143-150.

Li, Z. (2023). The philosophical foundation, classical implications and modern value of the concept of “unity of heaven and humanity”. History of Chinese Philosophy, (6), 12-18.

Liu, J., & Liu, X. (2024). The traditional Chinese cultural foundation of modernization with harmonious coexistence between humans and nature. Theoretical Horizon, 290(4), 45-50.

Liu, J., Wang, M., & Sun, Q. (2022). Current status investigation of psychological counseling and crisis intervention management for college students in China. Chinese Journal of Clinical Psychology, (2).

Lu, X. (2024). On the contemporary enlightenment of “Dao learning for Western use”. Journal of Central South University (Social Science Edition), 30(2), 25-32.

Wang, B. (2019). Rereading and reflecting on the Confucian-Daoist concept of “unity of heaven and humanity”. Zhongzhou Academic Journal, (1), 6.

Wang, H., & Cao, Y. (2024). A new exploration of the Confucian thought of “unity of heaven and humanity”. Theory Journal, (2).

Xie, X. (2022). How is “Daoist liberalism” possible: A new interpretation centered on “wu-wei”. Modern Philosophy, (1), 132-139.

Xie, Y., & Jia, X. (2021). Research on multiple relationship situations and decision types of university psychological counselors. Psychological Science, 44(4), 1004-1011.

Xu, Y. (2024). Wang Yangming's absorption and integration of Daoist life wisdom. Social Science Front, (10), 34-40.

Yan, X., & Zhang, Y. (2024). The fourfold transcendence of Chinese modernization of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature. Shandong Social Sciences, (5), 73-80.

Ye, S. (2023). The ideological context of action problems in Laozi's philosophy. Philosophical Research, (8), 63-72.

Yin, W. (2021). Each correct in their destiny, each suitable to their nature: The naturalist values of Laozi and Zhuangzi's Daoism. Jiangsu Social Sciences, (6).

Zheng, B. (2023). From “ruler's wu-wei” to “universal wu-wei”: The interpretation of Laozi by Han Feizi from the perspective of ruler-minister relations. Philosophical Trends, (4), 51-60.

Care as the Foundation

-Integrating Daoist Philosophy into Contemporary Psychotherapy

Meng Xianrui

School of Philosophy, Anhui University



CONTENT

01 Introduction: Limitations and Breakthroughs in Modern Psychotherapy

02 Wu-Wei: The Wisdom of Effortless Action

03 Harmony with Nature: Reconnecting through Ecological Wisdom

04 Tianren Heyi: The Unity of Man and Cosmos

05 Conclusion: Transforming Psychotherapy through Daoist Philosophy



01

Introduction: Limitations and Breakthroughs in Modern Psychotherapy



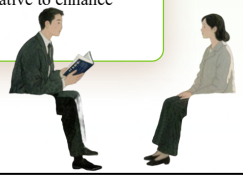
Limitations of Western Psychotherapy

Focus on Symptom Relief

Western psychotherapy often emphasizes symptom reduction and cognitive restructuring. However, it may lack a deeper perspective to address cultural differences and ecological crises, which are increasingly evident in global mental health issues.

Need for Cultural Adaptation

The growing awareness of cultural diversity and ecological challenges calls for more culturally adapted and philosophically inclusive therapies. Daoist philosophy, with its rich history and holistic approach, offers a promising alternative to enhance modern psychotherapy.



02

Wu-Wei: The Wisdom of Effortless Action



Philosophical Essence of Wu-Wei

01

Misinterpretations of Wu-Wei

Wu- wei is often misunderstood as passivity, but it actually means acting in harmony with natural patterns without forcing or resisting. This concept challenges the Western emphasis on active control and offers a more balanced approach to psychological well- being.



02

Historical Development

From its origins in the Daodejing to later interpretations, wu- wei has evolved to encompass various domains of human experience. It suggests that significant change comes from aligning with natural systems rather than trying to control them.



Application in Psychotherapy

Therapeutic Relationship

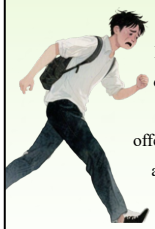
In psychotherapy, wu- wei encourages a more equal relationship between therapist and client. By creating a natural healing environment, therapists can reduce empathic fatigue and promote sustainable therapeutic practices.



Treatment Goals

Instead of focusing solely on symptom removal, wu- wei- oriented therapy aims to develop harmony and balance within the client's true nature. This approach values acceptance and integration of experiences rather than avoidance.

Implications for Modern Psychological Struggles



Anxiety and Depression

Modern psychological issues like anxiety and depression often stem from excessive striving and resistance to natural processes. Wu- wei offers a framework to understand these struggles and provides a path toward resolution through acceptance and natural unfolding.

Social and Cultural Healing

The modern emphasis on achievement and competition can exacerbate psychological distress. Wu- wei principles suggest a more balanced and sustainable approach to life, which can contribute to both individual and collective well- being.



03

Harmony with Nature: Reconnecting through Ecological Wisdom



Daoist View of Human-Nature Integration

Humans as Part of Nature

- Unlike Western traditions that often separate humans from nature, Daoism sees humans as integral parts of the natural world. This perspective challenges anthropocentric views and offers a holistic understanding of psychological health.



Natural Rhythms and Psychological Health

- Daoist philosophy emphasizes the importance of natural rhythms and cycles in human life. Aligning with these rhythms can promote mental health by restoring balance and reducing distress.



Ecological Therapy in Practice



Natural Settings for Therapy

Conducting therapy in natural environments such as gardens, parks, or forests can enhance the therapeutic process. Research shows that nature- based practices reduce anxiety, depression, and stress while improving overall well- being.

Techniques in Ecological Therapy

Practices like forest bathing and gardening allow clients to reconnect with nature in a meaningful way. These activities not only provide therapeutic benefits but also serve as powerful metaphors for personal growth and healing.

Addressing Modern Disconnection from Nature



Symptoms of Disconnection

Modern societies often experience a disconnection from nature, leading to feelings of rootlessness, anxiety, and meaninglessness. Daoist- informed therapy addresses these symptoms by re- establishing a connection with natural rhythms and relationships.



Healing through Reconnection

Reconnecting with nature can be achieved through various means, including spending more time outdoors, engaging in nature- related activities, and creating natural environments in therapy spaces. This reconnection can lead to significant improvements in mental health and overall well- being.

04

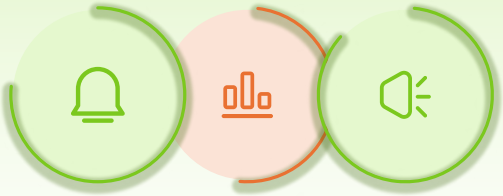
Tianren Heyi: The Unity of Man and Cosmos



Philosophical Core of Tianren Heyi

Concept of Unity

Tianren heyi, or the unity of man and cosmos, represents a profound reconceptualization of human existence. It suggests that humans and the cosmos are interconnected manifestations of the same underlying reality, challenging dualistic thinking.



Historical Evolution

The concept of tianren heyi has evolved over centuries, emphasizing the interconnectedness of humans and the cosmos. It offers a holistic view of reality and suggests that psychological well- being is achieved through alignment with cosmic principles.

Integration into Psychotherapy

Reframing Psychological Symptoms

From a tianren heyi perspective, symptoms like anxiety and depression can be seen as manifestations of disconnection from cosmic unity. This reframing allows for therapeutic approaches that focus on re- establishing this connection rather than merely managing symptoms.

Therapeutic Techniques

Practices such as meditation, qigong, and movement exercises can help clients experience the unity of man and cosmos. These techniques are central to the healing process and can lead to significant improvements in psychological well- being.

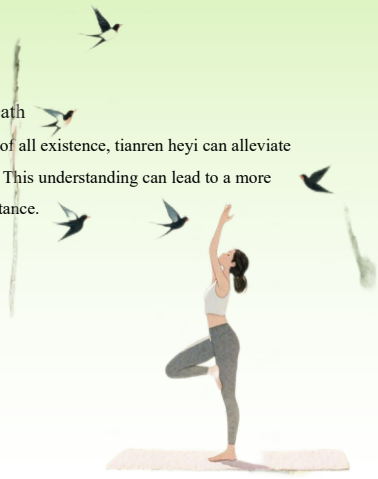
Solutions to Existential Challenges

Meaning and Purpose

Tianren heyi addresses existential concerns by providing a sense of meaning and purpose through connection with the cosmos. This perspective helps individuals find deeper significance in their lives beyond personal achievements.

Healing Alienation and Fear of Death

By recognizing the interconnectedness of all existence, tianren heyi can alleviate feelings of alienation and fear of death. This understanding can lead to a more profound sense of belonging and acceptance.



05

Conclusion: Transforming Psychotherapy through Daoist Philosophy



Shift in Therapeutic Approach

Integrating Daoist philosophy into psychotherapy transforms the approach from symptom- focused to holistic healing. It emphasizes living in harmony with natural and cosmic principles.

From Symptom Reduction to Holistic Healing



New Therapeutic Goals

The goals of therapy shift toward facilitating clients' recognition of their connection to the cosmos and promoting a balanced, harmonious way of life.

Future Directions

Research and Practice

01 Future research should explore the effectiveness of Daoist- informed therapies through qualitative and empirical studies. Developing training programs that incorporate these principles can enhance the practice of psychotherapy.

Cultural Sensitivity

02 Preserving the cultural roots of Daoism while adapting it to modern contexts is crucial. This integration can lead to more meaningful and effective psychological healing practices.

References

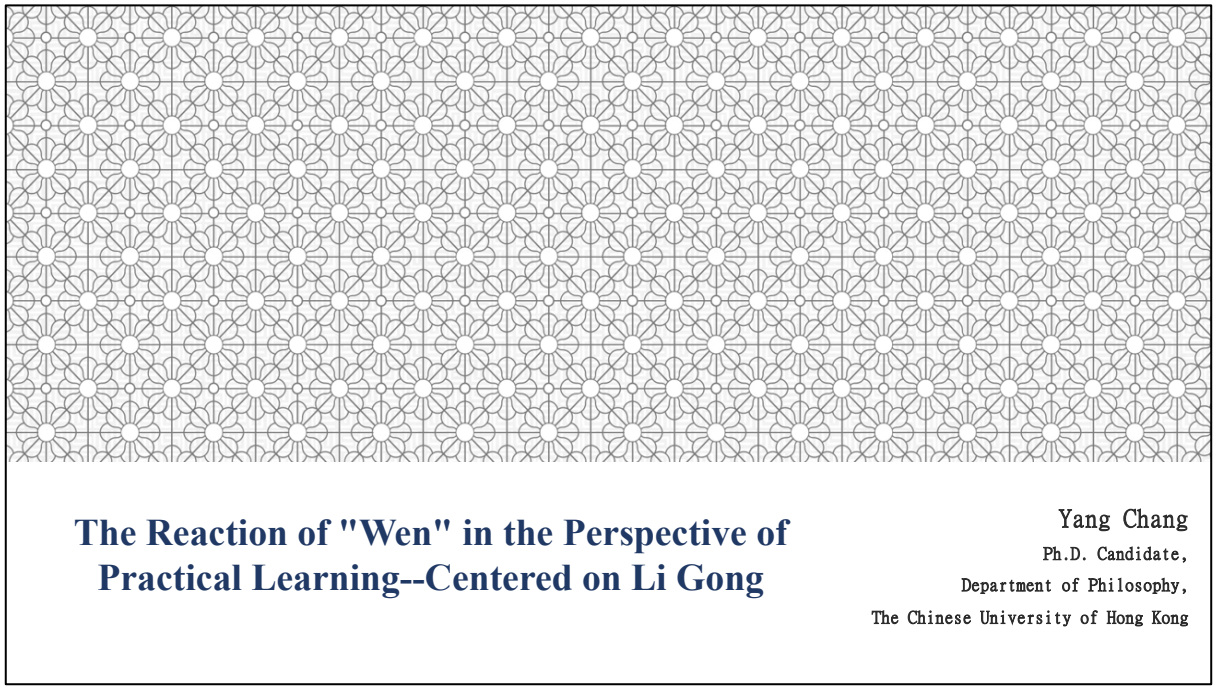
Chen, H., & Ma, X. (2022). The relationship between trait mindfulness, coping styles and empathy fatigue among psychological counselors. Chinese Journal of Clinical Psychology, 30(6), 1510-1514.
Chen, Y. (2024). Model exploration of building a modernization of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature: An investigation based on academic history. Journal of Nanjing Normal University (Social Science Edition), (1), 91-101.
Feng, L. (2022). The new construction of world order based on Dao: On Laozi's concept of tianxia. History of Chinese Philosophy, (5), 27-33.
Gao, W., & Li, Y. (2020). The modern transformation of the Daoist concept of "wu-wei". Zhongzhou Academic Journal, (9), 7.
He, D. (2018). On the four dimensions of Dong Zhongshu's "wu-wei" thought. Confucius Studies, (1), 7.
Hong, M. (2021). On Cheng Yi's ecological wisdom of "unity of heaven and humanity" and its contemporary value. Journal of Xiangtan University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition), 45(4), 130-133.
Hua, Y. (2022). Coinciding with the Dao: The theoretical and practical relevance of Daoist thought to the Anthropocene. Chinese Comparative Literature, (3), 52-67.
Li, B. (2024). Nature and artifice: The philosophical origins of Daoism and Confucianism. Literature, History and Philosophy, (2).
Li, D. (2024). Virtue governance and wu-wei: The complementarity of Confucian and Daoist governance thought from a rule of law perspective. Confucius Studies, (2), 16-24.
Li, R. (2021). "Revering nature" or "unity of heaven and humanity". Philosophical Analysis, 12(6), 3-14.
Li, W. (2023). The inverted heaven and humanity: Problems in the demonstration of "unity of heaven and humanity" and the resetting of the heaven-human relationship. Social Science Research, (2), 143-150.
Li, Z. (2023). The philosophical foundation, classical implications and modern value of the concept of "unity of heaven and humanity". History of Chinese Philosophy, (6), 12-18.
Liu, J., & Liu, X. (2024). The traditional Chinese cultural foundation of modernization with harmonious coexistence between humans and nature. Theoretical Horizon, 290(4), 45-50.
Liu, J., Wang, M., & Sun, Q. (2022). Current status investigation of psychological counseling and crisis intervention management for college students in China. Chinese Journal of Clinical Psychology, (2).
Lu, X. (2024). On the contemporary enlightenment of "Dao learning for Western use". Journal of Central South University (Social Science Edition), 30(2), 25-32.
Wang, B. (2019). Rereading and reflecting on the Confucian-Daoist concept of "unity of heaven and humanity". Zhongzhou Academic Journal, (1), 6.
Wang, H., & Cao, Y. (2024). A new exploration of the Confucian thought of "unity of heaven and humanity". Theory Journal, (2).
Xie, X. (2022). How is "Daoist liberalism" possible: A new interpretation centered on "wu-wei". Modern Philosophy, (1), 132-139.
Xie, Y., & Jia, X. (2021). Research on multiple relationship situations and decision types of university psychological counselors. Psychological Science, 44(4), 1004-1011.
Xu, Y. (2024). Wang Yangming's absorption and integration of Daoist life wisdom. Social Science Front, (10), 34-40.
Yan, X., & Zhang, Y. (2024). The fourfold transcendence of Chinese modernization of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature. Shandong Social Sciences, (5), 73-80.
Ye, S. (2023). The ideological context of action problems in Laozi's philosophy. Philosophical Research, (8), 63-72.
Yin, W. (2021). Each correct in their destiny, each suitable to their nature: The naturalist values of Laozi and Zhuangzi's Daoism. Jiangsu Social Sciences, (6).
Zheng, B. (2023). From "ruler's wu-wei" to "universal wu-wei": The interpretation of Laozi by Han Feizi from the perspective of ruler-minister relations. Philosophical Trends, (4), 51-60.


Thanks

C3

Chang Yang (Chinese University of Hong Kong)

“The Reaction of "Wen" in the Perspective of Practical Learning - Centered on Li Gong”



Concept definition&Background introduction

1. “Practical learning trend實學思潮”

At the turn of the Ming and Qing dynasties, society was in unrest and political crises were lurking everywhere. This huge social change prompted intellectuals to constantly reflect on the lessons of the country's decline and advocate practical learning. This was reflected in the academic trend, that is, some intellectuals reflected on the Neo-confucianism,the study of the mind and nature in Song and Ming dynasties, they advocated combining politics, economy and people's living conditions, and studied classics and history in order to "apply knowledge to the world".

At that time, the trends of practical learning that arose in different regions of the north and south had different styles. The north focused on practice, while the south focused on textual research考据之学.

Concept definition&Background introduction

2. "Wen文":

"Wen" has different meanings in different periods of ancient China . The Yanli School's understanding of "Wen" includes practice which mainly refers to six arts 六藝 and texts (exegetical texts訓詁, Neo-confucianism texts義理, literary essays辭章, and imperial examination essays科考時文), etc. Analysis of this can reveal the richness and hierarchy of the connotation of "Wen" in history.

3.“Yanli School顏李學派”:

The Yanli School is an important school of thought formed in northern China in the 17th century. Its founders were Yan Yuan and Li Gong, which are famous scholars in the north in the early Qing Dynasty. The Yanli School advocated "practical learning實學" which embodies"practical writing, practical conducting, practical experience and practical performing實文、實行、實體、實用", opposing to the Song and Ming philosophies, and had a considerable impact on the society.

Previous Studies and Research Significance:

In the past studies of the Yan-Li school, there are many overall studies on their thoughts, and some scholars have made specific studies into the ideas of the Yan-Li school from the perspectives of ethics, education, and other diversified perspectives, but few scholars have revealed the Yan-Li school's idea of practical learning from the angle of "wen".

Viewing practical learning from the perspective of "wen" can broaden the dimensions and perspectives of the study of practical learning thought; viewing "wen" from the perspective of practical learning also helps to enrich the understanding of the dimensions of "wen". This paper takes Li Gong as the center of the study, and discusses Li Gong's inheritance and development of Yan Yuan's idea of practical learning, and then reveals the development of the idea of practical learning in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties under a new perspective.

I Li Gong's Theory of "Wen" in Practical Learning

1.1 Inheritance of Yan Yuan's View on "Wen"

Yan Yuan's Understanding of "Wen"

Yan Yuan believed that the original meaning of "wen" lies in its practicality. He argued that "wen" includes the "Book of Songs," "Book of Documents" and the Six Arts. These texts are manifestations of practical knowledge related to governance and society. He emphasized that these texts should be applied in real-world contexts. Yan Yuan said, "Wen refers to the 'Book of Songs', 'Book of Documents', and Six Arts. The 'Book of Songs' and 'Book of Documents' are only three things of the spectrum,which relate to the "Six Virtues六德" "Six Actions六行" and "Six Arts六藝" as described in "the Rites of Zhou周禮".（文，《詩》、《書》、六藝耳。《詩》《書》亦只是三物之譜.）"

I Li Gong's Theory of "Wen" in Practical Learning

1.1Inheritance of Yan Yuan's View on "Wen"

Yan Yuan's Criticism of Later "Wen"

Yan Yuan criticized the later developments of "wen" into exegetical texts训诂之文，Neo-Confucianism texts义理之文and literary essays辞章之文. He argued that these forms of "wen" had strayed from practical applications and became empty and superficial.

試觀堯、舜修、和府、事，周、孔習行「三物」，五臣、十亂、七十賢所執之水、火、工、虞、兵、農、禮、樂，曰某事惟汝諧，某事惟汝諧，曰某可使如何，某可使如何，莫道釋、達番子分毫不得肖竊，雖程、朱之道學，歐、蘇之文字，漢人之訓詁，其可分毫彷彿否？

《顏元集•四書正誤卷六•朱子語類評•訓門人類》

I Li Gong's Theory of "Wen" in Practical Learning

1.2 Li Gong's Understanding of "Wen"

Practical Nature of "Wen"

Li Gong inherited Yan Yuan's view that "wen" should be connected to real-world application and practical engagement. He emphasized that "wen" should not be limited to mere texts or recitation but should be applied in practical contexts. Li Gong said, "Wen consists of the 'Book of Songs', the 'Book of Documents,' and the Six Arts. Reciting poetry, composing music, discussing classic texts, understanding governance, practicing rituals, archery, and the arts of war and writing should all be applied in practical contexts, rather than merely for the sake of academic pursuit.（文，《詩》、《書》、六藝也。誦詩作，能言考書，知政練事，習禮射數以致用，非占也。）"

I Li Gong's Theory of "Wen" in Practical Learning

1.2 Li Gong's Understanding of "Wen"

Distinction Between "Broad Learning in Wen" and "Literary Studies"

Li Gong distinguished between "broad learning in wen博學於文" and "literary studies文學",the former encompasses a wide range of practical studies while the latter focuses on the examination of texts. He argued that a gentleman should engage in both but prioritize practical application. Li Gong remarked, "Broad learning in wen encompasses a wide range of subjects, including military affairs, agriculture, rituals, music, archery, charioteering, writing, mathematics, water management, fire control, craftsmanship, and the arts of governance—all of which can be studied.（'博學於文'所指，廣兵、農、禮、樂、射、禦、書、數、水、火、工、虞之事，皆可學也。'文學'則專指其考定禮樂、酌古准今，博雅斐然而言。）"

II Li Gong's Works in Practical Learning

The works of Yan and Li vividly embody their practical styles. Yan Yuan dedicated himself to promoting the orthodox teachings of Zhou Gong and Confucius and constructing a system of practical scholarship; however, his lack of rigorous textual analysis made his arguments somewhat less persuasive.

In contrast, Li Gong employed textual criticism to provide classical foundations for practical learning and enriched Yan Yuan's concepts through a series of writings.

I divide Li Gong's works into his interpretation and textual research on ancient classics and his personal works.

II Li Gong's Works in Practical Learning

2.1 Classical Studies--**Commentary on the Book of Songs詩經傳注**

Li Gong's "Commentary on the Book of Songs" is a significant work that emphasizes historical evidence and textual criticism. He restores ancient notes and opposes Zhu Xi's interpretation. For example, in the poem "Zhou Song: Yong," the preface states, "Yong is the sacrifice to the great ancestor." Zheng Xuan interprets "great ancestor" as referring to King Wen. However, Li Gong argues that only Hou Ji can be rightfully referred to as the "great ancestor," based on historical context. This reflects Li Gong's method of promoting practical learning through writing. Li Gong said, "The preface, having been transmitted long before the 'Biographies of Exemplary Women,' should inherently be more persuasive.（《序》以為文王事，朱子無所考而之，以為未必。）

II Li Gong's Works in Practical Learning

2.2 Personal Writings

Li Gong also developed these ideas through his personal writings. These works are oriented towards practical governance. Among them, governance-related writings include "Compilation on Governance 治平編," "Corrections to the Book of Governance平書訂," and "Proposals for the Great Peace擬太平策." His learning-related works include "Regulations for the Study of the Classics聖經學規纂" and "Elementary Texts小學稽業," while his writings on human affairs include "Humanity人論," "Examples of Legal Cases訟過則例," and "Critics On Buddhism辟佛論."

III.Li Gong's Poetry thought in the Perspective of "practical learning"

3.1 Dialectical View on Poetry

In terms of the attitude toward poetics, Yan Yuan exhibited a strong rejection of poetic composition, whereas Li Gong engaged in a dialectical reflection on poetics. He believed that while one should moderately absorb the benefits of poetic learning, it is essential to remain vigilant and avoid becoming ensnared by it.Li Gong believed that poetry is a harmonious expression of aspirations that can evoke human emotions and reflect the realities of life. He argued that poetry should not be abandoned but should be approached with caution to avoid becoming overly immersed in poetic technique.

III.Li Gong's Poetry thought in the Perspective of "practical learning"

3.2 Criticism of Contemporary Poetry

Li Gong criticized the decline of contemporary poetry, stating that it had shifted from the political and educational framework of the "Book of Songs" to trivial and insignificant expressions. He emphasized the importance of emotional expression in poetry. He remarked, "Today's poetry is not like ancient poetry. Ancient poetry was musical composition; what we have now is mere trivial skill, a loss of ambition, and a pest to the way of the sages.今之詩，非古之詩也。古詩即樂章也，今流為雕蟲小技，玩物喪志，為聖道之蠹。"

III.Li Gong's Poetry thought in the Perspective of "practical learning"

3.3 Li Gong's Poetry and Practical Learning

（1） Reverence for Zhou and Confucius

Li Gong's poetry reflects his deep respect for the teachings of Zhou Gong and Confucius. For example, in his poem "On the Way to Dongzhuang," he writes: "I close the door and reopen the paths of Zhou Gong and Confucius; the sun and moon of a thousand autumns illuminate the universe.（閉戶重開周孔轍，千秋日月照乾坤）" This line expresses his commitment to the teachings of Zhou Gong and Confucius.

III.Li Gong's Poetry thought in the Perspective of "practical learning"

3.3 Li Gong's Poetry and Practical Learning

（2） Opposition to Neo-Confucianism

Li Gong's poetry also reflects his opposition to Neo-Confucianism. In his poem "Reflections on Learning," he writes: "Flowing down to the Southern Song, both Zhu and Lu embraced Zen.（沿流至南宋，朱陸皆禪喜。語錄徒增加，乾坤莫經理。）" In this poem, Li Gong reflects on the deviations in the Confucian tradition, highlighting the tendencies toward Zen in the Neo-Confucian teachings represented by Zhu Xi and Lu Jiuyuan during the Southern Song period. He argues that their aphorisms did not offer effective governance strategies.

III.Li Gong's Poetry thought in the Perspective of "practical learning"

3.3 Li Gong's Poetry and Practical Learning

（3）Emphasis on Practice

- Li Gong emphasized the importance of practical activities in his poetry. For example, in his poem "Farming in Dongzhuang," he writes: "On the northern path, three hundred acres are hard to plow; in the morning, I labor in the fields.（北陌難阡三百，朝來隴上課躬耕。）" This line depicts his involvement in agricultural labor and reflects his commitment to practical learning.

Summary

In the context of practical learning, Li Gong inherits Yan Yuan's idea that the original meaning of "wen" lies in its practicality, and he is critical of the later "wen" of exegetical texts訓詁, Neo-confucianism texts義理, literary essays辭章. At the same time, Li Gong developed the idea of practical learning through composition. On the one hand, Li Gong established a classical basis for practical learning through texual evidence, and on the other hand, he enriched and expanded the idea of practical learning of Yan Yuan through a series of personal writings.

Summary

In the field of poetics, Li Gong believed that the benefits of poetics should be absorbed, but at the same time, he is wary of being trapped in it. Taking Li Gong's "Commentary on the Book of Songs《詩經傳注》" as an example, the book focuses on historical evidence, restoring the ancient notes and opposing Zhu Xi's interpretation, reflecting Li Gong's method of promoting the practical learning through writing. Li Gong also composed a large number of poems, the contents of which reflect his conversion to Zhou Gong and Confucius, his criticism of Neo-confucianism, and his emphasis on practice, which is a vivid manifestation of Li's practical learning in his creative work.

All suggestions are welcome and appreciated!

Thank you very much.

YANG Chang

2025.7

Sirui Fu (Xi'an Jiaotong University)

"No-Mind Revolution in Modern Counseling: Integrating D. T. Suzuki's Zen Wisdom and Japanese Philosophical Practice for Spiritual Healing"

1. Introduction

The contemporary field of psychological counseling is currently grappling with the predicament of technocratic dominance. Standardized intervention models represented by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th ed.; DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association, 2013) and cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), while providing concrete diagnostic criteria that promote consistency in clinical judgments across practitioners, have demonstrated empirical efficacy at the cost of succumbing to "spiritual impoverishment" (Deacon, 2013) through excessive reliance on instrumental rationality. Patients are reduced to mere symptom clusters rather than being recognized as holistic individuals with spiritual needs (e.g., neglect of their value systems, existential dilemmas, etc.). This technocratic tendency in psychological counseling risks alienating the therapeutic process into mechanistic symptom management, thereby obscuring the integrity of subjective life experience—manifesting as one of the crises of modernity (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018).

In Japanese society, phenomena such as karōshi (death from overwork) and hikikomori (social withdrawal) (Kato et al., 2019) highlight the limitations of traditional psychotherapy in addressing contemporary existential anxiety. When individuals grapple with value nihilism and crises of meaning, purely behavioral interventions often fail to meet their fundamental spiritual needs. Against this backdrop, the Zen philosophy of D.T. Suzuki—revered as the "global ambassador of Zen"—offers a new paradigm for psychological counseling. Suzuki introduced the Eastern concept of mushin (no-mind) into Western psychotherapeutic frameworks, providing a spiritual counterbalance to the hyper-technicalized modern counseling paradigm. He articulated mushin as a form of non-discriminating wisdom that transcends subject-object duality, advocating for a psychological reconstruction of subjectivity through the dissolution of ego-clinging, thereby returning to the primordial state of original nothingness (Suzuki, 1991). Carl Jung praised this approach as "offering the West a practical path to realizing the inner Self" (Jung, 1992), while Suzuki's mushin philosophy resonates theoretically with existential therapy and mindfulness-based interventions, positioning Zen as a critical medium for East-West dialogue in psychotherapy (Suzuki, 2019). This critique and transcendence of instrumental rationality exemplify the unique wisdom of Eastern thought.

On the other hand, in recent years, Japan has witnessed a flourishing of philosophical practices such as philosophy cafés and Philosophy for Children (P4C) (堀越耀介 & 河野哲也, 2022). These initiatives exemplify a profound respect for the holistic integrity of individual lived experience. In philosophy cafés, participants engage in non-conceptual dialogues—such as film discussions—embodying Suzuki's emphasis on

"intuitively apprehending reality as-it-is." In educational settings, the "community ball" technique cultivates a rhythm of "pause-awareness-response," mirroring the Zen principle of "thinking yet not-thinking" “于念而无念”(nen naki nen). Meanwhile, in corporate consulting, the philosophy of mushin is distilled into streamlined Socratic dialogues, infusing traditional wisdom with modern critical thinking. This fusion of tradition and contemporaneity not only revitalizes Suzuki's thought but also charts a practical path for psychotherapy beyond technical rationality.

Though Zen and philosophical praxis originate from distinct traditions—the former rooted in Eastern spiritual practice, the latter in Western rational critique—they demonstrate remarkable theoretical synergy in addressing modernity's dilemmas. Methodologically, Zen's kōan practice and philosophy's "presuppositionless dialogue" share a common design: both suspend entrenched cognitive frameworks to catalyze epistemic transformation. This affinity allows Zen to supplement philosophical practice with spiritual depth, while philosophical practice provides Zen with discursive articulation. Japan's unique cultural context serves as an ideal crucible for this synthesis. In a society simultaneously grappling with modern anxieties and traditional revival, Zen's "non-reliance on words" “不立文字”(furyū monji) and philosophy's linguistic analysis achieve dialectical unity. The Kyoto School philosopher Kitarō Nishida's concept of "pure experience" bridges Zen intuition with philosophical reflection (森野雄介, 2015)—a convergence palpable when philosophy café participants encounter wordless silence, paralleling Zen's "realm beyond speech" (gon dō setsu). This cultural DNA imbues Japanese philosophical practice with an innate Zen quality: the ma (interval)-oriented rhythm of group discussion preserves Socratic rigor while embracing the Zen ethos of "every day is a good day"“日日是好日”(nichi nichi kore kōjitsu).

Contemporary philosophical counseling has increasingly shifted its focus toward individuals' inner experiences and spiritual needs, transcending the traditional paradigm dominated by technical rationality. This paper examines the innovative integration of D.T. Suzuki's mushin (no-mind) philosophy with modern philosophical counseling. Such a synthesis not only addresses contemporary crises of meaning and value nihilism but also—through the embodied healing (embodied healing) wisdom inherent in Japanese cultural practices like chanoyu (tea ceremony) and kadō (ikebana)—paves the way for a more holistic psychotherapeutic model. This approach simultaneously responds to modern spiritual dilemmas and offers valuable insights for cross-cultural psychological counseling practices.

2. Suzuki D.T.'s Philosophy of "Mushin": The Philosophical Foundation of Zen-Inspired Living

As the pioneering scholar who systematically introduced Zen Buddhism to Western audiences (Suzuki, 2019), D.T. Suzuki's contemporary reinterpretation of mushin (no-mind) demonstrates significant theoretical alignment with modern philosophical counseling practice, breathing new life into this ancient concept. The doctrinal roots of mushin can be traced to Huineng's foundational framework in The Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch, which establishes "no-thought as the essence (无念为宗), no-form as the substance (无相为体, and no-abiding as the foundation (无住为本)" (Huineng, 2010).Suzuki creatively reconceptualized this tradition—clarifying that mushin denotes neither literal mind-absence nor unconsciousness, but rather a mode of intuitive wisdom that transcends subject-object dichotomies and deconstructs conceptual cognition. He formally defined it as "Non-discriminating Wisdom" (Suzuki, 1943), characterizing it as an unconditioned mental state that remains unperturbed by logical categorization and surpasses all dualistic frameworks.

At the epistemological level, mushin inherits the essential characteristics of Zen philosophy. To comprehend mushin is to understand a mode of thinking that transcends conceptualization. In daily life, people habitually employ language and logic to bifurcate the world into binary categories such as "subject/object" and "good/evil." Mushin, however, breaks through these dichotomies by apprehending reality through intuitive realization . Suzuki emphasizes this as direct experience unmediated by conceptual thought—a cognitive mode surpassing subject-object duality. Citing the Platform Sūtra's axiom of "no-thought as the essence" (鈴木大拙,1943), he elucidates mushin as "thinking yet not-thinking" (Suzuki, 1991, p. 89).This paradoxical state—where thoughts arise without binding the mind—achieves what Zen describes as "bamboo shadows sweep the stairs but no dust is stirred," “竹影扫阶尘不动”maintaining the mind's unwavering tathatā“如如”(suchness). Here, tathatā denotes reality's true mode of being "just as it is" (Suzuki, 2019, p. 112), while "unwavering" signifies not passive inertia but freedom from conceptual judgments: perceiving beauty without craving, encountering ugliness without aversion. Non-discriminating wisdom manifests precisely in this unmediated encounter with suchness—refraining from "good/bad" or "self/other" labeling—resonating with Zhuangzi's philosophy of the "unperturbed mind"“不动心”(庄子，1983) .

At the psychological level, mushin represents a state of consciousness liberated from ego-clinging. As Suzuki (1991) clarifies, mushin does not negate awareness but transcends the fixations of the "small self"“小我”(ego)—dissolving the attachments of "I think" and "I desire" while preserving pure perception itself . This distinction becomes evident in Suzuki's comparative analysis of the famous Zen gong'an between Shenxiu's "diligent dust-wiping" verse and Huineng's "originally not one thing" revelation, recorded in the "Action Origins" chapter of The Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch (Huineng, 2010, pp. 12-15).Shenxiu's approach—"constantly wipe the mirror

to prevent dust accumulation"—embodies the Northern School's gradual cultivation “见性” (jianxiu), premised on a dualistic framework that opposes "inherent purity" against "defiling dust" (Suzuki, 1991, p. 81). His method of "observing purity"“看净” (kanjing) implies a subject (practitioner) maintaining an object (pure mind), thereby reinforcing the very duality Zen seeks to overcome. In contrast, Huineng's sudden enlightenment (dunwu) declaration—"originally no dust exists, so where could it settle?"—deconstructs this binary by denying both dust (defilement) and wiper (practitioner) as conceptual constructs (Huineng, 2010, p. 14).Suzuki critiques Shenxiu's position not to dismiss its practical value but to expose its latent paradox: the very effort to "guard purity" presumes and perpetuates ego-attachment (pp. 82-83). As the author notes, this analysis reflects Suzuki's core teaching to Western audiences—authentic liberation manifests as mushin: a non-logical wisdom where "the mirror neither reflects nor refuses, yet illuminates spontaneously" (Suzuki, 2019, p. 158). For contemporary scholars interpreting these teachings, Suzuki's admonition remains vital: "True Zen practitioners neither side with Shenxiu nor cling to Huineng, but directly point to that vibrant ordinary mind" (Suzuki, 1943, p. 45)—a guidance echoing Zen's hermeneutic principle to "follow the meaning, not the words" .

At the ontological level, mushin points to the primordial mode of existence encapsulated in the phrase "originally not one thing exists" “本来无一物”(benlai wu yiwu). Suzuki (1943) carefully distinguishes mushin from mere unconsciousness, emphasizing its dynamic quality as "vigilant awareness in its most alive state" (p. 92)—what he terms "bare existence itself" (p. 95). This awareness necessitates complete suspension (epoché) of conceptual dependence, returning consciousness to the pre-reflective field of pure experience. In this state, one ceases to appropriate objects through subjectivity, allowing all phenomena to "self-disclose"“自行显现” (ziran xianqi) with the unimpeded clarity of "snow blanketing a thousand mountains, moonlight reflecting in ten thousand streams" (Suzuki, 2019, p. 203).Yet mushin diverges fundamentally by privileging embodied practice over pure speculation. As the author observes, this practical wisdom transforms abstruse philosophy into quotidian reality—"eating when hungry, sleeping when tired" (Suzuki, 1940, p. 117)—where even mundane acts like wearing clothes or drawing water contain Zen's living truth (zenki) (Suzuki, 2019, p. 211). Unlike Western existentialism's confrontation with absurdity, mushin-informed living manifests as spontaneous naturalness (ziran).

For contemporary audiences, engagement with Zen—whether terminologically (e.g., "Chan") or through dialogic practice (mondō)—often evokes frustration due to its perceived abstraction. As Suzuki (1940/2019) observes, Zen's teachings transcend conventional logic through ethereal content and deliberately enigmatic phrasing, exemplified by Deshan's dictum "no affairs in mind, no mind in affairs" (柳田圣山, 1976, p. 102). While acknowledging this intentional opacity, Suzuki posits it as Zen's didactic

strength: "The master's fragmentary utterances force the disciple's innate wisdom to complete the circuit of understanding" (p. 134). This pedagogical dynamic is crystallized in the classical interchange between Vinaya master Yuan and Zen master Dazhu Huihai:

Yuan: "Do you employ any specialized cultivation method?"
Huihai: "Yes."
Yuan: "What method?"
Huihai: "Eating when hungry, sleeping when tired."
Yuan: "All humans do thus—how does your practice differ?"
Huihai: "When others eat, they scheme endlessly; when they sleep, they chase thoughts. This is the difference" (Suzuki, 2013).

For Zen Buddhism, spiritual cultivation (“修道”shugyō) is inseparable from ordinary living—eating and sleeping themselves constitute the path of practice (Suzuki, 1991, p. 89). Contemporary anxiety often stems from fixation on future uncertainties or past regrets, exacerbated by modern society’s relentless pace and high-pressure work environments. In this context, mushin (no-mind), as articulated in Zen wisdom, offers a threefold liberation: transcendence of attachment (upādāna), dissolution of dualistic thinking (nirvikalpa), and radical presence in each moment (Suzuki, 2019, p. 112). From this perspective, Zen serves as an anchor for inner tranquility amid life’s turbulence.As Suzuki (1940) emphasizes, Zen transcends both philosophy and institutional religion, manifesting instead as "direct life-experience" (p. 158). The mushin-guided existence neither pursues mystical ecstasy nor moral dogma, but embodies what he terms "awakened ordinariness"—exemplified by the Kyoto craftsman who "made wooden combs for sixty years yet claimed never to have worked a day" (Suzuki, 1938 p. 103). This paradoxical state mirrors the Zen ideal of "mountains are just mountains" (sangen), where mundane acts become sites of both self-effacement and self-fulfillment. When modernity reduces individuals to occupational roles, Zen’s embodied practice—"writing on water, acting wholeheartedly yet releasing all traces" (Suzuki, 1940, p. 167)—functions as a vital "decelerator" for accelerated societies.

3. Theoretical Resonance Between Zen and Philosophical Practice: From Meditation to Socratic Dialogue

Zen Buddhism and philosophical practice originate from distinct Eastern and Western traditions—Zen emphasizing intuitive realization (kenshō) while philosophical practice prioritizes rational critique —yet they converge methodologically through their shared design of paradoxical dialogue, both aiming to dismantle cognitive presuppositions and reconstruct subjectivity. In Zen methodology, zazen (seated meditation) and kōan

(paradoxical queries) are recognized as two primary forms of mushin cultivation. Zazen, commonly referred to as "sitting meditation," involves practitioners sitting with their backs straight, placing the left palm over the right with thumbs lightly touching, assuming a half-eyed gaze (Suzuki, 1991, p. 89). In this posture, practitioners enter a state of selflessness (anātman) through contemplative silence, dispelling mental distractions in pursuit of enlightenment (satori). Zazen emphasizes transcending conceptual categorization through stillness and mental focus, whereas kōan practice integrates Zen into daily life as a form of "meditation in motion." It employs seemingly contradictory and unsolvable questions—such as the famous kōan "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" attributed to Hakuin Ekaku (1686–1769) (柳田聖山,1984)—to push practitioners beyond logical thinking and toward direct realization of reality (kenshō). During these exchanges, the questioner is often led into a cognitive impasse, dismantling prior assumptions and resetting the starting point of thought, allowing consciousness to transcend linguistic limitations. This Zen method of cognitive disruption through paradox aligns strikingly with the dialogical design of contemporary philosophical practice. D.T. Suzuki regarded "paradox as a catalyst for awakening" (Suzuki, 2019, p. 112), noting the structural similarity between kōan and Socratic dialogue in philosophical counseling—both employ techniques to disrupt habitual thinking: kōan through illogical questioning, and Socratic dialogue through elenchus (e.g., interrogating "What is justice?" to expose contradictions in definitions) . Zen's "non-reliance on words" (furyū monji) and philosophical practice's "linguistic analysis" form a dialectical unity. For Zen, language is a tool, not truth itself—"non-reliance on words" arises because Zen's "Buddha-nature" and "original face" cannot be fully captured by language; attachment to concepts obscures reality. As Suzuki explains, "Zen truth is not in scriptures but in chopping wood and carrying water" (Suzuki, 1991, p. 76). Conversely, philosophical counseling employs Socratic dialogue to clarify conceptual ambiguities, progressively approaching truth through analytical rigor. These approaches ultimately unify in lived practice. For instance, in philosophy cafés, participants engage in non-conceptual discussions based on films or art, prioritizing descriptions of bodily sensations or intuitive imagery before conceptual interpretation—a method embodying the phenomenological principle of "returning to things themselves," which resonates with Zen's essence of directly encountering reality without conceptual mediation.

It is commonly understood that a single hand cannot produce sound, making Hakuin's question a deliberate violation of conventional logic. In the dynamic of Zen dialogue, the questioner's established cognitive frameworks are systematically deconstructed, leading them into an aporia where conventional responses prove inadequate. This state of cognitive impasse facilitates a fundamental reset of thought patterns, enabling consciousness to transcend the limitations of linguistic rationality (Suzuki, 1991, p. 112). This Zen methodology of cognitive disruption through paradox exhibits remarkable parallels with contemporary philosophical practice's dialogical approaches.

D.T. Suzuki posited that "paradox serves as the catalyst for enlightenment" (Suzuki, 2019, p. 156), highlighting the methodological isomorphism between kōan practice and Socratic dialogue—both employ deliberate strategies to subvert habitual thinking patterns. While kōan utilizes anti-logical questioning, Socratic elenchus employs rigorous conceptual interrogation (e.g., the deconstruction of "justice" through persistent questioning) to expose contradictions in the interlocutor's premises.

The dialectical synthesis between Zen's "non-reliance on words" (furyū monji) and philosophical practice's linguistic analysis reveals a profound complementarity. In Zen epistemology, language functions as an instrumental rather than constitutive medium - the "Buddha-nature" (busshō) and "original face" (honrai no memmoku) transcend linguistic encapsulation. Conceptual fixation, in this view, necessarily obscures reality's true nature. As Suzuki elucidated, "Zen truth resides not in sutras but in the mundane acts of chopping wood and drawing water" (Suzuki, 1991, p. 89). Conversely, philosophical counseling employs Socratic dialogue to methodically expose linguistic ambiguities and contradictions, progressively refining conceptual clarity through analytical rigor. These ostensibly antithetical approaches achieve synthesis in practical application: in philosophy cafés, participants engage in non-conceptual discourse through artistic or cinematic stimuli, prioritizing phenomenological description of embodied experiences and visual imagery before conceptual interpretation. This methodology embodies the Husserlian principle of "zu den Sachen selbst" (returning to things themselves), mirroring Zen's fundamental orientation toward "direct apprehension of reality, unmediated by conceptual constructs"（鈴木大拙,1943）.

In contemporary philosophical practice, the "community of inquiry" approach in Philosophy for Children (P4C) employs open-ended questions to stimulate collective reflection (Lipman, 2003). In Japan, psychotherapists have innovatively integrated P4C's group dialogue with zazen meditation, creating a therapeutic modality that helps clients both recognize cognitive contradictions and cultivate non-attachment to them - a modern interpretation of the Zen Buddhist principle that "earthly desires are enlightenment" (bonnō soku bodai) (河野哲也,斎藤幸平 , 2021). Notably, unlike the anti-logical nature of kōan, P4C's questioning design focuses on revealing cognitive ambiguities through collective dialogue. The "community ball" activity in P4C intentionally creates conversational pauses to develop children's philosophical thinking skills. For instance, children are instructed to practice mindful breathing and emotional awareness before responding, a training that essentially uses breath as an anchor to cultivate cognitive flexibility - maintaining clear awareness without over-identification. This "pause-awareness-response" rhythm remarkably resembles the breath regulation training in Zen meditation described as "thinking yet not-thinking" “于念而无念”. The original text states: "When the mind remains unattached to phenomena, this is called no-thought. When dwelling in thoughts yet detached from

phenomena, the mind does not arise in relation to phenomena",“于诸境上心不染，曰无念；于自念上常离诸境,不于境上生心”(慧能,2011). "man thinks yet he does not think," where "thinking" refers to noticing the arising of thoughts, while "not-thinking" means neither excessively pursuing nor deliberately suppressing thoughts, but rather gathering attention through breath regulation. Furthermore, Japanese business consulting has operationalized this "pause-awareness-response" model. For example, when teams debate "how to improve efficiency," consultants first ask members to suspend their positions (pause), then inquire "to whom is efficiency important?" When teams reach decision deadlocks, consultants might ask: "Does your definition of 'efficiency' contain inherent contradictions?" Through such paradoxical questioning, consultants compel teams to confront cognitive blind spots . As Suzuki (1959) observed in Zen and Japanese Culture: "True insight often emerges where logic is exhausted" (p. 78), and modern business consulting has unwittingly aligned with this Zen principle of "exhausting reason to reveal nature."

Thus, the theoretical resonance between Zen Buddhism and philosophical practice forms a complete loop, manifesting across both individual (kōan/Socratic dialogue) and collective (P4C/business consulting) levels through a shared "awareness-response" mechanism for cognitive transformation. This conceptual integration has transcended theoretical discourse and found practical realization through Japan's cultural synthesis. While Socratic dialogue teaches people to "live an examined life," Zen advocates "living an unexamined life" - seemingly contradictory positions that ultimately converge in practice. Both kōan and Socratic dialogue aim not at answers per se, but at cultivating participants' awareness of their cognitive limitations (e.g., realizing "I actually don't know what justice means") followed by active re-examination of presuppositions. This process remarkably parallels Zen's "doubt-awakening" “疑情——顿悟” (gijō-satori) trajectory (鈴木大拙,1940).This convergence offers crucial spiritual supplementation to today's over-technicized psychological counseling. Modern psychology often remains trapped in the "diagnosis-intervention" binary framework, whereas the shared "awareness-response" dynamic of Zen and philosophical practice points toward subjective reconstruction. By dissolving attachment to "self-diagnosis" (e.g., "I must/solve my anxiety") - what Zen calls "letting go of ego-clinging" (Suzuki, 1991, p. 89) - individuals may return to what D.T. Suzuki termed the "original state of nothingness" (honrai muichimotsu).

4. The Therapeutic Efficacy of Zen: Embodied Healing in Chanoyu and Ikebana

D.T. Suzuki (2019) observed in Zen and Japanese Culture that artistic disciplines like ikebana (flower arrangement), chanoyu (tea ceremony), and bushidō (the way of the warrior) all embody Zen spirituality (p. 156). Modern philosophical counseling can draw from these practices' intentional bodily movements and ritualized procedures to help

practitioners experientially grasp the subject-world relationship and achieve psychological healing.

The tea master Sen no Rikyū (1522–1591) established wabi-cha, which centers on four principles“和、敬、清、寂”—wa (harmony), kei (respect), sei (purity), and jaku (tranquility)—manifested through spatial design (e.g., the 1.5-tatami tea room) and ceremonial gestures (e.g., purifying the bamboo ladle) (中村修也,2013). The compact 1.5-tatami space, rejecting ornate decoration, fosters egalitarian interaction by dissolving social hierarchies through its minimalist aesthetic (Suzuki, 2019, p. 178). Polite phrases like "Please go first" (osaki ni) operationalize wa and kei, constructing interpersonal harmony, while kei extends reverence to all elements—tea utensils, nature, and participants—forming a trinity of "reverence for objects, tea, and people" (keibutsu, keicha, keijin) (Okakura, 1906/2021, p. 45). Sei and jaku guide inner purification: physical cleanliness reflects sei, whereas jaku embodies wabi-sabi aesthetics—finding beauty in imperfection, impermanence, and natural simplicity—which Suzuki (1991) described as "negating worldly attachments (e.g., fame, conventional aesthetics) to reach mushin's lucidity" (p. 89). The tea garden’s deliberately "asymmetrical stones, murmuring streams, moss-covered lanterns, hissing iron kettle, and soft light through paper screens" (Suzuki, 2019, p. 182) collectively create a meditative atmosphere, demonstrating how meticulous details cultivate ceremonial intentionality.

This wisdom of spatial atmosphere cultivation holds significant implications for modern philosophical counseling. Philosophy cafés could adopt design principles from the tea ceremony space - incorporating minimalist yet textured furnishings, soft lighting, and natural decorative elements - to create an environment where participants can relax physically while focusing mentally, much like how the 1.5-tatami space's constraints foster intimate communion in chanoyu (Suzuki, 2019, p. 179). Similarly, philosophical counseling spaces might enhance dialogical depth through deliberate spatial scaling. The tea ceremony's emphasis on ritual sensibility suggests that philosophical counseling could benefit from incorporating simple ceremonial elements, such as a moment of silence at the beginning or a concluding summary ritual, to help participants transition more effectively into and out of reflective states. Most crucially, the spiritual core of wa-kei-sei-jaku reminds us that philosophical counseling must extend beyond rational discourse to cultivate an atmosphere of mutual respect and authentic openness, creating the necessary conditions for profound philosophical reflection to emerge organically . The tea master's meticulous attention to seasonal flowers and handmade utensils parallels how philosophical counselors might thoughtfully curate discussion stimuli - selecting philosophical texts or artworks that resonate with participants' lived experiences while challenging their assumptions . Just as Rikyū's wabi-cha transformed tea preparation into spiritual practice through disciplined simplicity, philosophical counseling rituals could elevate everyday dialogue into meaningful existential inquiry when imbued with comparable intentionality.

The essence of Zen-tea relationship lies in simplification and intuitive apprehension, which equally applies to ikebana (flower arrangement). Ikebana cultivates gratitude and respect for nature through its intuitive creative process, wherein the concept of ma (間) becomes particularly significant (Suzuki, 2019, p. 203). As a core aesthetic principle in Japanese culture, ma emphasizes the physical intervals between floral materials and between flowers and vessels - resonating with the negative space in ink-wash painting - to create a tension-filled tranquility, a spiritual breathing space. When discussing the mushin philosophy in ikebana, Suzuki (1991) emphasized that mushin represents a non-conceptual aesthetic experience independent of established standards or language, instead directly apprehending nature's beauty through intuition (p. 112). This aesthetic experience intimately connects with ma, where the created space is not mere emptiness but an open state brimming with possibilities. Kurokawa Masayuki further elucidated that ma constitutes a spacetime formed by ki (energy field) - like the lingering sound in music or unpainted space in artwork - intangible yet perceptible (黒川雅之,2012). Psychologically, this spatial awareness suggests an existence that avoids overfilling while maintaining room for flexibility, allowing individuals to preserve open and receptive mental states during aesthetic experiences, thereby enabling deeper apprehension of nature and life's essence. The deliberate placement of a single flower branch, asymmetrically positioned with ample ma, mirrors how philosophical counseling might create conceptual space for clients to breathe between thoughts - what Heidegger might term "clearing" (Lichtung) for authentic being to emerge (Heidegger, 1971, p. 65). Just as ikebana masters speak of "listening to flowers," philosophical practitioners could learn to "listen to silence" in dialogues, recognizing that meaning often emerges from what remains unspoken yet palpably present in the ma between words.

The aesthetic of negative space (ma) in ikebana and the Zen philosophy of mushin (no-mind) offer profound implications for philosophical therapy. These principles not only provide spiritual solace through artistic beauty but, more significantly, embody a spatial consciousness that psychologically points toward a healthy mode of being—one that avoids over-saturating cognitive space while preserving necessary buffer zones for mental activity (Suzuki, 2019, p. 205). In therapeutic settings, counselors might adapt this aesthetic approach to create analogous psychological space for clients. Rather than being filled with predetermined solutions or excessive verbal interventions, this space offers clients opportunities for free exploration and authentic self-expression. Through this method, clients may maintain a mushin state during sessions: unconstrained by rigid thought patterns or emotional attachments, thereby confronting their inner needs and issues more authentically (Suzuki, 1991, p. 115). This non-saturated mental condition effectively reduces anxiety levels while enhancing psychological resilience, providing internal space for self-regulation . Through its physical manifestation of ma and spiritual guidance of mushin, ikebana offers modern individuals an operational paradigm for psychological adjustment—what Nishida Kitarō might term "acting-intuition" (kōiteki chokkan) in daily life (Nishida, 1990, p. 72).

The deliberate placement of a single chrysanthemum stem, asymmetrically positioned with intentional void space, mirrors how philosophical counselors might structure dialogues—creating room for silence between exchanges, allowing insights to emerge organically rather than through forced interpretation.

5. Conclusion

This paper systematically examines the integration of Zen wisdom, particularly D.T. Suzuki's "mushin" (no-mind) philosophy, with modern philosophical counseling and its implications for contemporary psychotherapy, revealing that the "mushin" concept, by deconstructing subject-object duality, forms a profound methodological resonance with philosophical counseling—both employ unique approaches to transcend cognitive limitations: Zen suspends conceptual thinking through the paradox of "kōan" (公案) contemplation (Suzuki, 1991, p. 45), while philosophical counseling dismantles presuppositions via Socratic elenchus . At the practical level, group dialogues in philosophical counseling, such as the "pause-awareness-response" mechanism in Philosophy for Children (P4C) (河野哲也, 2020, p. 78), complement Zen's embodied practices—the "harmony, respect, purity, and tranquility" (和敬清寂) of tea ceremony (Suzuki, 2019, p. 158) and the "ma" (間) aesthetics of ikebana (黒川雅之, 2012, p. 64)—jointly constructing a healing paradigm that transcends technical rationality.

In contrast to the limitations of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Zen and philosophical counseling demonstrate distinctive therapeutic advantages. While CBT reduces psychological distress to mere "cognitive distortions" and rigidly adheres to empirical validation—asking, "Is there evidence for this thought?"—its mechanistic approach often falls into the trap of instrumental rationality. Although this "diagnosis-correction" model may offer short-term symptom relief, it struggles to address deeper existential voids and value crises, even risking the reduction of therapy to a mere "technical fix" due to its neglect of cultural contexts and spiritual needs . In contrast, Zen and philosophical counseling adopt alternative approaches: the former reframes suffering through the lens of "your pain may stem from attachment to thought itself" (Suzuki, 1991, p. 72), while the latter employs open-ended inquiries like "What do you mean by 'justice'?" to provoke autonomous reflection on life's meaning. This divergence underscores the core proposition that modern psychotherapy must strike a balance between empirical efficacy and holistic humanistic care.

Future research could theoretically further explore the dialogical potential between Zen's "mushin" (no-mind) philosophy and phenomenological-existential therapies, while translating the embodied healing wisdom of Japanese philosophical practice into actionable counseling techniques. This would ultimately establish a "three-tiered concentric circle" intervention model: The outer circle employs embodied practices like tea ceremony and ikebana to regulate autonomic nervous system equilibrium (Suzuki,

2019, p. 167); the middle circle integrates CBT-based mindfulness training to interrupt rumination (河野哲也, 2020, p. 82); and the core circle applies philosophical counseling aligned with "mushin" principles to address existential crises. Subsequent studies should conduct empirical verification through randomized controlled trials to examine the effects of embodied practices on autonomic regulation and investigate the cross-cultural applicability of "mushin" philosophy, thereby facilitating the translation of this theoretical model into clinical practice.

References

Deacon, B. J. (2013). The biomedical model of mental disorder: A critical analysis of its validity, utility, and effects on psychotherapy research. Clinical Psychology Review, 33(7), 846-861. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2013.08.007

Lipman, M. (2003). Thinking in education. Cambridge university press.https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511840272

Johnstone, L., & Boyle, M. (2018). The power threat meaning framework: An alternative nondiagnostic conceptual system. Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 0022167818793289.https://doi.org/10.1177/0022167818793289

Jung, C. G. (1992). Foreword to Suzuki's Introduction to Zen Buddhism [repr]. Self and liberation, 11-30.

Kato, T. A., Kanba, S., & Teo, A. R. (2019). Hikikomori: Multidimensional understanding, assessment, and future international perspectives. Psychiatry and clinical neurosciences, 73(8), 427-440.https://doi.org/ 10.1111/pcn.12895

Mindell, A. S. (1991). Moon in the water: The metaskills of process-oriented psychology as seen through the psychotherapeutic work of Arnold Mindell. The Union Institute.

Nonaka, I., & Takeuchi, H. (2019). The wise company: How companies create continuous innovation. Oxford University Press.

Nishida, K. (1990). An Inquiry into the Good (M. Abe & C. Ives, Trans.). Yale University Press. (Original work published 1911). ISBN: 978-0300047319.

Suzuki, D. T. (1991). The Zen Doctrine of No Mind: The Significance of the Sutra of Hui-Neng. Weiser Books.

Suzuki, D. T. (2010). The training of the Zen Buddhist monk. Cosimo, Inc..

Suzuki, D. T. (2018). Mysticism: Christian and buddhist. Routledge.

Suzuki, D. T. (2019). Zen and Japanese culture (Vol. 334). Princeton University Press.ISBN：978-0691182964

河野哲也 (2020).『子どもと行う哲学する瞑想』. 東京：慶應義塾大学出版会.

河野哲也·斎藤幸平 (2021). 『瞑想する子ども──P4C と禅の実践的統合』. 東京：東京大学出版会.

黒川雅之. (2012). 日本の八つの美意識 [Japan's eight aesthetic principles]. 講談社.

堀越耀介, 河野哲也. 哲学践行在日本[J]. 認知科学, 2022, 6: 276-293.

森野雄介. (2015). 西田幾多郎『善の研究』における三つの「現在」. 年報人間科学, 36, 53-68.

中村修也. (2013). 戦国茶の湯倶楽部 ~利休からたどる茶の湯の人々~ (第 12 冊) Sengoku Chanoyu Club: Tracing Tea Ceremony Figures from Rikyū (Vol. 12)]. 大修館書店.

柳田圣山.(1976).《禅语录 9：德山·临济》(pp. 102-103). 东京：筑摩书房.

柳田聖山.(編). (1984).『白隠禅師全集』(第 3 巻, pp. 112-115). 東京：岩波書店.

鈴木大拙 .(1938).『禅と生活』(pp. 102-103). 岩波書店.

鈴木大拙.(1940).『禅と日本文化』(pp. 67-68). 東京：岩波書店.

鈴木大拙.(1943).『無心ということ』. 大東出版社.

鈴木大拙.(1943).『禅の本質』(pp. 15-16). 東京：大東出版社.

千宗室. (2001). 茶の心 [The heart of tea] (納屋宗淡 解説; 井上隆雄 写真). 淡交社. (淡交ムック).

陈鼓应. (1983).《庄子今注今译》[Zhuangzi: Modern commentary and translation]. 中华书局.

崔世广.(2021).茶道的特质及其在日本文化中的角色.日本问题研究,35(04),56-65.doi:10.14156/j.cnki.rbwtyj.2021.04.006

戴森宇.(2023).“本体之寂”与“本然之寂”——中日比较哲学视域下的“寂”论.四川大学学报(哲学社会科学版),(01),50-57+190-191.

慧能（唐）.（2011）.《敦煌新本六祖坛经》（杨曾文 校释）. 宗教文化出版社. ISBN: 9787802543876.

Huineng. (2010).《六祖坛经》(图文本) [The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch (Illustrated Edition)] (王月清注评). 凤凰出版社. ISBN: 9787550601838.

Suzuki, D. T. (2013). 禅と生活 [Zen and life] (刘大悲, 译). 上海三联书店. ISBN: 9787542649314.

Jia Qin (Tianjin Foreign Studies University)

“Contemporary Philosophical Practice in the Horizon of the Syncretism of Confucian, Buddhist and Daoist”

Introduction

Since its emergence in the 1980s, initiated by Gerd B. Achenbach, philosophical practice has sparked profound intellectual resonance around the world. In 1981, Achenbach founded the International Conference on Philosophical Practice, advocating for a shift in philosophy from academic training toward real-world engagement. Meanwhile, philosophical practice is not equivalent to psychological counseling or occupational therapy; it seeks to explore the practical applicability and everyday embeddedness of philosophy while preserving its essential nature of reflective inquiry. Today, humanity finds itself caught in a vortex of multiple philosophical crises and all predicaments point to a central philosophical question—how can modern individuals find grounding and purpose in an ever-changing world?

Looking back on the long course of Chinese intellectual history, the convergence of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism forms a spiritual bridge that transcends time. Though each tradition follows a distinct path, they share a common core concern—Confucianism constructs the ethical self through "self-cultivation and establishing one's destiny"; Daoism seeks harmony in life through "living in accordance with nature"; and Buddhism aims to free individuals from the bondage of meaning through "non-attachment and introspective awareness." Together, they converge on the meta-question of philosophical practice: how to find stability and meaning in life. This practical wisdom, rooted in the lived experience, naturally exhibits a triadic structure of "ethics-psychology-life": Confucianism establishes the ethical order, Buddhism offers psychological techniques, and Daoism deepens the care for life—together forming an indigenous system of philosophical practice in traditional Chinese society.

Functional Division and Practical Goals: Centered on "Securing One’s Place in the World"

The core concern of Chinese philosophy, from the pre-Qin era to the present, has consistently centered on the fundamental issue of how human beings find proper grounding in life. Although Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism follow distinct intellectual paths, their historical interactions have gradually formed a shared philosophical community unified around the goal of "securing one’s place in the world." As Zhu Xi observed, "Though the Three Teachings differ, their aims are one." In practice, this is expressed as: Confucianism governs society, Buddhism cultivates the mind, and Daoism nurtures life.

This functional division is not an artificial categorization but emerges from each tradition’s response to real-world concerns. Confucianism emphasizes social order and ethical norms, focusing on the individual’s moral responsibilities within the structures of family and state, thereby establishing the moral foundation for societal

functioning. Buddhism addresses the deep structure of inner suffering, offering an ontological framework of "impermanence," "suffering," and "non-self," and guides individuals toward spiritual liberation through the practice of "observing the mind." Daoism focuses on the harmony and alignment of body and mind, responding to existential anxiety and health concerns through the principle of "following the natural Way." This tripartite division means that the syncretism of the Three Teachings is not merely a philosophical synthesis, but a practical system oriented toward the holistic well-being of human existence.

Wisdom in Life and the Techniques of Virtue: Confucian Self-Cultivation, Buddhist Mind Observation, and Daoist Qi Regulation

Philosophical practice emphasizes the unity of "knowledge—action—personhood," a process in which knowledge is internalized into virtue through disciplined effort. At the heart of Confucian practice lies "self-cultivation." Since the time of Confucius and Mencius, Confucianism has emphasized that "a noble person focuses on the fundamentals; when the fundamentals are established, the Way emerges." Self-cultivation is not an abstract notion but a concrete process of daily "self-examination and self-discipline." The "Eight Steps" outlined in The Great Learning—"investigating things, extending knowledge, making intentions sincere, rectifying the mind, cultivating the self, regulating the family, governing the state, and bringing peace to the world"—demonstrate an ethical expansion that proceeds from within to without. Neo-Confucianism in the Song and Ming dynasties placed particular emphasis on practices such as "maintaining reverence," "exhaustive inquiry," "quiet sitting," and "daily self-reflection", aiming to establish a stable grasp of goodness deep within the mind. This path of disciplined cultivation closely parallels the philosophical practices of "virtue formation" and "training of thought", representing an institutionalized technique for sustained philosophical reflection on life.

Buddhist philosophical practice is embodied in the dual cultivation of "calmness and insight." "Calmness" (śamatha) refers to meditative techniques that pacify mental afflictions and stabilize the body and mind; "insight" (vipaśyanā) involves the development of wisdom, enabling one to perceive the impermanent, non-self, and empty nature of existence. Buddhism emphasizes a transformative mental mechanism of "letting go of attachment," dissolving fixation on the self, others, and the world through layers of introspective observation, thereby attaining spiritual liberation. This process not only addresses existential anxiety but also provides a mechanism of "emotional transformation" that aligns with the goals of philosophical practice.

Daoism emphasizes the harmonization of life through the unity of body and mind, with its core practices centered on the integration of "nourishing life" and "non-action" (wuwei). "The Dao follows nature" is not a call for passivity, but a practical philosophy of aligning with the rhythms of the body and respecting the natural laws of life.The Yellow Emperor’s Inner Canon proposes "nourishing the body in accordance with the four seasons and nurturing the spirit in response to cold and heat," reflecting the Daoist

medical-philosophical system’s profound understanding of the body's functioning. Through practices such as breath regulation, guided movement, inner observation, and sitting in forgetfulness, Daoism has developed a comprehensive system of mind-body techniques centered on the regulation of qi dynamics. This contemplation of the interplay between bodily rhythms and the environment also resonates with the concept of an "ecology of existence" in contemporary philosophy of life.

Problem Orientation and Methodological Complementarity: Indigenous Prototypes of philosophical practice

Philosophical practice is not merely a concept or method, it must also be capable of addressing concrete issues and offering multidimensional solutions. In this regard, the practical systems of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism present a structurally integrated and functionally complementary three-dimensional framework of "problem orientation—methodological complementarity—value symbiosis," constituting an indigenous prototype of philosophical practice within the Chinese philosophical tradition.

From the perspective of "problem-oriented", Confucianism addresses the ethical relationship issues between individuals and society. Its philosophical structure is based on continuous exploration of "the order of human relationships", "the distribution of responsibilities" and "moral self-discipline". Buddhism delves into the individual's psychological world and responds to the fundamental spiritual issue of "how to face suffering". Its cultivation system is highly developed, forming a complete psychological philosophy system. Taoism deals with the relationship between individuals and nature, emphasizing "adapting to the universe" and "controlling desires", and focusing on the existence state of humans in the universe. These three philosophical models jointly depict the key tensions within the "individual-society-nature" three-dimensional relationship and provide corresponding philosophical practice solutions.

From the perspective of methodological complementarity, Confucianism emphasizes the cultivation of virtue through ethical conduct, Buddhism focuses on introspective awareness and mindfulness, and Daoism highlights the regulation of bodily energy and harmony. Respectively centered on ritual (li), contemplation (guan), and vital energy (qi), they form a triadic mechanism for the adjustment of thought, behavior, and the body. This complementary structure enables philosophical practice to move beyond abstract theorizing and become a set of multidimensional intervention techniques.

From the perspective of value symbiosis, although the three traditions differ in their intellectual origins, they share a profound consensus on the fundamental philosophical question of what it means to become truly human.The ultimate goal of the Three Teachings is not external success or intellectual superiority, but the cultivation of a virtuous, meaningful, and liberated way of life. This symbiotic structure of philosophical values made the convergence of the Three Teachings a foundational force in upholding the ideological order and ethical practices of traditional Chinese society,

while also providing a shared basis for the value reconstruction pursued in contemporary philosophical practice.

In summary, the syncretism of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism is not merely an eclectic amalgamation of intellectual resources, but a deeply integrated system of philosophical practice, unified in its structural logic, methodological approach, and value orientation.

Reconstruction of the Three-Dimensional Methodology: A Coordinated System of Ethics, Psychology, and Life

Building on the syncretism of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, we can distill three complementary philosophical resources for practice: virtue ethics, introspective awareness, and bodily attunement. These correspond respectively to the fundamental existential questions of "how to do good," "how to understand suffering," and "how to live well." They also form mechanisms for identifying and addressing issues within the threefold structure of ethics, psychology, and life, creating a multidimensional, coordinated system of philosophical practice.

Confucianism offers an internal motivational mechanism rooted in virtue ethics. In today's reality of declining social norms and eroding communal trust, the Confucian tradition of "self-cultivation and establishing one's destiny" can serve as a path for regenerating moral energy. For instance, the principle of "extending innate knowledge of the good" can act as a cognitive anchor for ethical self-discipline, helping individuals remain attuned to moral boundaries amid algorithmic decision-making and utilitarian choices. The Confucian ideal of "manifesting virtue and benefiting the people" can contribute to rebuilding ethical bonds within communities, fostering a public culture of "intergenerational co-cultivation" and "shared responsibility."

Buddhism provides psychological techniques for coping with existential anxiety. In the digital age, where "meaninglessness" and "inner imbalance" have become widespread symptoms, Buddhist practices such as "observing the mind" and "calming and insight meditation" offer philosophical methods of cognitive intervention. Indigenous practices like the Tiantai School's system of "Threefold Contemplation," the "Four Foundations of Mindfulness," and the investigation of "critical phrases" can effectively help resolve spiritual afflictions such as anxiety, anger, and emptiness. In South Korea's "templestay" movement and Taiwan's "spiritual lecture hall" programs, Buddhist meditation has been widely adopted to alleviate information overload and restore the rhythm of body and mind, demonstrating its cross-cultural adaptability and philosophical significance.

Daoism offers a philosophy of the body that harmonizes with nature and resists the alienation brought about by technology. Traditional practices such as Daoyin (guiding and stretching exercises), Internal Alchemy, Zuowang (sitting in forgetfulness), and breath regulation can be adapted into methodological systems for balancing the pace of modern life. In areas such as chronic disease prevention, recovery from digital fatigue, and ecological education, Daoist mind-body philosophy provides an

alternative paradigm for "life redesign." At the same time, Daoist principles such as "governing through non-action" and "reversal is the movement of the Dao" offer an intrinsic critical mechanism for curbing excess and regulating systems within the realm of technological ethics, serving as a soft intervention against technological instrumentalism.

The synergistic system is not a patchwork of philosophical resources, but an "Eastern philosophical practice model" grounded in problem orientation, methodological complementarity, and value co-existence.

Construction of the Mechanism for Embedding Philosophy into Reality: From Conceptual Transformation to Institutional Practice

For philosophical practice to yield tangible outcomes in contemporary society, it must progress from conceptual reconstruction to institutional implementation. This involves not only the cultural revitalization of the "Three Teachings" (Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism) in a modern context, but also the development of embedded structures at the meso level—within education, communities, and policy frameworks.

First, the establishment of "community-based philosophical practice spaces" can embed philosophical ideals into concrete social settings. Drawing inspiration from Taiwan's "community universities," Korea's "Zen villages," and "life academies" in various mainland Chinese cities, multifunctional venues rooted in the wisdom of the Three Teachings can be created. Confucian areas may facilitate ethical dialogue, intergenerational support, and the cultivation of family traditions; Buddhist spaces may offer mindfulness meditation, emotional regulation, and life education; Daoist sections may provide qigong training and seasonal lifestyle courses. This spatial integration essentially reimagines the spiritual functions of traditional "academies–temples–Daoist sanctuaries" as modern bases for philosophical engagement.

Second, "philosophical intervention projects" should be integrated into the education system and social governance. At the level of basic education, a "Philosophy and Life" curriculum can be developed to help adolescents cultivate comprehensive ethical judgment through the insights of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism. In elder care and end-of-life services, philosophical perspectives can be introduced through "life and death education courses" to support ethical reflection and psychological comfort for the elderly. In the field of mental health, a localized intervention toolkit can be formed by integrating Buddhist techniques of mind observation, Daoist breathing regulation, and Confucian ethics of responsibility—enhancing cultural relevance and building a stronger foundation of trust.

Finally, a triadic feedback system integrating "philosophy–life–institution" should be gradually established. For instance, "philosophy practice observation points" can be created to monitor implementation outcomes, while "philosophy laboratories" may be supported to test intervention mechanisms. At the same time, the development of professional career pathways should be advanced, such as by launching training

programs for "philosophy practitioners" to prepare professionals for active engagement on the front lines of society."

Practical Practoce Challenges and Dilemmas in Contemporary Philosophy

However, as a form of practical thinking still in its formative stage, philosophical practice continues to encounter multiple structural challenges in its real-world development.

First, the difficulty of adapting philosophical practice to specific cultural contexts remains significant. Rooted in Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, the East Asian cultural tradition has long shaped a personality structure centered on introversion and subtlety. Its modes of expression emphasize "cautious speech and reserved conduct" and "emotional restraint," rather than "personal disclosure" or "explicit narration." In contrast, philosophical practice originating from Western traditions is typically grounded in the expression of a rational inner subject and logical clarity, emphasizing Socratic questioning, critique, and value clarification. These cultural differences create dual barriers of understanding and acceptance for philosophical practice in non-Western societies. The effective localization of philosophical practice requires a deep understanding of the mechanisms for translating between "instrumental discourse" and "existential language." Without careful handling, there is a risk of falling into three interrelated pitfalls: "Westernized theoretical packaging," "semantic drift of methods," and "ineffectual practical outcomes."

Second, philosophical practice also suffers from widespread structural deficiencies in terms of knowledge frameworks and institutional support. In the current global philosophical education system, philosophy remains largely oriented toward "abstract theory," "historical interpretation," and "logical analysis," with core evaluation criteria focused on academic originality and theoretical depth. The approaches promoted by philosophical practice—such as "problem-oriented inquiry," "relational thinking," and "life engagement"—are often dismissed as "informal" or "non-academic," and thus receive little institutional backing. Consequently, philosophical practice occupies a marginal position in university curricula, research funding programs, and talent development pathways, making it difficult to secure sustained disciplinary resources and policy support.Even in institutions that offer applied philosophy courses, related practices often remain superficial, lacking systematic methodological guidance and evaluation mechanisms. In most Asian countries, philosophical practice lacks disciplinary accreditation systems, professional entry standards, and community-based practice environments, making it difficult to integrate effectively with existing systems such as mental health services, social ethics, and educational counseling.

Overall, the challenges facing the development of philosophical practice stem not only from an "immature methodology," but more fundamentally from a systemic barrier—namely, the absence of an established ecosystem. To overcome this predicament, structural reconstruction must be pursued across three dimensions: firstly, at the theoretical level, promote academic modeling and conceptual clarification of

philosophical practice, establishing its legitimacy and methodological paradigm as an independent "practical discipline"; secondly, at the institutional level, expand curriculum frameworks, accreditation systems, and pathways for integration into public programs, thereby providing philosophical practice with operational platforms and access to policy resources; thirdly, at the cultural level, re-evaluate the practical wisdom embedded in indigenous philosophical traditions, activating their potential to address contemporary individual and societal challenges, so that philosophy may truly serve as a vital practical avenue for confronting real-world dilemmas, healing spiritual fractures, and rebuilding public ethics.

Conclusions

In the face of the compounded crises of meaning and ethical disruption, philosophical practice is no longer a peripheral pursuit but has become a vital means of responding to the challenges of contemporary human existence. Drawing on the historical syncretism of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, this paper's goal is to promote a shift in philosophy from abstract theorization to lived practice. From cultural resources to methodological development, from historical wisdom to institutional integration, the convergence of the three traditions offers a profound foundation for a distinctly Chinese mode of philosophical practice.

Future philosophical practice should be grounded in local experience while remaining open to global contexts, expanding its institutionalized applications in public spheres such as education, healthcare, and community life—ultimately realizing the vision of "bringing peace to the modern self through the way of philosophy".

Contemporary Philosophical Practice in the Horizon of the Syncretism of Confucian, Buddhist and Daoist

Presenter:Jia Qin **Department**:Tianjin Foreign Studies University

Introduction

How can modern individuals find grounding and purpose in an ever-changing world ?

Philosophical Practice	The Syncretism of Confucian, Buddhist and Daoist
Philosophical Practice seeks to explore the practical applicability and everyday embeddedness of philosophy while preserving its essential nature of reflective inquiry.	Confucianism constructs the ethical self through "self-cultivation and establishing one's destiny"; Daoism seeks harmony in life through "living in accordance with nature"; Buddhism aims to free individuals .

The philosophical practice resources and practical structure

Functional Division and Practical Goals Centered on "Securing One's Place in the World"

Confucianism

Confucianism emphasizes social order and ethical norms, focusing on the individual's moral responsibilities within the structures of family and state.

Buddhism

Buddhism guides individuals toward spiritual liberation through the practice of "observing the mind."

Daoism

Daoism focuses on the harmony and alignment of body and mind, responding to existential anxiety and health concerns through the principle of "following the natural Way."

The philosophical practice resources and practical structure

Problem Orientation and Methodological Complementarity: Indigenous Prototypes of Philosophical Practice

problem orientation

These three philosophical models outline the key tensions within the triadic relationship of individual–society–nature and offer corresponding approaches to philosophical practice.

methodological complementarity

Respectively centered on ritual (li), contemplation (guan), and vital energy (qi), they form a triadic mechanism for the adjustment of thought, behavior, and the body.

value symbiosis

The ultimate goal of the Three Teachings is not external success or intellectual superiority, but the cultivation of a virtuous, meaningful, and liberated way of life.

Reconstruction Path of Contemporary Philosophy Practice

We can distill three complementary philosophical resources for practice: virtue ethics, introspective awareness, and bodily attunement.

Firstly	Secondly	Thirdly
how to do good	how to understand suffering	how to live well

Reconstruction Path of Contemporary Philosophy Practice

Reconstruction of the Three-Dimensional Methodology

Confucianism

Confucianism offers an internal motivational mechanism rooted in virtue ethics. This can contribute to rebuilding ethical bonds within communities。

Buddhism

Buddhist meditation has been widely adopted to alleviate information overload and restore the rhythm of body and mind.

Daoism

Daoism offers a philosophy of the body that harmonizes with nature and resists the alienation brought about by technology.

Construction of the Mechanism for Embedding Philosophy into Reality

From Conceptual Transformation to Institutional Practice

"Philosophical intervention projects" should be integrated into the education system and social governance.

Finally, a triadic feedback system integrating "philosophy–life–institution" should be gradually established.



The establishment of "community-based philosophical practice spaces" can embed philosophical ideals into concrete social settings.

Enhancing cultural relevance and building a stronger foundation of trust.

Practical Practice Challenges and Dilemmas

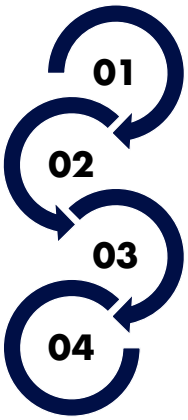
Philosophical practice continues to encounter multiple structural challenges .

2

The effective implementation of philosophical practice depends on a deep understanding of the mechanism that enables the transformation between "instrumental discourse" and "existential language."

4

Over the course of its long development, philosophy has developed a disciplinary self-understanding centered on the pursuit of truth and the logical deduction of propositions.



1

The difficulty of adapting philosophical practice to specific cultural contexts remains significant.

3

Philosophical practice also suffers from widespread structural deficiencies in terms of knowledge frameworks and institutional support.

Solutions

The challenges not only from an "immature methodology", but more fundamentally from a systemic barrier—namely, the absence of an established ecosystem.

theoretical level	institutional level	cultural level
promote academic modeling and conceptual clarification of philosophical practice	expand curriculum frameworks, accreditation systems	re-evaluate the practical wisdom embedded in indigenous philosophical traditions

THANKS!

Presenter:Jia Qin **Department**:Tianjin Foreign Studies University

D1

Young E. Rhee (Dongguk University)
"AI Life Story Model for Elderly People: An Embodied Cognitive Approach"

1. The Necessity of an Embodied Cognitive Approach

The demographic shift towards an aging global population presents unique challenges and opportunities in supporting the well-being of older adults. One critical aspect of well-being in later life is the ability to reflect upon, organize, and share one's life story. This process of reminiscence and narrative construction contributes significantly to identity formation, meaning-making, social connection, and even cognitive health.

Current AI applications, particularly deep learning, while powerful in data processing and pattern recognition, often treat human experience as disembodied information, abstracted from its rich sensory, motor, and emotional context. This traditional computational approach is fundamentally ill-suited for capturing the essence of a life story, which is inherently embodied, situated, and dynamic. A life story is not merely a chronological list of events; it is a tapestry woven from perceptions, feelings, interactions, and interpretations that are deeply intertwined with the individual's physical and social environment.

The embodied cognitive approach, in contrast, asserts that cognition is not solely a function of the brain but arises from the dynamic interaction between the brain, body, and environment. This perspective offers a necessary paradigm shift for developing AI models that can genuinely engage with and support the complex process of life story narration for the elderly. By embracing the embodied nature of human experience, an AI Life Story model can move beyond mere data aggregation to become a more empathetic, intuitive, and ultimately more effective tool for enhancing the quality of life for older adults.

The necessity of an embodied cognitive approach to AI life story models for the elderly stems from several key reasons:

- **Authenticity and Meaning**: Human memories are deeply intertwined with sensory experiences (sights, sounds, smells, textures) and physical actions. A purely textual or factual AI life story would miss the richness and emotional resonance of these embodied memories, making the narrative feel sterile and less personally meaningful to the elder.
- **Accessibility and Engagement**: As individuals age, cognitive processes can change. Embodied AI models, by incorporating multimodal inputs and outputs (e.g., visual, auditory, haptic), can offer more intuitive and accessible ways for elderly individuals to interact with and recall their life stories, potentially bypassing linguistic or abstract cognitive barriers.

- **Combatting Disconnection**: Aging can sometimes lead to social isolation and a sense of disconnection from one's past self. An embodied AI life story model can act as a bridge, allowing individuals to re-experience aspects of their past in a tangible and interactive way, fostering a sense of continuity and self-identity.
- **Personalization Beyond Data Points**: True personalization goes beyond demographic data. An embodied approach can capture the unique ways an individual has interacted with the world throughout their life, leading to a life story that reflects their lived experience rather than just a collection of facts.
- **Support for Cognitive Health**: Engaging with embodied memories can stimulate various brain regions involved in perception, emotion, and motor control, potentially offering cognitive benefits and supporting brain health in older adults.

2. The Four Meanings of Aging in the Embodied Cognitive Point

From the perspective of embodied cognition, aging is not merely a decline in cognitive or physical function but a dynamic, multifaceted process deeply intertwined with an individual's ongoing interaction with their world. Here are four meanings of aging:

a. **Aging as Embodied Transformation**: This meaning emphasizes the continuous physical changes that occur throughout the lifespan, from cellular to systemic levels. These transformations are not solely internal but shape and are shaped by an individual's interaction with their environment. For instance, changes in motor control influence how an elder interacts with objects, which in turn affects their perception and cognitive processes. Aging is thus a constant process of sensorimotor re-calibration and adaptation.

b. **Aging as Re-calibration of Perception-Action Loops**: As our sensory organs and motor skills evolve with age, we constantly re-calibrate how we perceive the world and interact with it. This isn't necessarily a deficit but an adaptive process. For example, an older adult might learn new strategies for navigating a space due to changes in vision or balance, demonstrating a dynamic and flexible interaction with their environment. Cognition, in this view, is about optimizing these loops for continued effective action in the world.

c. **Aging as a Shifting Landscape of Affordances**: James J. Gibson's concept of affordances (opportunities for action provided by the environment) is central to embodied cognition.(1979) As we age, our physical capabilities change, and so too do the affordances we perceive in our environment. A staircase might afford easy ascent to a younger person but present a challenge to an older person, leading to different perceptual and behavioral responses. Aging, therefore, involves a continuous re-evaluation and adaptation to a changing landscape of affordances.

d. **Aging as the Embodiment of a Life History**: An individual's entire life history is "embodied" in their current physical and cognitive state. Every experience, every skill learned, every trauma, and every joy has left an imprint on the brain-body system. Aging, in this sense, is the ongoing manifestation of this accumulated embodied history. Memories are not just abstract data points but are deeply tied to the bodily states and actions that accompanied their formation, making the recall of these memories an embodied experience itself.

3. Main Features of Enactivism, Extended Mind Theory, and Experientialism

To fully appreciate the proposed AI Life Story model, it is essential to understand the core tenets of the three key embodied cognition theories: enactivism, extended mind theory, and experientialism.

3.1. Enactivism

Enactivism, a prominent approach within embodied cognition, posits that cognition is not merely a representation of the world but an active, embodied process of bringing forth a world through sensorimotor engagement. (Maturana, & Varela, 1987; Varela et al., 1991; Gallagher, 2005; Thompson, 2007) Key features include:

Autopoiesis: Living systems are characterized by their self-producing and self-organizing nature, actively maintaining their identity and boundaries. Cognition is seen as an emergent property of this autopoietic activity.

Sensorimotor Coupling: Cognition arises from the dynamic and reciprocal interaction between an organism's sensory and motor systems and its environment. Perception is always already action-oriented, and action is always already perceptually guided.

Meaning-Making: Meaning is not pre-given but is enacted or brought forth through the organism's interactions with its environment. The world is meaningful to an organism in relation to its needs, goals, and possibilities for action.

Emergence: Higher-level cognitive phenomena emerge from the complex interplay of lower-level sensorimotor processes, without requiring explicit internal representations.

3.2. Extended Mind Theory

The extended mind theory, proposed by Andy Clark and David Chalmers(1998), argues that the boundaries of the mind are not strictly confined to the skull. Instead, cognitive processes can extend into the environment, incorporating external tools and resources as integral parts of the cognitive system.(Clark, 1996, 2008, 2015, 2024; Menary, 2010).Key features include:

- **Parity Principle**: If, as we consider a process (e.g., memory, calculation), it functions in a way that, were it to occur in the head, we would have no hesitation in accepting it as part of the cognitive process, then it is part of the cognitive process, even if it is external.

- **Active Externalism**: Cognitive processes are not merely influenced by the environment but actively constituted by it. Tools, notebooks, smartphones, and even other people can become functional components of an individual's cognitive system.
- **Coupling**: The extended mind operates through strong, reliable, and transparent coupling between the internal and external components. The external resource must be readily available and frequently used by the individual.
- **Complementarity**: External resources often complement internal cognitive processes, offloading cognitive burden, enhancing processing capabilities, or providing new forms of representation.

3.3. Experientialism

Experientialism, particularly as developed by philosophers like George Lakoff and Mark Johnson(1980, 1999), emphasizes the role of lived bodily experience in shaping our conceptual systems, language, and reasoning. Key features include:

- **Embodied Metaphor**: Abstract concepts are understood and structured through concrete, embodied experiences, primarily via metaphorical mappings. For example, "understanding is grasping" reflects our physical experience of grasping objects.
- **Image Schemas**: Recurring patterns of embodied experience, such as CONTAINMENT, SOURCE-PATH-GOAL, or BALANCE, form fundamental structures of our conceptual system. These schemas are pre-conceptual and emerge from our interactions with the physical world.
- **Grounding of Meaning**: Meaning is not arbitrary but is grounded in our bodily experiences and interactions. Language and thought derive their coherence from these embodied foundations.
- **Folk Theories and Everyday Reasoning**: Experientialism highlights how our everyday reasoning is shaped by these embodied conceptual structures, leading to "folk theories" that guide our understanding of the world.

4. AI Life Story Models for Elderly People in the Three Theories

Applying these three embodied cognitive theories, we can envision distinct yet complementary AI Life Story models for elderly people.

4.1. Enactivist AI Life Story Model

An enactivist AI Life Story model would not aim to simply store and retrieve pre-existing narratives but rather to facilitate the *active enactment* and *re-enactment* of life experiences.

Feature	Description	Example in AI Model
Sensorimotor Loop	The AI system would engage in real-time, context-aware interactions with the elderly person, using sensors (e.g., wearables, environmental sensors) to detect activities, moods, and social contexts.	An AI companion that notices an elderly person looking at an old photo album and prompts, "Tell me about this time," drawing on its understanding of their current engagement and potential emotional state.
Meaning-Making	The AI would not impose pre-defined meanings but would co-create meaning with the user through iterative, situated interactions. It would learn the user's idiosyncratic ways of relating to their past.	Instead of asking "What happened on X date?", the AI might ask, "How did you *feel* when you were doing [activity inferred from sensors/past narrative]?" or "What did that experience *mean* to you?"
Embodied Prompts	Prompts for memory recall would be deeply tied to sensory and motor experiences, rather than just verbal cues. This could involve visual, auditory, or even haptic feedback.	Playing a specific piece of music from a past era, displaying images of places the user has lived, or even stimulating a scent associated with a memory to trigger recall.
Autopoietic Narrative	The "life story" would be a continuously evolving, self-organizing process, rather than a fixed document. The AI would facilitate the user's ongoing sense-making and adaptation of their narrative over time.	The AI could present different "versions" of a story based on the user's current mood or focus, allowing them to re-interpret or add new insights to past events, reflecting the dynamic nature of memory and identity.

Table 1. Enactivist AI Life Story Model

4.2. Extended Mind AI Life Story Model

An extended mind AI Life Story model would conceptualize the AI system itself as an integral part of the elderly person's cognitive system, offloading memory retrieval and narrative organization.

Feature	Description	Example in AI Model
Reliable Coupling	The AI would be seamlessly integrated into the user's daily life, accessible at any time and in various modalities, becoming a trusted and readily available cognitive extension.	A voice-activated AI assistant integrated into a smart home environment, accessible through smart speakers, tablets, or even smart glasses, consistently available to record, retrieve, and organize life events.
Information Offloading	The AI would function as a vast external memory store, allowing the elderly person to externalize details, names, dates, and connections, thereby reducing cognitive load and freeing up internal resources for higher-level narrative construction.	"AI, what was the name of the flower shop next to our first apartment?" or "Remind me of the sequence of events leading up to our move to the countryside." The AI instantly retrieves and presents the information.
Narrative Scaffolding	The AI would provide structural support for organizing and retrieving narrative elements, helping the user to build coherent stories	The AI could suggest narrative structures (e.g., chronological, thematic, by significant relationships), identify gaps in a story, or prompt the user to

	even when internal memory resources are strained.	elaborate on specific events based on existing information.
Shared Cognitive Space	The AI could facilitate the co-construction of narratives with family members or caregivers by providing a shared external memory and communication platform, extending the cognitive system to include a social dimension.	Family members could add their memories or perspectives to the AI-generated life story, enriching it and making it a shared family archive that all can access and contribute to, acting as a collective external memory.

Table 2. Extended Mind AI Life Story Model

4.3. Experientialist AI Life Story Model

An experientialist AI Life Story model would focus on leveraging embodied metaphors and image schemas to structure and make sense of the elderly person's life experiences, connecting abstract narratives to their concrete bodily grounding.

Feature	Description	Example in AI Model
Metaphorical Mapping	The AI would identify and utilize common embodied metaphors (e.g., "life as a journey," "time as a river," "love as a bond") to help the elderly person frame and understand their experiences.	If the user describes a period of hardship, the AI might prompt, "Was that a difficult *road* you traveled?" or "Did you feel *stuck* during that time?" connecting to embodied metaphors of motion and constraint.
Image Schema Recognition	The AI would recognize underlying image schemas in the user's descriptions and use them to prompt further elaboration or to connect seemingly disparate events.	If the user talks about feeling "overwhelmed," the AI might infer a CONTAINER schema being violated and ask, "Did you feel like things were *pouring in* too fast?" or "Were you struggling to *contain* everything?"
Sensory-Grounded Prompts	Prompts for memory retrieval would be strongly linked to sensory modalities, leveraging the idea that memories are often deeply embedded in our sensory experiences.	"What did that place *smell* like?" or "What was the *texture* of the fabric you were wearing?" or "What were the *sounds* you heard in that moment?" to evoke rich, embodied recall.
Narrative Archetypes	The AI could suggest common narrative archetypes (e.g., the hero's journey, overcoming adversity, finding belonging) that resonate with embodied human experience, helping the user structure their unique life story within a broader, relatable framework.	After hearing several anecdotes, the AI might suggest, "It sounds like you embarked on quite a *journey* of self-discovery during that period," providing a familiar narrative structure for reflection.

Table 3. Experientialist AI Life Story Model

5. Comparison of Resulting Models

Each of these three models offers unique advantages and disadvantages when considered for an AI Life Story for elderly people.

Feature/Aspect	Enactivist Model	Extended Mind Theory Model	Experientialist Model
Primary Goal	Re-experience/re-create past events through active engagement.	Augment/offload memory; seamless access to externalized cognition.	Facilitate meaning-making and emotional connection to memories.
Memory Nature	Dynamic, emergent, process-oriented (re-enactment).	Externalized, accessible, distributed (data-centric).	Subjective, emotional, qualitative (affective-centric).
Interaction Style	Immersive, interactive, sensorimotor.	Seamless, unobtrusive, intelligent retrieval.	Reflective, emotive, narrative-driven.
Technological Focus	VR/AR, haptics, biofeedback, advanced simulation.	Large databases, semantic AI, ubiquitous computing, smart devices.	Sentiment analysis, narrative AI, multi-sensory (olfactory, auditory).
Benefit for Elderly	Deep engagement, motor stimulation, active recall.	Memory aid, cognitive scaffolding, information access.	Emotional processing, identity formation, shared meaning.
Potential Drawback	High technical demands, potential for disorientation, intensive.	Risk of data overload, depersonalization if purely factual.	Can be emotionally taxing, requires user introspection.
Life Story Output	A series of lived, re-experienced scenarios.	An external, searchable, augmented memory database.	A personalized narrative imbued with emotional significance.

Table 4. Comparison of AI Life Story Models

Summary of Comparison:

- **Enactivist**: Offers the deepest level of embodied engagement, potentially leading to the most vivid and authentic re-experience of memories. However, it is the most technologically demanding and might be disorienting for some users. It focuses on the *process* of remembering.
- **Extended Mind Theory**: Provides practical, seamless support for memory recall and access, acting as a powerful cognitive prosthetic. Its strength lies in its utility and ability to offload cognitive burden. The risk is that it might become a purely factual archive without emotional depth. It focuses on the *availability* of memories.
- **Experientialist**: Prioritizes the subjective and emotional resonance of memories, fostering deeper meaning and identity. It is less about factual recall and more about the qualitative experience. It might be emotionally intensive and relies on the user's willingness to introspect. It focuses on the *meaning* of memories.

6. Best Strategy to Construct the Model

Given the strengths and weaknesses of each approach, the best strategy to construct an AI Life Story model for elderly people is a hybrid and integrated approach that

leverages the complementary benefits of enactivism, the extended mind theory, and experientialism. No single theory provides a complete solution; rather, their synthesis offers the most robust and holistic framework.
The integrated model would operate on multiple levels:

a. **Foundational Enactivist Layer**: The core interaction with the elderly person should be deeply enactive. This means prioritizing real-time, context-aware sensorimotor interactions. The AI should not just passively record data but actively engage in a continuous loop of perception and action with the user, sensing their current state, emotional cues, and environmental context to inform its prompts and responses. This ensures that the life story is not a static artifact but a living, dynamically constructed narrative. This layer promotes active meaning-making and adapts to the user's current capabilities and interests.
b. **Extended Mind as a Cognitive Backbone**: Functioning beneath the enactive layer, the extended mind principles would provide the necessary infrastructure for reliable information storage and retrieval. The AI would serve as a robust, easily accessible external memory system, offloading the burden of factual recall. This allows the elderly person to focus on the *meaning* and *emotional content* of their memories, rather than struggling with details. The seamless integration of the AI into their daily life, through various devices and modalities, would make it a natural extension of their cognitive abilities. This ensures comprehensive data capture and readily available access to past information.
c. **Experientialist Guidance for Narrative Coherence**: Experientialist principles would guide the AI in helping the elderly person organize and make sense of their experiences. By recognizing and utilizing embodied metaphors and image schemas, the AI can offer prompts that resonate deeply with the user's lived experience, facilitating the articulation of abstract concepts and emotions. This layer helps in structuring the narrative, finding overarching themes, and connecting individual events to a larger, more meaningful life story. This provides a framework for understanding and expressing complex experiences.

Layer	Theoretical Foundation	Primary Function	Key Benefits
Interaction Layer	Enactivism	Real-time, context-aware sensorimotor engagement; active co-creation of meaning.	Fosters active user engagement; promotes dynamic and adaptable narrative construction; sensitive to user's current state.
Information Layer	Extended Mind Theory	Reliable external memory storage and retrieval; cognitive scaffolding; seamless data management.	Reduces cognitive burden; ensures comprehensive and accurate recall; readily accessible information.

Meaning-Making Layer	Experientialism	Utilizes embodied metaphors and image schemas; guides narrative coherence; connects abstract concepts to lived experience.	Enhances depth of understanding; facilitates meaningful narrative construction; helps users express complex emotions and ideas.

Table 5. Integrated AI Life Story Model Strategy

7. Concluding Remarks

The most effective AI Life Story model for older adults won't rely on a single approach but will be a thoughtful blend of several key concepts. Imagine it as a reliable extended memory prosthesis (Extended Mind Theory), offering seamless, intelligent access to a rich personal archive. At the same time, it should provide opportunities for embodied re-experience (Enactivism), allowing for active, multi-sensory engagement with past events. Crucially, its design must facilitate personal meaning-making and emotional resonance (Experientialism), moving beyond simple facts to capture the subjective significance of a lived life.

The core of this model should be user-centric design, ethical data handling, and adaptability to individual needs and preferences. This acknowledges that aging is a diverse and dynamic process.

This integrated strategy recognizes that while a life story is an active, embodied process of meaning-making (Enactivism), it also benefits from external aids for memory and organization (Extended Mind Theory). Furthermore, its coherence is often shaped by fundamental embodied conceptual structures (Experientialism). Ultimately, such an AI Life Story model wouldn't just store information; it would actively participate in the user's ongoing journey of self-discovery and narrative construction, enriching their lives.

References

Barsalou, L. W. (2008). Grounded Cognition. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 59, pp. 617-645.

Butler, R. N. (1963). The Life Review: An Interpretation of Reminiscence in The Aged. *Psychiatry*, 26(1), pp. 65-76.

Chemero, A. (2009). *Radical Embodied Cognitive Science*. MIT Press.

Clark, A. (1997). *Being There: Putting Brain, Body, and World Together Again*. MIT Press.

Clark, A. (2008). *Supersizing The Mind: Embodiment, Action, And Cognitive Extension*. Oxford University Press.

Clark, A. (2016). *Surfing Uncertainty: Prediction, Action, and the Embodied Mind*. Oxford University Press.

Clark, A. (2023). *The Experience Machine: How Our Minds Predict and Shape Reality*. Pantheon.

Clark, A., and Chalmers, D. J. (1998). The Extended Mind. *Analysis*, 58(1), pp. 7-19.

Cole, T. R., & Winkler, M. G. (1994). *The Oxford Book of Aging: A Reader on The Journey of Life*. Oxford University Press.

Damasio, A. R. (1994). *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain*. Putnam.

Dautenhahn, K. (2007). Socially Intelligent Robots: Dimensions of Human–Robot Interaction. *Philosophical Transactions of The Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 362(1480), pp. 679-693.

Di Paolo, E. A., Rohde, M., and De Jaegher, H. (2010). Horizons for the Enactive Mind: Values, Feeling, And Culture. *Topics In Cognitive Science*, 2(3), pp. 594-612.

Dreyfus, H. L. (1979). *What Computers Can't Do: The Limits of Artificial Reason*. Harper & Row.

Froese, T., and Gallagher, S. (2012). From Neural Reuse to Neuronal Group Selection: A Framework for Understanding Brain Functional Organization in Development and Evolution. *Adaptive Behavior*, 20(3), pp. 163-176.

Fuchs, T. (2017). The Embodied Self and Its Disorders. *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology*, 24(2), pp. 173-192.

Gallagher, S. (2005). *How The Body Shapes the Mind*. Oxford University Press.

Gallese, V., and Lakoff, G. (2021). *The Embodied Neural Mind: Cognitive Science and Philosophy*. Oxford University Press.

Gibson, J. J. (1979). *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. Houghton Mifflin.

Hutto, D. D., and Myin, E. (2013). *Radicalizing Enactivism: Basic Minds Without Content*. MIT Press.

Johnson, M. (1987). *The Body in The Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, And Reason*. University Of Chicago Press.

Johnson, M. (2007). *The Meaning of The Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding*. University Of Chicago Press.

Kirchhoff, M., & Kiverstein, J. eds. (2019). *Handbook of 4E Cognition*. Routledge.

Lakoff, G., and Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors We Live By*. University Of Chicago Press.

Lakoff, G., and Johnson, M. (1999). *Philosophy In the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought*. Basic Books.

Maturana, H. R., and Varela, F. J. (1987). *The Tree of Knowledge: The Biological Roots of Human Understanding*. Shambhala Pub.

McAdams, D. P. (2008). Personal Narratives and The Life Story. In O. P. John, R. W. Robins, and L. A. Pervin eds., *Handbook of Personality: Theory and Research*, 3rd ed., pp. 242-262. Guilford Press.

Menary, R. (Ed.). (2010). *The Extended Mind*. MIT Press.

Noë, A. (2004). *Action In Perception*. MIT Press.

Picard, R. W. (1997). *Affective Computing*. MIT Press.

Randall, W. L., and Kenyon, G. M. (2001). *Ordinary Wisdom: Biographical Aging and The Journey of Life*. University Of Toronto Press.

Rowles, G. D. (1978). *Prisoners of Space? Exploring The Geographical Experience of Older People*. Westview Press.

Shapiro, L. A. (2019). *Embodied Cognition*, 2nd ed. Routledge.

Sheets-Johnstone, M. (1999). *The Primacy of Movement*. John Benjamins Pub.

Stern, D. N. (1985). *The Interpersonal World of the Infant: A View from Psychoanalysis and Developmental Psychology*. Basic Books.

Thompson, E. (2007). *Mind In Life: Biology, Phenomenology, and the Sciences of Mind*. Harvard University Press.

Varela, F. J., Thompson, E., and Rosch, E. (1991). *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*. MIT Press.

EASPP 2025

1

AI Life Story Model for Elderly People: An Embodied Cognitive Approach

Young e. Rhee
Dongguk University

2

❖ 목표

1. 체화인지 접근에 기반한 노년층을 위한 AI 생애사 모델 (EAI model)제안: 나이가 들면서 개인이 살아온 경험, 기억, 이야기는 정체성과 웰빙의 주요 부분이 된다. 기존 AI 모델은 경험의 복잡하고, 상호 주관적이고, 상황 의존적인 특성을 포착하지 못한다.

2. 체화주의(enactivism, extended mind theory, experientialism)를 통해 노인이 자신의 생애사를 구성하고 거기에 재귀하는 과정을 올바르게 반영하고 지원하는 AI 모델 개발을 위한 견고한 틀을 제시한다.

❖ 내용

3

1. 체화인지적 접근의 필요성
2. 체화인지적 관점에서 노화의 네 가지 의미
3. 행화주의, 확장된 마음 이론, 체현주의의 핵심
4. 세 가지 이론에 기반한 AI 모델
5. EAI 모델을 구축하기 위한 최적의 전략

1. 체화인지적 접근의 필요성

4

- 체화인지 이론: 인지는 뇌만의 기능이 아니라 뇌-신체-환경 간 역동적인 상호 작용에서 비롯된다.
- 체화인지적 관점은 노인의 복잡한 생애사를 제대로 이해하고 지원할 수 있는 AI 모델을 개발하는 데 필수적이다.
- 경험의 체화성을 수용함으로써, EAI 모델은 단순한 데이터 집계를 넘어 노년층의 삶의 질을 향상하는 데 있어 더 공감적이고 직관적이며, 궁극적으로 더 효과적이다.

5

❖ 초점

- 진정성과 의미: 기억은 감각 경험 및 신체 행동과 깊이 얽혀 있다. 텍스트나 사실 위주의 AI 생애사는 체화된 기억의 풍부성과 정서적 울림을 놓쳐 밋밋하고 덜 의미 있게 느껴진다.

- 접근성과 참여 유도: EAI 모델은 다중모드(시각, 청각, 촉각 등) 입출력을 통합하여 노인이 자신의 생애사를 회상할 수 있는 더 직관적이고 접근하기 쉬운 방법을 제공하고, 언어적 인지 장벽을 우회할 수 있다.

6

- 단절감 해소: EAI 모델은 과거를 실제적이고 상호작용하는 방식으로 추체험할 수 있는 수단을 제공하여, 연속성과 자아 정체성을 강화하는데 기여할 수 있다.

- 데이터를 넘어선 진정한 개인화: 체화적 접근은 개인이 평생 동안 세상을 경험해 온 고유한 방식을 포착하여, 단순한 사실들의 모음이 아닌 실제 살아온 경험을 반영하는 생애사를 구성할 수 있다.

2. 노화의 체화적 의미

7

- 체화된 변형으로서의 노화
- 어포던스(affordances)의 변화로서의 노화
- 생애사의 체화로서의 노화

3. 체화인지 이론의 특징

8

- 행화주의(enactivism): 인지는 세상을 표상하는 것이 아니라 감각 운동적 참여를 통해 세상을 이끌어내는 능동적이고 체화된 과정이다. (F. Varela ; E. Thompson)

- Autopoiesis
- Sensorimotor Coupling
- Meaning-Making
- Emergence

9

- 확장된 마음 이론(extended mind theory): 인지 과정은 뇌의 경계를 넘어 환경으로 확장되어 외부 도구와 자원이 인지계의 통합적인 부분으로 포함될 수 있다. (A. Clark ; R. Menary)

- Parity Principle
- Active Externalism
- Coupling b/t the internal and the external
- Complementarity

10

- 체현주의(Experientialism): 우리의 개념 체계, 언어, 추론을 형성하는 데 있어 살아있는 신체 경험이 핵심 역할을 한다. (G. Lakoff ; M. Johnson)

- Embodied Metaphor
- Image Schemas
- Grounding of Meaning
- Folk Theories and Everyday Reasoning

4. EAI 생애사 모델

11

- Enactive model
- EMT model
- Experiential model

Enactive 모델

12

Feature	Description	Example in AI Model
Sensorimotor Loop	The AI system would engage in real-time, context-aware interactions with the elderly person, using sensors (e.g., wearables, environmental sensors) to detect activities, moods, and social contexts.	An AI companion that notices an elderly person looking at an old photo album and prompts, "Tell me about this time," drawing on its understanding of their current engagement and potential emotional state.
Meaning-Making	The AI would not impose pre-defined meanings but would co-create meaning with the user through iterative, situated interactions. It would learn the user's idiosyncratic ways of relating to their past.	Instead of asking "What happened on X date?", the AI might ask, "How did you feel when you were doing [activity inferred from sensors/past narrative]?" or "What did that experience mean to you?“

Feature	Description	Example in AI Model
Embodied Prompts	Prompts for memory recall would be deeply tied to sensory and motor experiences, rather than just verbal cues. This could involve visual, auditory, or even haptic feedback.	Playing a specific piece of music from a past era, displaying images of places the user has lived, or even stimulating a scent associated with a memory to trigger recall.
Autopoietic Narrative	The "life story" would be a continuously evolving, self-organizing process, rather than a fixed document. The AI would facilitate the user's ongoing sense-making and adaptation of their narrative over time.	The AI could present different "versions" of a story based on the user's current mood or focus, allowing them to re-interpret or add new insights to past events, reflecting the dynamic nature of memory and identity.

❖ EMT 모델

14

Feature	Description	Example in AI Model
Reliable Coupling	The AI would be seamlessly integrated into the user's daily life, accessible at any time and in various modalities, becoming a trusted and readily available cognitive extension.	A voice-activated AI assistant integrated into a smart home environment, accessible through smart speakers, tablets, or even smart glasses, consistently available to record, retrieve, and organize life events.
Information Offloading	The AI would function as a vast external memory store, allowing the elderly person to externalize details, names, dates, and connections, thereby reducing cognitive load and freeing up internal resources for higher-level narrative construction.	"AI, what was the name of the flower shop next to our first apartment?" or "Remind me of the sequence of events leading up to our move to the countryside." The AI instantly retrieves and presents the information.

Feature	Description	Example in AI Model
Narrative Scaffolding	The AI would provide structural support for organizing and retrieving narrative elements, helping the user to build coherent stories even when internal memory resources are strained.	The AI could suggest narrative structures (e.g., chronological, thematic, by significant relationships), identify gaps in a story, or prompt the user to elaborate on specific events based on existing information.
Shared Cognitive Space	The AI could facilitate the co-construction of narratives with family members or caregivers by providing a shared external memory and communication platform, extending the cognitive system to include a social dimension.	Family members could add their memories or perspectives to the AI-generated life story, enriching it and making it a shared family archive that all can access and contribute to, acting as a collective external memory.

❖ Experiential 모델

16

Feature	Description	Example in AI Model
Metaphorical Mapping	The AI would identify and utilize common embodied metaphors (e.g., "life as a journey," "time as a river," "love as a bond") to help the elderly person frame and understand their experiences.	If the user describes a period of hardship, the AI might prompt, "Was that a difficult road you traveled?" or "Did you feel stuck during that time?" connecting to embodied metaphors of motion and constraint.
Image Schema Recognition	The AI would recognize underlying image schemas in the user's descriptions and use them to prompt further elaboration or to connect seemingly disparate events.	If the user talks about feeling "overwhelmed," the AI might infer a CONTAINER schema being violated and ask, "Did you feel like things were pouring in too fast?" or "Were you struggling to contain everything?"

Feature	Description	Example in AI Model
Sensory-Grounded Prompts	Prompts for memory retrieval would be strongly linked to sensory modalities, leveraging the idea that memories are often deeply embedded in our sensory experiences.	"What did that place smell like?" or "What was the texture of the fabric you were wearing?" or "What were the sounds you heard in that moment?" to evoke rich, embodied recall.
Narrative Archetypes	The AI could suggest common narrative archetypes (e.g., the hero's journey, overcoming adversity, finding belonging) that resonate with embodied human experience, helping the user structure their unique life story within a broader, relatable framework.	After hearing several anecdotes, the AI might suggest, "It sounds like you embarked on quite a journey of self-discovery during that period," providing a familiar narrative structure for reflection.

5. 세 가지 모형 비교

18

Feature/Aspect	Enactivist Model	EMT Model	Experientialist Model
Primary Goal	Re-experience/re-create past events through active engagement.	Augment/offload memory; seamless access to externalized cognition.	Facilitate meaning-making and emotional connection to memories.
Memory Nature	Dynamic, emergent, process-oriented (re-enactment).	Externalized, accessible, distributed (data-centric).	Subjective, emotional, qualitative (affective-centric).
Interaction Style	Immersive, interactive, sensorimotor.	Seamless, unobtrusive, intelligent retrieval.	Reflective, emotive, narrative-driven.

Feature/Aspect	Enactivist Model	EMT Model	Experientialist Model
Technological Focus	VR/AR, haptics, biofeedback, advanced simulation.	Large databases, semantic AI, ubiquitous computing, smart devices.	Sentiment analysis, narrative AI, multi-sensory (olfactory, auditory).
Benefit for Elderly	Deep engagement, motor stimulation, active recall.	Memory aid, cognitive scaffolding, information access.	Emotional processing, identity formation, shared meaning.
Potential Drawback	High technical demands, potential for disorientation, intensive.	Risk of data overload, depersonalization if purely factual.	Can be emotionally taxing, requires user introspection.
Life Story Output	A series of lived, re-experienced scenarios.	An external, searchable, augmented memory database.	A personalized narrative imbued with emotional significance.

❖ 정리

20

	Enactivist Model	EMT Model	Experientialist Model
초점	• 기억 과정	• 기억 접근	• 기억의 의미
장점	• 가장 깊은 수준에서 체화적 관여 제공 • 가장 생생하고 진정성 있게 기억의 재경험 제공	• 기억 회상 및 접근에서 실용적이고 매끄러운 지원 제공 • 강력한 인지 보조 기능 제공	• 사실적 회상보다 주관적이고 질적인 경험 중시 • 더 깊은 의미와 정체성 함양
단점	• 기술적으로 가장 어려움 • 일부 사용자에게 혼란을 야기할 가능성	• 정서적 깊이가 없는 순수한 사실만을 제공할 가능성	• 감정적 몰입의 과다 유발 가능성 • 사용자의 내성적 성향에 의존

6. 최적의 전략

21

- 상호 보완적 장점을 활용하는 하이브리드 통합
- 세 이론 중 어떤 이론도 완전한 모형을 제공 불가
- 그것들을 통합할 때 더 강력하고 효율적인 모형 가능

- Foundational Enactivist Layer
- Extended Mind as a Cognitive Backbone
- Experientialist Guidance for Narrative Coherence

Layer	Theoretical Foundation	Primary Function	Key Benefits
Interaction Layer	Enactivism	Real-time, context-aware sensorimotor engagement; active co-creation of meaning.	Fosters active user engagement; promotes dynamic and adaptable narrative construction; sensitive to user's current state.
Information Layer	Extended Mind Theory	Reliable external memory storage and retrieval; cognitive scaffolding; seamless data management.	Reduces cognitive burden; ensures comprehensive and accurate recall; readily accessible information.
Meaning-Making Layer	Experiential-ism	Utilizes embodied metaphors and image schemas; guides narrative coherence; connects abstract concepts to lived experience.	Enhances depth of understanding; facilitates meaningful narrative construction; helps users express complex emotions and ideas.

7. 결론

23

- 노인을 위한 가장 효율적인 AI 생애사 모델은 EAI 통합 모델이다. 한다.

- 다차원적 효율성
  과거 기억에 대한 체화된 재경험
  신빙성 있는 기억보조기
  삶의 질적 의미 파악

Heeja Sung · Seon Yeong Shim (Kyungpook National University)
"Successful Aging through Life History"

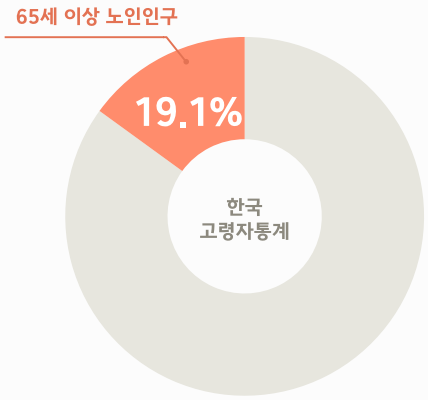
생애사를 통한
노인의 성공적 노화

성희자(경북대 사회복지학부 교수)
심선영(경북대 사회복지학부 박사과정)

목차
Contents

01 한국의 노인 인구 비율
02 한국 노인의 사회문제
03 성공적 노화에 대한 이론
04 노인의 생애사
05 연구방법
06 연구결과
07 결론
08 함의

한국의 노인인구 비율



한국의 고령자 통계

- 65세 이상 노인인구 - 전체 인구의 19.1%
- 65-74세(10.7%) : 초기노인
- 75세 이상(8.4%) : 후기노인, 초고령노인

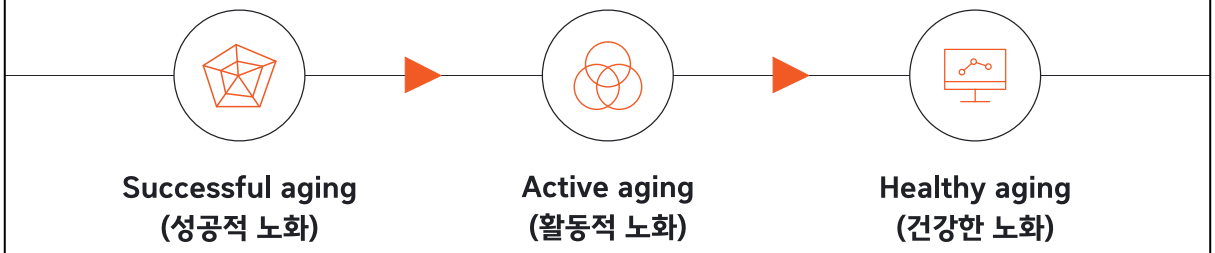
한국 노인의 사회문제

한국노인의 빈곤율 : 40. 4%(OECD 국가 중 1위)
OECD 평균(14.2%)의 3배)

한국 노인의 자살율 : 인구 10만명당 42.2명(OECD 국가 중 1위)
OECD 평균(16.3명)의 2.5배)

한국의 평균 은퇴연령 : 52. 7세
독거노인의 비율 : 전체 노인 중 독거노인의 비율은 23. 6%(25. 5. 기준)

노인의 만족스런 삶에 대한 개념들



Successful aging
(성공적 노화)

Active aging
(활동적 노화)

Healthy aging
(건강한 노화)

Successful Aging(성공적 노화)

- 1986년 미국 노년학회(Gerontological Society of America, GSA)**의 연례회의에서 성공적 노화에 대한 공식적인 논의가 이루어짐.
- 기존의 논의 : 노화 질병, 쇠약, 의존성 VS 성공적 노화.
- 성공적 노화 : 긍정적이고 능동적인 관점을 가지게 됨.

Active Aging(활동적 노화)

WHO(2002), 『Active Aging : A Policy Framework』 보고서

- 정의 : 건강, 참여, 안전을 통해 삶의 질을 향상시키는 과정.
- UN의 '건강한 노화의 10년(2021–2030)' 전략에도 반영됨.

Health Aging(건강한 노화)

WHO (2015): 『고령화와 건강에 대한 세계보고서(World Report on Ageing and Health)』

"건강한 노화란, 나이가 들어도 신체적·정신적·사회적으로 기능을 유지하고, 삶의 질을 높이며, 사회에 적극적으로 참여할 수 있는 상태를 의미한다."

- **기능적 능력(functional ability)이란** 스스로 가치있다고 여기는 존재가 되고, 또한 가치있다고 여기는 일을 할 수 있도록 하는 건강과 관련된 특성을 의미.
- 노인의 자립성과 삶의 질 중시.

성공적 노화의 설명 이론

Rowe & Kahn의 모델

- 성공적 노화의 개념과 구성요소 제시

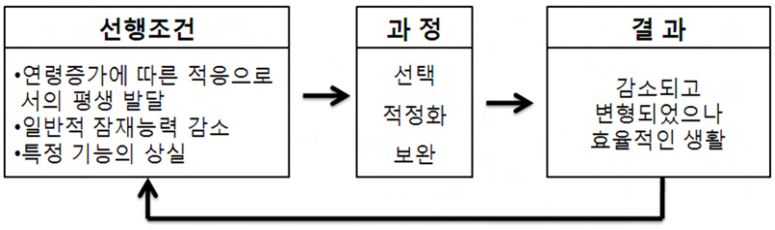
- 질병 및 장애의 최소화
- 정신적 인지적 기능 유지
- 인생의 적극적 참여

'보통의 노화(usual aging)'와
'성공적 노화(successful aging)'를 구분

성공적 노화의 설명 이론

Baltes & Baltes의 모델 : SOC 모델

- 선택(selection), 최적화(optimization), 보상(compensation)의 과정.
- 노화에 의한 손상과 기능감퇴에도 불구하고 상실을 보상하고 주어진 능력에 적합한 활동을 선택하여 보유한 기술을 최적화함으로써 성공적 노화에 도달할 수 있다고 봄.



출처 : Blates & Baltes(1994) 석재은 외(2010) : 261 재인용

성공적 노화의 설명 이론	**Stowe & Coony(2015)의 생애과정 관점** • Rowe & Kahn의 모델을 비판적 검토. • 성공적 노화는 개인의 선택과 행동만으로 결정되지 않고 역사적, 사회적 맥락과 구조적인 요인이 크게 영향을 미침. • 개인의 생애경험과 사회구조적 요인의 상호작용 중요시. • 생애 조기 경험과 기회가 노년기 적응과 성공적 노화에 미치는 영향 강조.

성공적 노화의 설명 이론	**Elder(1998)의 생애과정이론** • 인간발달을 역사적 시간과 장소에서 펼쳐지는 과정. • 주요 생애 사건의 발생시기가 개인의 발달궤적에 중요한 영향을 미침. • 개인의 삶은 가족, 친구 등 사회적 관계망 속에서 상호연결되어 있음. • 개인은 역사적, 사회적 제약 속에서도 선택과 결정을 통해 자신의 삶을 구성함.

성공적 노화의 설명 이론

Schulz & Heckhausen(1996)

- Baltes & Baltes의 이론을 확대하였음.
- 자신이 처한 환경과 지속적으로 상호작용하며 노년기까지의 발달을 성공적으로 이어 옴.
- 어린시절에 다양한 경험으로 발달 가능성을 확장.
- 나이가 들수록 선택의 가능성이 제한되어 자원의 효율적 활용을 위한 선택(selection)과 최적화(optimization).
- 손실된 기능에 대한 보상(compensation)을 할 수 있음 : 레질리언스.

가장 오랜 시간 신체적 기능, 정신(인지)기능을 유지하고 사회적 참여를 유지할 수 있는 능력을 보유한 사람을 성공적인 사람이라고 봄.

성공적 노화의 구성요소 비교: 서구와 한국비교

서구의 경우 : 개인 중심의 가치관

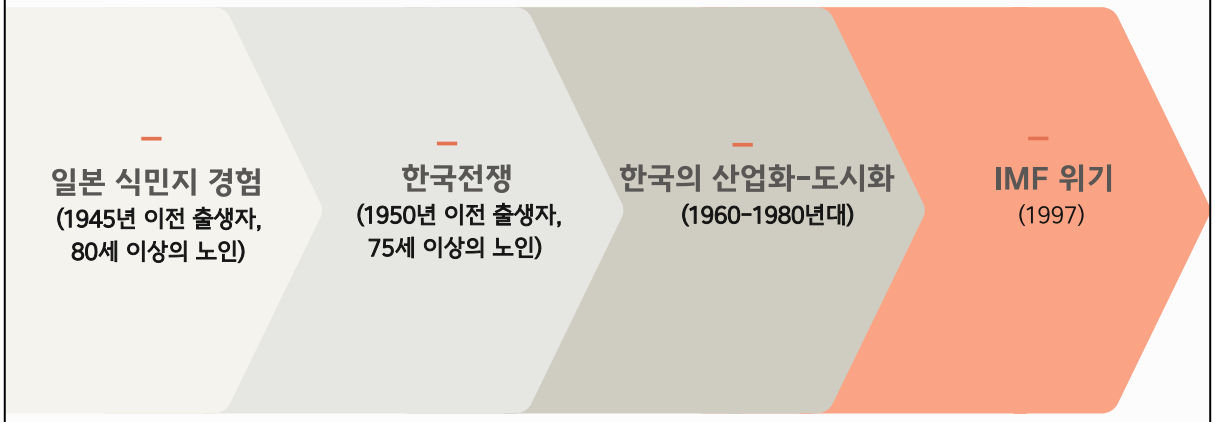
생산성, 봉사활동, 높은 인지적 기능상태, 목표의식, 긍정적인 시각 및 태도, 변화에 대한 적응, 신앙심, 활력, 지혜와 지식의 전수, 유머.

한국의 경우 : 관계 중심의 가치관

자식이 잘 성장하고 성공하는 것, 자식이나 타인에게 짐이 되지 않는 것, 크게 아프지 않고 자다가 죽는 죽음복, 역할완수, 욕심을 버리는 것.

백지은, 최혜경(2007)-한국사회와 서구사회의 성공적 노화의 구성요소에 대한 비교 문화적 연구

한국사회의 특성과 노인의 경험



노인의 연령 : 65세 이상(1960년대 이전에 출생한 사람들)

생애사(life history)와 노인

- 생애사의 개념

- 심리학 : Alport(1942) –개인기록과 생애사의 연관성 강조.
- 사회학 : 개인의 삶의 이야기는 사회구조와 문화, 역사적 맥락을 이해하는 도구.

생애사란, 개인이 삶의 단편들을 말이나 글로써 행해지는 이야기(Hatch, 1995).

생애사(life history)와 노인

- 생애사(life history)연구는 이야기 형식으로 구술한 개인의 생애를 분석의 기초 자료로 삼는 것 (박재홍, 1999).
- 프리츠 쉬체(Fritz Schütze) : 독일의 사회학자로 생애사 연구(life history research)의 이론적 틀을 정립한 대표적인 학자.
- 생애사를 단순한 개인의 이야기로 보지 않고, 사회적 맥락 속에서 개인이 겪는 사건과 그에 대한 반응을 구조적으로 분석하는 틀을 제시.
- “Biographieforschung und narratives Interview”(1983)

노인에 대한 생애사 연구는 사회적 상황 속에 ‘살고 있는’ 노인을 이해하는 도구.

생애사 연구의 자료수집 방법



전기연구



자서전쓰기



구술사

면담

연구방법

- 3명의 interviewer 3명의 interviewee와 일대일 면접.
- 1일, 100분-150분간, 3회(2025. 2. 10-12)
- 대구광역시의 00장기요양기관에서 센터장이 소개해 준 참여자에게 연구목적을 상세히 설명하고 서면동의를 얻은 후 인터뷰를 진행함.

- 반구조화된 질문지를 활용함.
- 1회차 : 유년기부터-청소년기까지(개인의 경험, 가족관계)
- 2회차 : 청소년기부터 중년기까지(결혼, 자녀양육, 직업생활, 가족관계
- 3회차 : 중년기 이후 현재까지.

기록을 전사하고 AI팀에서 기록물을 정리하고 정리된 자료를 interviewer가 전해줌.

연구참여자의 특성

	성별	나이	교육 정도	결혼 상태	종교	(현재) 직업	결과물
참여자1	남	71	초 졸	기혼	기독교	수산물 판매직	AI생성 그림액자 (글을 포함)
참여자2	여	68	초 중퇴	기혼	기독교	노인일자리(청소)	생애주기 삽화 6장
참여자3	남	68	고 졸	기혼	기독교	운전기사	트로트 노래(작사·작곡)+ 생애사 기록물 (책자)

연구결과 (청소년기 이전)

참여자1 초등학교 졸업후 돈을 버는 일터로 나가게 됨
학교다니는 친구들을 피해다님. 학교 못가는 자신이 부끄러워서 형제간에 우애가 있었고, 아버지를 존경함.

참여자2 초등학교 4학년 이후로 중퇴.
미싱하는 일 시작. 일 잘한다는 소리를 들음.
어릴 때 많이 울어 청각장애.
그로 인한 대인관계의 어려움.

참여자3 건강이 나빠서 어려움이 있었으나 초등시절 수학여행 못감
경북에서 서울로 이사감. 도시빈민의 삶.
00전자고등학교 졸업.

연구결과 (청장년기)

참여자1 직물공장 종업원, 페이트 가게운영자로 직업적 변화와 더불어 부산-대구로 거주지 이동이 있었음. 중매결혼, 딸 2명을 낳아 1명의 딸은 맏형에게 입양. 딸이 결혼하고 자녀를 낳음.

참여자2 직물공장에서 미싱사. 지인소개로 결혼. 결혼후 부산으로 이사. 하숙, 딸이 초등입학과 동시에 전자회사에 취업. 가정경제에 도움을 준 것에 자부심. 남편보다 시어머니나 주인집아주머니와 같은 주변인이 도와 줌. 동생이 운영하는 간장게장집에서 일함. 운전면허증 딴 것에 대해 자부심.

참여자3 외국계 전자회사에 입사, 철도청 공무원, 경찰직 공무원으로 직업 전환. 신앙생활을 위한 전직. 결혼도 신앙심이 좋은 여자라서 선택. 결혼생활에 대한 만족감이 높고 아내를 울리는 것은 부족한 사람이라고 생각.

연구결과 (노년기)

참여자1 자녀가 안정적으로 살고, 사위와 관계가 좋음. 직장을 다니고 건강하다는 것에 대해 만족함. 일요일도 일해야 해서 교회를 못가는 것에 대해서는 불만. 공부를 조금만 했더라면 공무원이 되었을 것에 대한 아쉬움을 표현함. 그래도 이만하면 잘 살았다고 긍정적으로 생각함.

참여자2 현재는 노인일자리 참여. 경제적으로는 어렵지만 남편과 그럭저럭 살고 있고, 딸이 영양사이고 결혼하여 손주 출산. 여전히 음식을 만들어주면 맛있다는 칭찬을 받으니 본인이 가치있는 존재라고 생각함.

참여자3 현재 장기요양기관 운전기사. 전직도 잘 마무리했고, 교회에 봉사하며 아내와 파크골프를 함께 해서 행복함.

연구결과(인생을 한마디로 정의)

참여자1

남에게 싫은 소리 안하고 안 듣고 살아 온 자신에 대해 고마움. 형제들과 가족 모두 안 아프고 건강하게 지내길 바람.

참여자2

할 수 있는데 까지 해주는게 좋다.

참여자3

사는 건 다 사는거니까. 목표의식을 가지기를 바람.

연구결과 (분석)

참여자1 초졸이지만 직장생활을 성실히 해서 창립기념일 '감사패'를 받은 것에 자부심을 가짐. 노인인 지금도 매일 6km정도 걷기를 하며 건강관리함. 형제관계가 좋은 것이 자부심. 자식에게 좋은 말을 해 줌.

참여자2 청각장애를 가지고 일찍 부터 공장에 다녀 돈을 벌어 친정어머니에게 경제적인 도움을 줌. 결혼해서 하숙을 치거나 회사를 다니면서 돈을 모으고 자녀를 성장시켜 결혼시키고 안정되게 살고 있는 모습을 보는 것이 자신의 삶이 의미있는 삶이었다고 생각하고 있음.

참여자3 전자공고졸. 산업화초기에 학력은 철도청공무원, 경찰공무원으로 선택지를 다양하게 할 수 있었음. 종교가 삶의 토대, 의미로 작용. 본인 자신의 봉사활동이나 신앙심, 부부관계, 자녀 이런 순서로 의미를 부여함.

연구결과(결과물)

참여자1	참여자2	참여자3
액자 "성실함과 가족중심의 삶"	그림책 "역경속에서 찾은 자부심"	자서전 + (삶을 담은) 노래 만들기 "신앙을 통한 삶의 전환"

참여자 모두 결과물을 본인의 삶이 "그대로" 기록된 것으로 인식하였고 이러한 물체를 받는 것에 대해 기뻐하였음.

결론

성공적 노화의 구성요소로 개념화되었던 신체적 건강과 인지적 기능 유지 그리고 사회참여(경제활동, 사회참여)가 자신의 삶을 긍정적으로 인식하는 요인이었음.

생애사를 말하는 과정, 즉, 구술과정에서 자신의 삶을 이해하고 재구성하여 긍정적인 의미를 부여하고 있음자신과 타인의 상호작용으로 재구성.

결과물을 실체로 받았을 때 interviewer에서 나아가 세계로 부터 인정받는 것 같은 확장과 수용의 작용이 일어난 것으로 이해됨.

함의

구술생애사는 노인이 자신의 삶을 이해하고 재구성하는데 도움이 됨.

노인생애사쓰기가 집단적으로 이루어진 경우가 많은데, 1:1 개별 면접 상황으로 진행하는 것이 필요함. 면접 과정에서 상호작용이 치료적 효과를 가져옴.

노인이 성공적 노화, 만족스런 삶이라고 하는 것이 내재적 규범에 의한 것인지에 대한 심층적인 이해가 필요함.

References

김태성, 서석남(2012), 생애사 연구를 통한 노년기 삶의 이해-주거노인을 중심으로-, 노인복지연구. 381-400
강유진. (2002). 한국여성노인의 생애경험과 노년기 적응. 서울대학교 박사학위논문.강유진. (2005). 한국 성인세대의 노후준비에 관한 연구. 한국지역사회생활과학회지, 16(4), 159–174.
김동배. (2008). 한국 노인의 성공적 노화 척도 개발을 위한 연구. 한국사회복지학, 60(1), 211-231.
김미혜, 김혜연, 박수진, 이수정, 정미경. (2021). 베이비붐세대와 노인세대의 행복영향요인의 차이에 대한 연구. 한국콘텐츠학회논문지, 21(6), 232-245.
김미혜, 신경림. (2005). 한국 노인의 성공적 노후 척도 개발에 관한 연구. 한국노년학, 25(2), 35-52.
김일식, 김계령. (2019). 노화 패러다임 변화의 필요성 : 성공적 노화에서 '인간완성'으로. 선도문화. 제 26권.330-360.
김정은, & 이재영. (2022). 인구 고령화의 공간적 불균등. 지역연구, 29(2), 45–67.
https://nationalatlas.cafe24.com/pages/page_1900.php
박경란, & 이영숙. (2002). 성공적 노화에 대한 인식 조사연구. 한국노년학, 22(3), 53-66.
백지은, 최혜경. (2007). 한국사회와 서구사회의 성공적 노화의 구성요소에 대한 비교 문화적 연구. 가정과삶의질연구, 25(2), 137-153.
안정신, 정영숙, & 서수균. (2013). 성숙한 노화 태도와 성공적 노화 및 심리사회적 성숙의 관계 – 성숙한 노화개념의 탐색. , 26(2), 127-143.
안정신, 정영숙, 정여진, 서수균, Cooney, T. M.(2011). 성공적 노화 연구의 비판적 고찰. 한국심리학회지: 발달, 24(3), 35-54.
정순둘. (2007). 여성노인과 남성노인의 성공적 노화에 관한 인식 비교연구. 한국노년학, 27(4), 829-845.
최혜경, 백지은, 서선영(2005). 노인들의 인식을 통한 한국적인 성공적 노화의 개념. 한국가정관리학회지, 23(2), 1-10.
통계청. (2024). 2024 고령자 통계보고서. https://www.kostat.go.kr/board.es?act=view&bid=10820&list_no=432917&mid=a10301010000

References

Baltes, P. B. & Baltes, M. M.(1990), Psychological perspectives on Successful aging: Perspectives from the behavioral sciences (pp. 1–34). Cambridge University Press.
Dannefer, D. (2003). Cumulative advantage/disadvantage and the life course: Cross-fertilizing age and social science theory. The Journals of Gerontology Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences, 58(6), S327–S337. https://doi.org/10.1093/geronb/58.6.S327
Depp, C. A., & Jeste, D. V. (2006). Definitions and predictors of successful aging: A comprehensive review of larger quantitative studies. The American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry, 14(1), 6–20. https://doi.org/10.1097/01.JGP.0000192501.03069.bc
Diener, E., & Suh, E. M. (1997). Measuring quality of life: Economic, social, and subjective indicators. Social Indicators Research, 40(1–2), 189–216. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1006859511756
Dillaway, H. E., & Byrnes, M. (2009). Reconsidering successful aging: A call for renewed and expanded academic critiques and conceptualizations. Journal of Applied Gerontology, 28(6), 702–722. https://doi.org/10.1177/0733464809333882
Elder, G. H. Jr. (1998). The life course as developmental theory. Child Development, 69(1), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.1998.tb06128.x
Havighurst, R. J. (1961). Successful aging. The Gerontologist, 1(1), 8–13. https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/1.1.8
Hatch, J. A.(1995), Life history of a first grade teacher: a narrative culturally sensitive teaching practice, in Qualtative Research in Early Childhood Settings, Praeger Publishers. 64

Kelly, J. R., Steinkamp, M. W., & Kelly, J. R. (1987). Later-life satisfaction: Does leisure contribute? Leisure Sciences, 9(3), 189–199. https://doi.org/10.1080/01490408709512159
Larson, R. (1978). Thirty years of research on the subjective well-being of older Americans. Journal of Gerontology, 33(1), 109–125. https://doi.org/10.1093/geronj/33.1.109
McAdams, D. P. (2001). The psychology of life stories. Review of General Psychology, 5(2), 100–122. https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.5.2.100
Rubinstein, R. L., & de Medeiros, K. (2015). "Successful aging," gerontological theory and neoliberalism: A qualitative critique. The Gerontologist, 55(1), 34-42.
Rowe, J. W., & Kahn, R. L. (1997). Successful aging. The Gerontologist, 37(4), 433–440. https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/37.4.433
Ryff, C. D. (1989). Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological well-being. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 57(6), 1069–1081. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.57.6.1069
Sabia, S., Singh-Manoux, A., Hagger-Johnson, G., Cambois, E., Brunner, E., & Kivimaki, M. (2012). Influence of individual and combined healthy behaviours on successful aging. Canadian Medical Association Journal, 184, 1985-1992.
Schulz, R., & Heckhausen, J. (1996). A life span model of successful aging. American Psychologist, 51(7), 702–714. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.51.7.702
Stowe, J. D., & Cooney, T. M. (2015). Examining Rowe and Kahn's concept of successful aging: Importance of taking a life course perspective. The Gerontologist, 55(1), 43–50. https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnu055
Strawbridge, W. J., Wallhagen, M. I., & Cohen, R. D. (2002). Successful aging and well-being: Self-rated compared with Rowe and Kahn. The Gerontologist, 42(6), 727–733. https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/42.6.727
Torres, S. (2009). A critical perspective on the concept of successful aging: The impact of the social and structural factors. Journal of Aging & Social Policy, 21(4), 394-411. https://doi.org/10.1080/08959420.2009.10592874

Seung-Ah Seo · Seon Yeong Shim (Kyungpook National University)
"Emotional Expression and Sociocultural Context in Korean Elderly Life Narratives "

[1] Title
Presentation Title: Emotional Expression and Sociocultural Context in Korean Elderly Life Narratives
Presenter and Affiliation: Seung-Ah Seo, Doctoral Candidate in Social Work Practice, School of Social Welfare, Kyungpook National University

[2] Outline
This presentation will proceed in the following order: Introduction, Theoretical Background, Research Methodology, Research Findings, and Conclusion.

[3] Introduction
1. Research Necessity
① Two Models of Emotion
What constitutes emotion? We commonly understand emotions as basic affects such as 'sadness,' 'joy,' and 'anger,' perceiving them as naturally emerging from within. This understanding is grounded in the organismic model, which traditionally explains emotions as biological and automatic responses.
This organismic model of emotion is substantiated by prior research demonstrating that individuals can similarly infer emotional states from facial expressions regardless of cultural background, as illustrated by the male figure on the left, and that basic biological expressions exist even in infancy.
However, can emotions be viewed solely as internal physiological responses? The sociology of emotions presents an alternative perspective.

1. Although emotions are expressed through physical manifestations, they possess 'relational' properties that cannot be reduced to the body. Emotions are social in that they are expressed within relationships with others or objects (Burkitt, 2002): encountering people elicits higher emotional responses than encountering snakes.
2. While emotions are expressed by individuals within relationships, they possess 'contextual' properties that cannot be reduced to individual internal characteristics. Emotions are social in that they are diversely experienced and expressed according to the situational contexts in which actors find themselves.
3. Although emotions are manifested as responses to external stimuli, they possess properties of 'action' beyond mere discharge. Emotions constitute a form of social action (Weber, 1997).
4. While emotions are characterized as expressive acts, they possess 'normative'

> properties in that they are controlled and managed within social relationships, with different emotions being required. Social 'feeling rules' exist that people must follow, and emotions regulated through these rules provide crucial foundations for maintaining daily life within social institutions (Hochschild, 1979).

Interactionist theorists, including Hochschild (1979), conceptualize emotions as experiences constructed and regulated within social interactions, particularly emphasizing that the ways emotions are expressed and interpreted are strongly influenced by cultural norms.
Culture shared by groups provides members with meaning systems and information systems transmitted across generations, thereby maintaining social order and providing rules, guidelines, values, and norms for emotional regulation.
This culture functions in three ways: First, culture regulates biologically-based basic emotions from the perspective of when basic emotions should be induced and what we should do after they are induced. Second, it assists in constructing unique emotional experiences beyond basic emotions. Third, culture influences the construction of distinctive concepts, meanings, attitudes, values, and beliefs about emotions.

② Elderly Emotions and Sociocultural Norms

Grossmann et al. (2014) explained that elderly individuals' emotional experiences and emotional regulation are not simply explained by age-related effects but result from the influence of culturally internalized emotion norms.
Furthermore, elderly individuals constitute a group that has undergone socialization processes for extended periods, and since the importance of intimate interpersonal relationships increases in old age, they tend to refrain from emotional expressions that might threaten interpersonal relationships while engaging in emotional expressions that facilitate interpersonal relationships (Carstensen, 1999).
However, existing domestic research has primarily focused on elderly emotions from pathological or individual characteristic perspectives, with limited research reflecting sociocultural perspectives on elderly emotions.

③ Life History

Life history research maintains the fundamental perspective that all actions an individual has lived constitute a structured self-image and are constructs resulting from interaction with society (Mandelbaum, 1983).
Unlike other qualitative research, life history research emphasizes how individuals experience their lives within the flow of time and what meanings they have attributed to those experiences. This signifies not merely listing facts about "what events someone experienced," but explaining "why I lived that way and what meaning those experiences held for me" from that person's perspective within social contexts.

Thus, elderly life histories are appropriate for revealing the social meaning construction processes of emotional expression, remembered events, and their interpretations through autobiographical life experiences.
Therefore, this study seeks to explore how emotional experiences and expressions appearing in elderly life histories reflect Korean sociocultural beliefs and emotion norms, based on this sociology of emotions perspective.

2. Research Questions
The research question of this study is as follows:
How are Korean elderly individuals' emotional experiences and emotional expressions constructed and made meaningful within sociocultural contexts and emotion norms?

[4] Theoretical Background
This study is grounded in the sociology of emotions perspective, which understands emotions not as individual psychological responses but as emotions constructed and regulated within sociocultural contexts.
Among these, feeling rules constitute a concept explaining social expectations that specify emotions to be expressed or suppressed in particular social situations, providing a crucial framework for understanding elderly emotional expression patterns (Hochschild, 1983).
However, emotions extend beyond mere expression according to norms, being constructed through associations with remembered events, internalization through repeated experiences, and reflection of cultural beliefs.
To explain this, this study applies Kitayama & Markus's (1994) cultural psychological theory in the interpretation stage to explore how emotions are culturally structured and made meaningful within individual lives.
Kitayama and Markus (1994) viewed emotions not as universal responses spontaneously occurring within individuals, but as psychological experiences constructed according to cultural beliefs and social norms. They argued that emotional formation and expression are deeply rooted in cultural values and norms, with emotions being learned and internalized within cultural self-concepts and repeated social interactions.
This theory explains that the emotion construction process operates through the following stages: (1) core cultural ideas → (2) social norms → (3) recurrent situations → (4) emotional experience → (5) behavior/expression.
Based on this theoretical framework, this study seeks to explore how elderly emotional expressions have been formed by cultural norms and social contexts through analyzing emotional experiences appearing in Korean elderly life histories.

[5] Research Methodology
1. Research Design

This study employed qualitative research methods to explore how elderly emotional experiences and expressions are constructed and interpreted within sociocultural contexts. To deeply understand emotional experiences and memories accumulated in elderly lives and the cultural norms and beliefs surrounding them, life history interview transcripts were analyzed using inductive content analysis combined with thematic analysis. In the interpretation stage, Kitayama & Markus's (1994) cultural psychological theory was applied to examine the cultural formation processes of emotions.

2. Research Participants

Research participants comprised 5 Korean elderly individuals aged 65 and above, selected through purposive sampling. Participant selection criteria included: (1) individuals capable of routine communication, (2) individuals without dementia, and (3) individuals who received sufficient explanation of research purposes and provided consent.

3. Data Collection

Data collection proceeded through semi-structured life history interviews conducted 2-3 times per participant. Each interview session lasted approximately 90-120 minutes, with the entire process recorded with participants' prior consent and subsequently transcribed. Interviews were structured around major life events following temporal sequences of childhood, youth, middle age, and old age, though questions were flexibly adjusted when participants repeatedly mentioned or emotionally prioritized particular events.

Life history interview questions included items exploring emotional experiences and expression methods such as "What were your emotions regarding specific situations?", "How did you express those emotions?", "To whom did you express emotions?", and "Were there emotions you could not express?"

4. Data Analysis

Collected life history texts were analyzed using ATLAS.ti 25.0 software, employing inductive content analysis combined with thematic analysis. Transcribed data underwent initial open coding, focusing on content related to emotional expression, emotion-related events, and their interpretations and evaluations. Subsequently, similar or recurring codes were integrated and reconstructed to derive categories, with semantic relationships among derived categories analyzed to extract final core themes. The analysis process involved two researchers independently performing coding, followed by repeated mutual review and consensus processes to ensure coding agreement and interpretation consistency. Additionally, ATLAS.ti's memo and network view functions were utilized to visualize relationship networks among derived categories, enabling deep exploration of relationships between recurring emotional expressions, event narratives, and the sociocultural contexts in which such expressions are situated.

5. Interpretive Perspective

While not directly applied as an analytical method, Kitayama & Markus's (1994) cultural psychological emotion construction theory served as an important interpretive lens for this study. This theory posits that emotions are formed through the dynamic interplay of (1) core cultural ideas, (2) social norms, (3) recurrent situational experiences, (4) emotional experience, and (5) expressive behavior. Drawing on this theoretical perspective, we aimed to understand and explain how the emotional expressions of the elderly participants were constructed and manifested within specific Korean cultural contexts, including temporal values, family-centered culture, and face-saving norms.

6. Ensuring Research Validity

To ensure research reliability and validity, member checks were conducted to confirm that major interpretations aligned with participants' actual experiences. Peer debriefing was employed to examine analytical subjectivity, and continuous reflective contemplation was performed through research journals and memo records to prevent excessive intervention of researchers' preunderstanding in analysis.

[6] Research Findings

The findings of this study are as follows:

Elderly individuals demonstrated tendencies to reinterpret events or experiences that might be socially evaluated when expressing their emotions into acceptable forms or transform them toward positive aspects.

For example, Interviewee 1 recalled the limited educational opportunities for daughters, explaining the reasons according to temporal contexts, then stating, "Still, all three daughters married into good families."

Interviewee 2 mentioned the failed business venture started with her son, then concluded with "The ending is good. Now I'm very comfortable and at peace these days. Mentally."

Some participants showed identity restoration through narrative transitions explaining their attitudes or roles or leading to positive outcomes following mentions of their mistakes or deficiencies.

For instance, Interviewee 3 mentioned her lack of education and arduous labor, then emphasized in subsequent narratives how diligent and recognized she was.

However, socially acceptable emotions such as sadness did not exhibit positive reconstruction.

Interviewee 1 directly expressed sadness regarding her husband's sudden lung cancer and loss, while Interviewee 4 described her husband's death as 'pitiful,' expressing helplessness and sadness about being unable to afford hospital care at that time.

Negative emotions such as anger and regret appeared denied or indirectly revealed through repetitive event mentions. Both Interviewees 1 and 4 initially responded "I don't know" when asked about regrettable experiences, while Interviewee 3 repeatedly explained situations regarding her regret about burning her husband's belongings.
The following represents sociocultural contexts derived through cross-case analysis:
First, 'jeong' (affection) and collectivist culture commonly appeared. Interviewee 3 recalled experiences of sharing soy sauce and soybean paste among family members, while Interviewee 5 mentioned the culture of sharing rice cakes and ancestral ritual food with neighbors after conducting ancestral ceremonies. Interviewee 2 demonstrated attitudes prioritizing relationships "even at some loss," suggesting that cultural norms emphasizing emotional solidarity and mutual assistance within groups underlie emotional expression. These cases demonstrate that Korea's strong collectivist values and relationship-maintenance culture centered on 'jeong' significantly influence elderly emotional expression and recognition.
Second, 'Confucian hierarchical culture and female norms' were confirmed.
Interviewee 1 mentioned absolute parental authority structures, while Interviewees 2 and 4 described experiences of propriety, silence, and educational deprivation imposed on women. All grew up within Confucian hierarchical orders and strict female norms, consequently experiencing repeated limitations in educational or autonomous choice opportunities. Such cultural contexts likely became internalized as attitudes of compliance, silence, and submission.
Third, diminished self-expression regarding educational absence emerged.
All commonly responded "I learned nothing" and "I lived without knowing," with repetitive statements confirming that the absence of formal education led to persistent feelings of inadequacy and negative self-consciousness among elderly women.
Fourth, 'face-saving' culture emphasizing others' perspectives and social reputation emerged. Interviewee 5 recalled concealing family conflicts from guests despite their existence, while Interviewee 3 mentioned attitudes of not directly expressing loneliness to family despite feeling it. Interviewee 4 recalled experiencing shame about past poverty, while Interviewee 1 remembered her mother maintaining harmony without revealing emotions despite living in a household with two wives.
These cases demonstrate elderly individuals' tendencies to suppress actual emotions or reconstruct them positively while being conscious of others' evaluations and social perspectives. This suggests the operation of face-centered emotion norms where emotional expression methods are regulated according to social contexts and relationship maintenance.

[7] Discussion

This study inductively explored how Korean elderly individuals' emotional experiences and emotional expressions are constructed and manifested within Korea's specific cultural contexts through life history interviews.

The relationship-oriented life and jeong-centered mutual assistance appearing in this study's central themes are closely connected to Korea's strong collectivist culture and relational self concepts (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995).
Collectivist culture refers to individuals being regarded as parts of groups or organizations they belong to, valuing group standards over individual standards (Han Gyu-seok, 1995).
Within such culture, individuals experience greater happiness and assign important values to relational domains (Jo Geum-ho, 2003), making emotional expression rules for relationship maintenance likely to be powerfully applied. This aligns with Go Jae-uk and Hwang Seon-young's (2013) findings regarding indirect communication methods where individuals cannot freely express thoughts and emotions while emphasizing face-saving.
Additionally, according to Jeon Byeong-gi's (2018) literature review, elderly face-saving in Korean society characterized by relationalism culture influences not only external aspects such as social relationships but also decision-making, beliefs, depression, and psychological distress. This clearly demonstrates how importantly Korean elderly individuals regard others' perspectives and social reputation.
Korea's collectivist cultural attributes are rooted in Confucian thought. Within patriarchal Confucian culture, emotion norms and emotional control mechanisms regarding women operate more powerfully, suppressing elderly women's anger while requiring emotional restraint and silence as virtues of obedience and gentleness (Hong In-suk, 2019).
Furthermore, elderly women's absence of educational opportunities due to patriarchal Confucian culture makes forming autonomous individual selfhood difficult, manifesting as diminished self-expression (Ji Haeng-jung et al., 2012). This is confirmed by the persistent feelings of inadequacy and negative self-consciousness revealed in this study's 'diminished self-expression regarding educational absence.'
Such sociocultural contexts lead elderly women to deny negative emotions or express them indirectly through repetitive event mentions rather than direct expression. Additionally, according to this study's findings, elderly women tend to positively reconstruct negative emotions into acceptable forms, internalizing emotion norms and connecting them to positive self-identity.
Thus, Korean elderly emotional expression should be interpreted as results of internalized sociocultural beliefs rather than mere individual psychological characteristics. This study's significance lies in establishing foundations for more socially interpreting elderly emotional narratives by analyzing individual emotional expression cases in connection with sociocultural contexts.

[8] Research Limitations and Future Research Directions

While this study deeply explored connections between Korean elderly emotional expression and sociocultural contexts through in-depth qualitative approaches, it has the following limitations:

First, as a small-scale (N=5) exploratory study, generalization to the entire Korean elderly population is limited.
Second, sample bias possibilities exist as only female elderly individuals using specific adult day care centers were included.
Third, given qualitative research characteristics, researchers' subjectivity may intervene in emotional expression classification and interpretation processes.
Fourth, in-depth explanations of specific operational mechanisms through which sociocultural contexts and emotion norms influence emotional expression were insufficient.
Accordingly, future research suggests the following:
First, follow-up studies including elderly individuals with diverse sociocultural backgrounds including gender, residential type, and region are necessary.
Second, introducing theoretical classification frameworks for emotion types and securing inter-researcher analytical reliability are needed to enhance emotional expression analysis reliability.
Third, emotional expressions and cultural beliefs derived from this study can be utilized as foundational data for developing algorithms enabling AI-based life history systems to understand emotional cultural contexts and provide emotional feedback.
This suggests possibilities for precisely reflecting elderly emotional experiences and applications to personalized emotional support systems.

Thank you for listening. This study explored the possibility that the emotional expressions of Korean elderly individuals are not merely personal characteristics, but rather may have been shaped by our unique sociocultural contexts, such as 'Jeong' and collectivist culture, Confucian norms, and the culture of 'face-saving.' While this was a small-scale qualitative study, we believe it offers important insights for understanding the emotional well-being of the elderly from a more social perspective. We hope this research encourages broader studies into the cultural dimensions of emotion, and potentially contributes to the development of future AI-based emotional support systems for the elderly. Thank you

Additional Detailed Findings
Research Findings (Detailed)
1. Emotional Expression
1-1. Tendency toward positive reconstruction of socially sensitive events or experiences
Interviewee 1: "Sons went to university, but daughters... I don't know why it was like that back then. I only sent daughters through middle and high school. Women weren't educated much then. Now I think it's somewhat regrettable... My daughter only graduated middle school. Still, all three daughters married into good families.

Especially my youngest daughter married a professor. Even though she couldn't study much, she had good looks and personality, so she married well."
Interviewee 2: "My son was young, you know. Around twenty, while attending university in his second year, he did business with me. Quit school... Then the guarantees failed... It was a life-or-death situation... But the ending is good. Now I'm very comfortable and at peace. Mentally, more than material things, it's about the heart."
Interviewee 3: "No, I have nothing learned, can only do hard work... When I first went there, they said I worked well, praised me so much. I never heard that I couldn't work well."

1-2. Socially acceptable emotions like sadness show no positive reconstruction
Interviewee 1: "Oh my... I felt like dying, wondering how to live like this... It felt like the sky was falling. My husband was always healthy, but suddenly terminal lung cancer. I couldn't believe it, didn't know what to do... That time was really difficult. He was someone who always cared for me, but I couldn't do anything for him, which was so sad. I just stayed beside him and cared for him as much as I could."
Interviewee 4: "My husband's death is pitiful. I'm living and seeing good times now... But then we lived so difficultly that when he was sick, I couldn't even take him to the hospital. That breaks my heart. Having someone and not having someone, what you can do for them is different. My heart aches. My heart aches, but that's how it is."

1-3. Negative emotions appear denied or indirectly through repetitive event mentions
Interviewee 1: "I don't know. I don't know that either, always living with only good things. Even when difficult things happened, I didn't think about them long. I just endured thinking 'this too shall pass.' So I forgot all bad memories and only good memories remain."
Interviewee 4: "What I regret, I don't know... There was no time to endure. Every day going to work in the fields, going to mountains to dig bellflowers, carrying hoes."
Interviewee 3: "My husband's books, resident registration, everything, I burned them all. I took them to some hospital and burned everything. I was out of my mind then, thinking these were things that should be passed down through generations, lifetime important things, but they all burned in the fire. Things he brought from Vietnam, I burned everything. Burned it all... But I went a bit crazy. These are really important things in my lifetime that my children and grandchildren should see, but I have nothing to show them because I burned everything..."

2. Sociocultural Contexts Derived Through Cross-Case Analysis
2-1. Jeong and Collectivist Culture

Interviewee 3: "So mother gathered these siblings together, and among the women, these siblings shared soy sauce and soybean paste, getting everything from each other."
"So I became friends with my mother-in-law too, and even when mother-in-law became a grandmother, she became my friend despite my age, and I never made my own soy sauce or soybean paste my whole life."
Interviewee 5: "When conducting ancestral ceremonies, we made rice cakes by the steamer-full for all neighbors and made ancestral ritual food by the pot-full, inviting all neighbors to share. I grew up seeing all this, so even now I make lots of food for people at the hospital I attend."
Interviewee 2: "Wherever I go, I don't receive hatred. So even if I suffered some losses, I suffered losses."

2-2. Confucian Hierarchical Culture and Female Norms
Interviewee 1: "Back then we couldn't even speak. We lived like that. In the old days, we absolutely couldn't disobey parents' words. Especially girls were more so."
Interviewee 2: "If you're a woman, you should be quiet, they said."
"When going to elementary school, we also wanted to go, but mother wouldn't send us. She said it was useless for women to be literate."
Interviewee 4: "In the old days, even when pregnant, you always had to bend your body. Nowadays they proudly show their bellies, but in the old days when pregnant, you were ashamed."
"If I bought a yeot (traditional candy), my mother-in-law would make a fuss when I went out. Calling me presumptuous for being a woman."

2-3. Diminished Self-Expression Regarding Educational Absence
Interviewee 4: "How could I say what I wanted? Afraid of making mistakes."
"Washing dishes, working in fields, picking wild vegetables in mountains. That's all I learned."
Interviewee 3: "What can I do now? I learned nothing, heard nothing, so I only know what comes out of my mouth."
Interviewee 2: "Back then I lived not knowing such things. Having nothing in my head, not knowing what was what, just wandering around. When they said to give money, I just gave it all away. I never saw even 10 won, didn't know how money came to be."

2-4. Face-Saving
Interviewee 5: "If my husband and I fought in the room, when guests opened the door, there was absolutely no sign of fighting. When I said come and eat, my daughter said mother is an actress."
Interviewee 3: "Seeing everything makes me a bit lonely... My son does business and travels around, only calls, I tell him not to come. My daughters also do business in Pohang, restaurant business, I tell them not to come. When they come, they stop work

and leave, giving money, 500,000 won, but what's the use of receiving that, I tell them not to come."
Interviewee 4: "Even then it was difficult, so I went to others' houses to wash dishes." "I can't hide living like this. Because it was like that in the old days, living now is better." "Having my hair all disheveled like that. I was so ashamed of my appearance... My face and everything, so when someone came it was bothersome. Why, because I lived difficultly, having visitors was bothersome, even greetings were bothersome. After I cried, that person felt sorry and cried together. (laughter)"
Interviewee 1: "My mother only gave birth to three daughters. So the in-laws brought in a second wife. Because my (biological) mother couldn't bear sons... At first, when the second wife came, my mother must have felt very hurt, but as I remember, my mother never showed irritation or anything to the second wife. Rather, she helped her while working together. The second wife was also respectful to my mother. The second wife called my mother 'older sister.'"

Emotional Expression and Sociocultural Context in Korean Elderly Life Narratives

Department of Social Welfare, Kyungpook National University

Seo Seung-Ah, Shim seon-yeong , Kang Hae-In

Table of Contents

1 Introduction
— Background & Rationale
2 Theoretical Background
— Relevant Theories and Previous Research
3 Research Question
— Core Research Issue
4 Research Methodology
— Data Collection & Analysis Methods
5 Analysis Results
— Key Findings
6 Discussion
— Interpretation & Suggestions

Introduction : Two Models of Emotion – Organismic Model

- Fundamental emotions such as sadness, joy, and anger
- Definition of emotion as a biological and automatic process
- Emphasis on persistence and similarity of emotions
- Emotions viewed as universal experiences with biological foundations

Key References:

Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872)
William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (1890)
Sigmund Freud & Josef Breuer, *Studies on Hysteria* (1895)

Introduction : Two Models of Emotion – Interactionist Model (1)

- Emotions are exhibited through the body but are not reducible to simple biological reactions; possess relational characteristics
- Suggests emotions are socially constructed within relationships and cultural contexts (Burkitt, 2002)
- Expression of emotions varies depending on the context and situation
- Emotions as meaningful social action: According to Weber (1997), emotional acts are interpreted and performed within social contexts
- Emotional norms regulate the expectations and expression of emotions in society (Hochschild, 1979)

Key References:

Ian Burkitt, "Complex Emotions: Relations, Feelings and Images in Emotional Experience" (2002)
Max Weber, "The Theory of Social and Economic Organization" (1997)
Arlie Russell Hochschild, "Emotion Work, Feeling Rules, and Social Structure" (1979)

Introduction :Two Models of Emotion – Interactionist Model (2)

- Interactionist theorists, such as Hochschild (1979), argue that emotions are socially constructed and disciplined through interaction
- Culture provides normative and value frameworks for emotion regulation and interpretation across generations
- Culture influences when basic emotions should be elicited and how they are regulated, leading to unique emotional experiences
- Cultural contexts help construct distinctive emotional concepts, meanings, attitudes, values, and beliefs

Key References:

John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct* (1922)
Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973)
C. Wright Mills, *White Collar* (1951)
Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959)

Introduction : Emotions of the Elderly and Sociocultural Norms

- Elderly emotional experience and regulation are explained not only by age-related biological effects but also by culturally internalized emotion norms (Grossmann et al., 2014)
- Older adults tend to restrain the expression of emotions that may disrupt interpersonal relationships and express emotions that maintain or enhance social ties (Carstensen, 1999)
- Research gap: Most previous Korean studies focus on personal characteristics (Kim & Min, 2004; Ahn & Kim, 2017) or influencing factors (Kang & Kim, 2014; Park & Lee, 2016), with limited research addressing sociocultural construction and contextuality of elderly emotions

Key References:

Grossmann et al., "A Cultural Perspective on Emotional Experiences Across the Life Span" (2014)
Carstensen, "Taking Time Seriously: A Theory of Socioemotional Selectivity" (1999)

Introduction : Life History Research

- Life history research conceptualizes individual lives as narratives of self constructed within social relationships and environments, organized through social interactions (Mandelbaum, 1983)
- This methodology enables capturing the intersection of individual subjectivity and social context by constructing and interpreting life events in narrative form across temporal dimensions
- Elderly life narratives are particularly suitable for revealing processes of social meaning construction through emotional expression, recalled events, and their interpretations in autobiographical experiences

> This study explores how emotional experiences and expressions in Korean elderly life histories reflect sociocultural beliefs and emotional norms from a sociology of emotions perspective

Theoretical Background: Sociological Perspective on Emotion

- **Feeling rules** (Hochschild, 1983): Social expectations that define which emotions should be expressed or suppressed in specific social situations
- Emotion construction through:
  - Association with remembered events
  - Internalization through repeated experiences
  - Reflection of cultural belief systems
- **Cultural formation of emotion** (Kitayama & Markus, 1994): Formation and expression of emotion are deeply rooted in cultural values, norms, and learned through social interaction
- This study analyzes elderly emotional experiences in life histories to explore how emotions are formed through cultural norms and social contexts

Key References:

Hochschild, A.R. (1983). *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*
Kitayama, S., & Markus, H.R. (1994). *Emotion and Culture: Empirical Studies of Mutual Influence*

Research Question

How are emotional experiences and expressions of Korean elderly constructed and signified within sociocultural contexts and emotional norms?

Research Methodology : Purpose, Design, and Data Collection

- **Purpose:** To explore how emotional experiences and expressions in elderly life histories reflect Korean sociocultural beliefs and emotion norms from a sociological perspective
- **Research Design:** Life history research approach (Mandelbaum, 1983) - suitable for understanding experiences in temporal flow and social context
- **Participants:** 5 Korean elderly adults (aged 65+)
  - Selection criteria: Communicative capacity, absence of dementia, informed consent
- **Data Collection:** IRB approval (May 12-19, 2025)
  - Semi-structured interviews at community care center
  - 2-3 sessions per participant (approximately 120 minutes each)
  - Audio recording with transcription for analysis
- **Interview Structure:** Focused on major life stages (childhood, youth, middle age, elderly) and significant events, with particular attention to emotional experiences and expressions

Research Methodology : Data Analysis and Reliability

- **Analysis with ATLAS.ti 25.0:** Inductive content analysis and thematic analysis
- **Coding focus:** Emotional expression, relevant events, interpretations; open coding, category development, and thematic extraction
- **Researcher validation:** Three researchers coded independently and cross-checked to ensure reliability
- **Visualization:** Category networks using ATLAS.ti's network view functionality
- **Interpretive Perspective:** Kitayama & Markus (1994) – While not directly applied, the perspective offered by Kitayama & Markus (1994) guided the cultural reading of emotion in this study.
- **Reliability measures:** Peer debriefing and reflective research journals maintained to minimize researcher subjectivity

> **Interpretive Perspective:**
> This analysis was informed by the analytical framework suggested by Kitayama & Markus (1994), which highlights how cultural context shapes emotion through (1) core cultural ideologies, (2) social norms, (3) recurrent experiences, (4) emotion interpretation, and (5) expression behaviors. While not directly applying their model, the present study draws upon these conceptual elements to explore how emotion is culturally constructed.
> *- Based on Kitayama & Markus (1994), "Emotion and Culture: Empirical Studies of Mutual Influence"*

Research Results (Emotional Expression)

1. Positive Reconstruction

Interviewee 1

"My son went to university, but with my daughters, I don't know why it was like that in the old days. Daughters were only sent to middle or high school. Back then, girls weren't taught much. Now, when I think about it, I feel a bit bad... My daughter only finished middle school. But still, all three daughters married well. Especially the youngest married a professor. Even though she couldn't study much, she was beautiful and had a good personality, so she married well."

Interviewee 2

"My son, being young, doesn't know. When he turned twenty, he was studying at college but dropped out in his second year to do business with me. But then a loan guarantee fell through... We were on the verge of ruin... But in the end, it turned out well. Now, these days, life is so comfortable. More than property, it's about peace of mind."

Interviewee 3

"No, I didn't learn anything, so I could only do physically hard work... When I first started, I worked so hard, and people didn't say I couldn't work."

- There is a tendency to reinterpret socially evaluated incidents or experiences in an acceptable way or transform them by focusing on their advantages.

Research Results (Emotional Expression)

2. Socially Permitted Emotions such as Sadness: Direct Expression

Interviewee 1

"Oh my... I felt like I would die, wondered if I could live on like this... It felt like the sky was falling. My husband was always healthy, but suddenly to hear he was in terminal stage lung cancer. I couldn't believe it, didn't know what to do... It was really tough then. He was the one who supported me all my life, but I couldn't do anything for him, which was so sad. I just looked after him as much as I could."

Interviewee 4

"My husband's death was so pitiful. I've lived to see good days since then... We were so poor then that I couldn't even take him to the hospital when he was sick. That weighs on my mind. That's right... If there's no one, what can you do. When I'm there, I can do things, but if there's no one, it's different. It hurts my heart. Even though it hurts, that's how it is."

Socially permitted emotions (e.g., sadness, sense of loss) are not reconstructed but are recounted as experienced.

Research Results (Emotional Expression)

3. Minimization or Repeated Mention of Negative Emotions

Interviewee 1

"I don't know, I just live focusing on good things. Even if something hard happened, I didn't dwell on it for long. I just thought, 'This too shall pass,' and endured. So I think I forgot all the bad memories and only the good ones remain."

Interviewee 4

"I regret... I didn't have time even to think. Every day I went to work in the fields, dug up bellflowers in the mountains, carried a hoe."

Interviewee 3

"When my husband died, I burned all his books, registration, everything. I even burned them at a hospital. At that time I was so out of it, but those were family heirlooms, things that should've been passed down. But I set them all on fire. Even things he brought back from Vietnam. I burned them all. I must've gone a bit crazy at that time. These were so important, something for my children and grandchildren to see, but now there's nothing left because I burned it all."

- Negative emotions such as anger or regret are denied or expressed indirectly by repeated mention of related events.

Research Results (Socio-cultural Context)

4. Affection (Jeong) and Collectivist Culture

Interviewee 3

"So, my mother would gather women together, assign one of the siblings to take charge, and through that, we would get soybean paste, chili paste. I never made my own. I also became friends with my mother-in-law—they called me a friend even when she became a grandmother, saying I was old enough to be one. All my life, I never made my own soybean paste or soy sauce."

Interviewee 5

"When we held ancestral rites, the entire village would make a few stacks of rice cakes, several cauldrons of ritual food, and invite everyone. I grew up watching this. Even now, at the hospital I go to, I make lots of food for people."

Interviewee 2

"Wherever I go, I never cause trouble or make people dislike me. Even if I have to bear a little loss, so be it."

- Affection-based collectivist emotional norms are revealed, where stability is achieved by mutual aid and maintaining relationships, and satisfaction is gained through sharing and generosity within the community.

Research Results (Socio-cultural Context)

5. Confucian Hierarchy and Female Norms

Interviewee 1

"At that time, you couldn't even speak up. That's how I lived. Back then, you could never disobey your parents, especially as a girl."

Interviewee 2

"As a woman, you're expected to be quiet. When I wanted to go to elementary school, my mother didn't send me. She said, 'It's no use for a girl to know letters.'"

Interviewee 4

"In the past, you always had to bow your body when pregnant. Nowadays, people flaunt their bellies, but back then, you were embarrassed when expecting a child. If someone bought me taffy, my mother-in-law would scold me for acting out of place as a woman."

- Within Confucian hierarchy and strict gender norms, opportunities for education or autonomous choice were restricted, and these experiences were internalized as conformity, silence, and obedience.

Research Results (Socio-cultural Context)

6. Inhibited Self-expression Due to Lack of Education

Interviewee 4

"How could I say what I wanted? Afraid of making mistakes. All I learned was doing the dishes, working in the fields, picking greens in the mountains. That's all I was taught."

Interviewee 3

"What can I say? I didn't learn anything, didn't hear anything, so I only know how to blurt things out simply."

Interviewee 2

"I lived without knowing such things. I had nothing in my head. I just wandered around, eating whatever the house gave me. If someone said give them money, I gave it all away. I never even saw ten won. I didn't know how money was made."

- Persistent inhibition and negative self-perception regarding lack of formal education are repeatedly revealed among elderly women.

Research Results (Socio-cultural Context)

7. Chemyon (Face/Social Prestige)

Interviewee 5

"If my husband and I argued in the room, you'd never see a trace of it when the guests arrived. I'd open the door and invite them in. My daughter says I'm an actress."

Interviewee 3

"Watching everything, I feel a bit lonely now... My son runs a business and works far away, and my daughters run food businesses in Pohang.
They tell me not to visit—that if I come, they'll have to close up. Even if they send me 500,000 won, they tell me not to come."

Interviewee 4

"I was poor and worked at others' houses washing dishes. I can't even hide that. In the old days, I lived like that, but now I live better—messy hair and all.
I was embarrassed by my appearance, and when someone came by,
I hated it, too embarrassed to greet anyone. I cried, and that person, feeling sorry, cried with me. (laughs)"

Interviewee 1

"My mother had only three daughters, so my in-laws got my father a concubine. Since my own mother couldn't have a son. At first my mother must have been very upset, but I remember she never snapped at or showed any resentment to the concubine. She even helped and worked with her."

- The culture of 'face' is revealed as an emotional norm in which one hides real feelings and highly values others' opinions and social reputation.

Discussion

This study inductively explored how the emotional experiences and expressions of elderly Koreans are constructed and manifested within Korea's unique cultural context, through life history interviews.

Relationship-Oriented Life & Collectivist Culture

A relationship-oriented life and affection-based mutual assistance are closely connected with the strong collectivist culture of Korean society and the concept of a relational self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995). In such a culture, people find greater happiness and place more value on relationships *(Jogeumho, 2004)*, which likely enforces strong emotional expression rules for maintaining relationships.

Face Culture & Social Reputation

According to Jeon Byung-gi (2018), the 'face' (chemyon) of the elderly in Korea influences not only social relationships but decision-making, beliefs, depression, and psychological distress—showing how much value is placed on others' opinions and social reputation.

Confucian Ideology & Women's Emotional Regulation

The collectivist attributes of Korean society stem from Confucian ideology *(Go Jae-uk & Hwang Sun-young, 2013)*. Within this patriarchal Confucian culture, norms and controls on women's emotions are even stronger, suppressing elderly women's anger and requiring restraint, compliance, and gentleness *(Hong In-sook, 2019)*. Lack of educational opportunities hinders self-identity and leads to inhibited self-expression *(Ji Haeng-joong et al., 2012)*.

Therefore, emotional experiences and expressions of elderly Koreans are the result of a relationally centered culture, Confucian norms, and the culture of face (chemyon).

Study Limitations and Suggestions

Limitations

- **Generalization limitations:** Small-scale, exploratory research that cannot be generalized to the entire elderly population
- **Sample bias:** Only included elderly women using day care centers, lacking diversity in demographics
- **Interpretation dependence:** Researcher subjectivity may have influenced classification and interpretation of emotional expressions
- **Mechanism explanation gap:** Insufficient explanation of how socio-cultural context and emotional norms influence emotional expression mechanisms

Suggestions

- **Diverse participant groups:** Future studies should include various demographics by gender, residence type, region, etc. for comparative analysis
- **Objective analysis methods:** Implement theory-based classification frameworks for emotional expressions and ensure inter-rater reliability among multiple researchers
- **Culture-based emotion AI research:** Develop and empirically test AI models that reflect Korean elderly's emotional expression characteristics for effective implementation in care settings

D2

Qun Wei (Keimyung University)

"Multi-Physiological Signal Measurement Technology-based Smart Stethoscope for Personal Cardiovascular Health Monitoring"

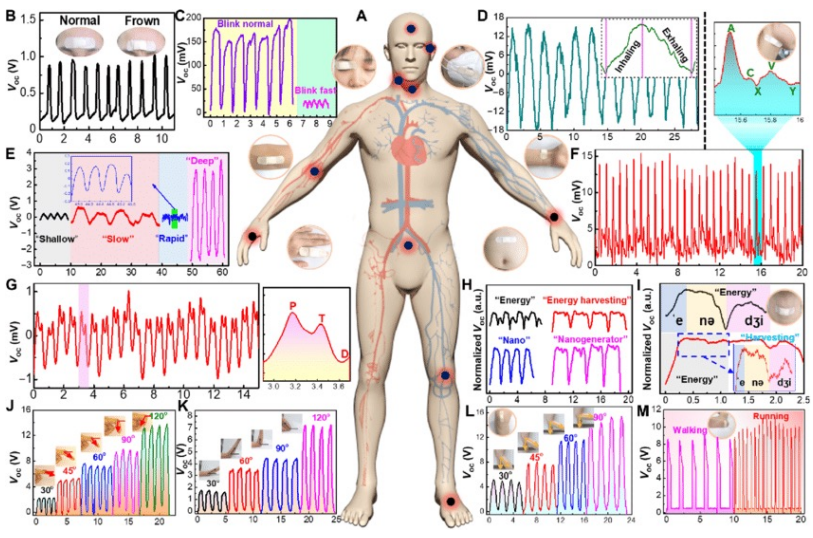
Multi-Physiological Signal Measurement Technology-based Smart Stethoscope for Personal Cardiovascular Health Monitoring

Associate Prof. Wei Qun

Department of Biomedical Engineering
College of Engineering
Keimyung University

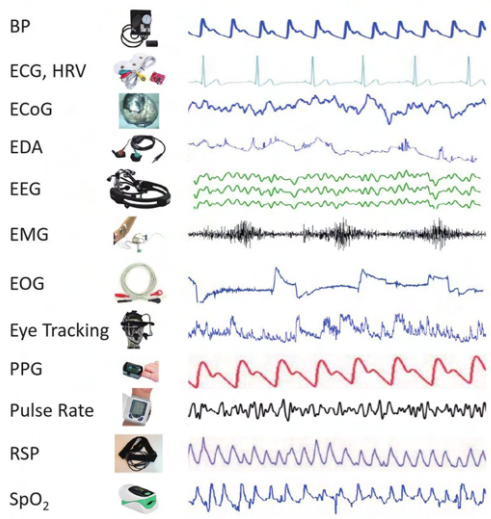
KEIMYUNG UNIVERSITY

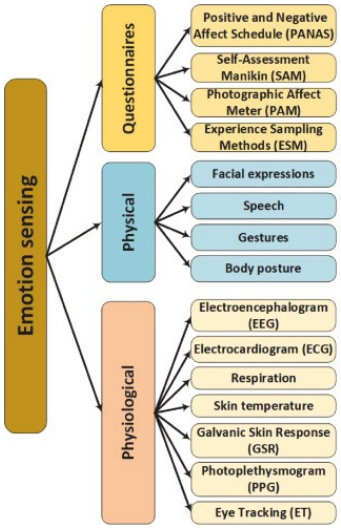
What is the physiological signal?



KEIMYUNG UNIVERSITY

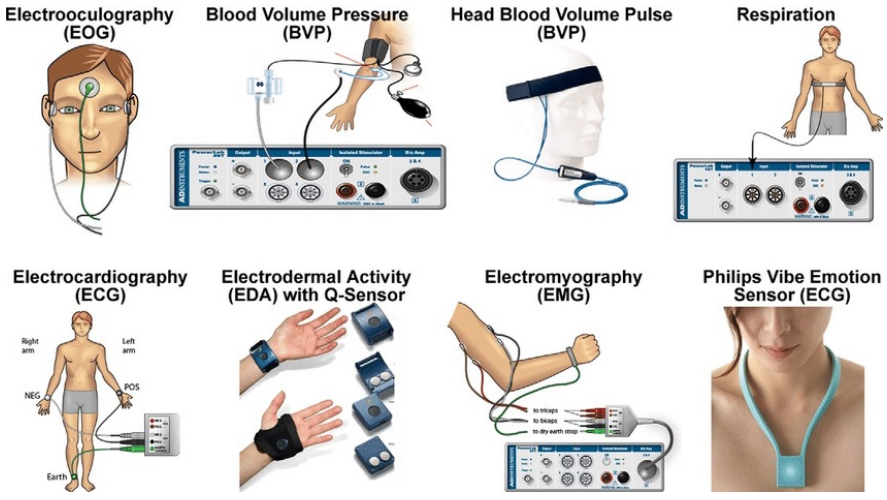
How many kinds of physiological signals?





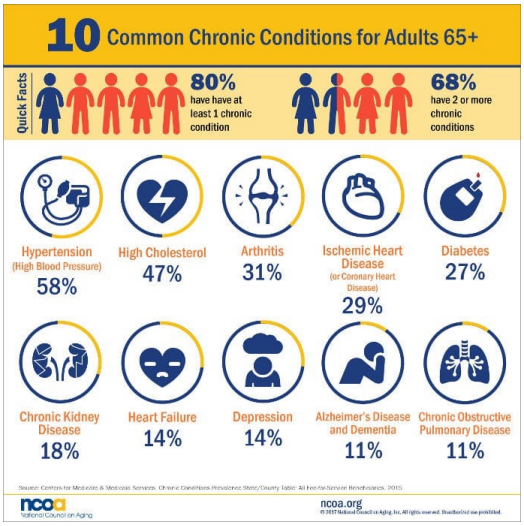
KEIMYUNG UNIVERSITY

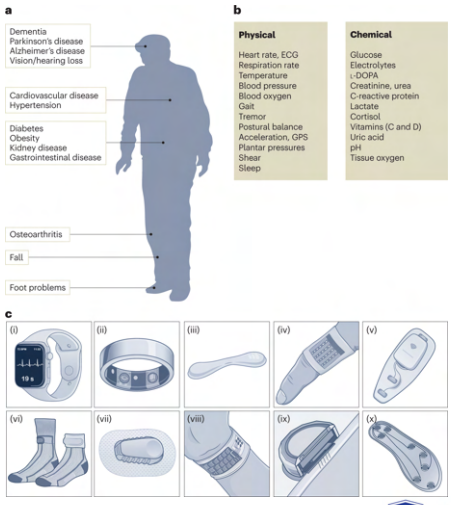
How do we measure the physiological signal?



KEIMYUNG UNIVERSITY

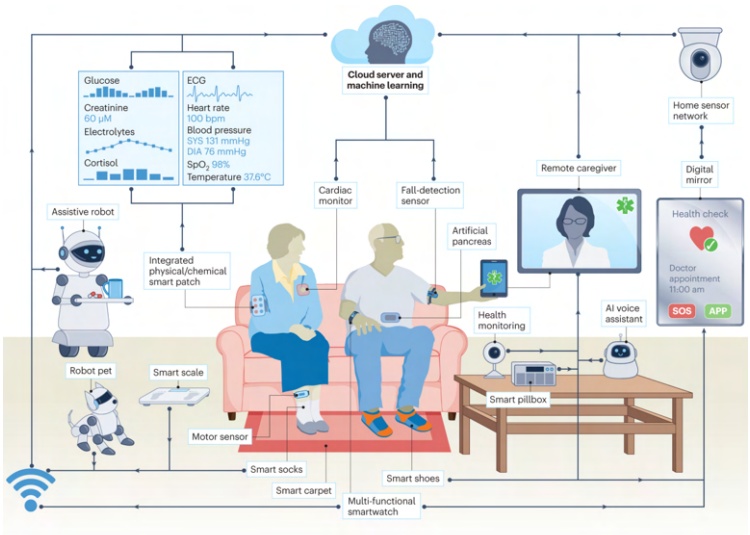
Chronic conditions for seniors and current solution.





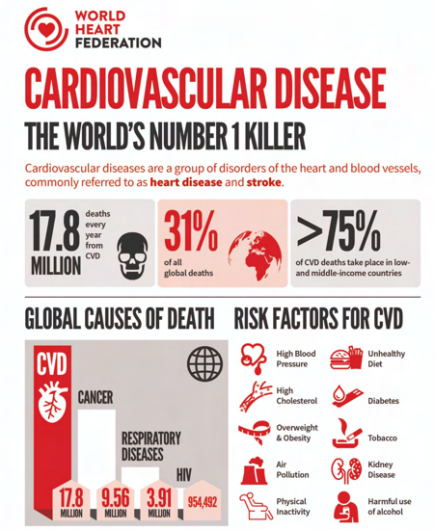
KEIMYUNG UNIVERSITY

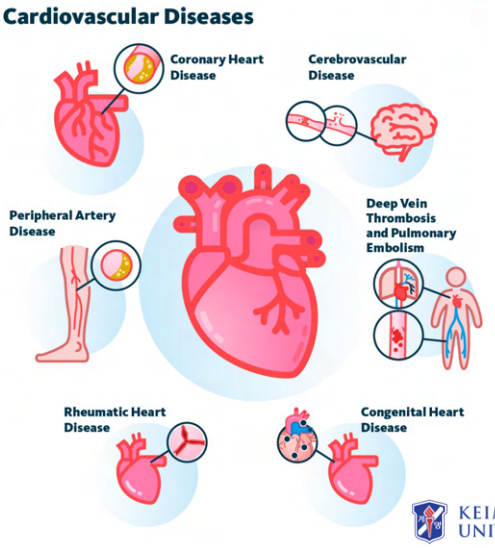
Chronic conditions for seniors and current solution.



KEIMYUNG UNIVERSITY

Cardiovascular diseases?





KEIMYUNG UNIVERSITY

Current methods of cardiovascular diseases monitoring.

1. Holter:
   ECG sensor, recording heart health for arrhythmia and other CVD diagnosis assistant.
2. Stethoscope:
   Acoustic sensor, auscultate heart sound to observe heart health and blood flow.
3. Smart watch & Health band:
   PPG sensor based wearable devices, measure pulse to calculate the heart rate, SpO2.



(a)



(b)



(c)

Examples of current methods for CVD monitoring: (a) Holter, (b) analog stethoscope, (c) smartwatch.

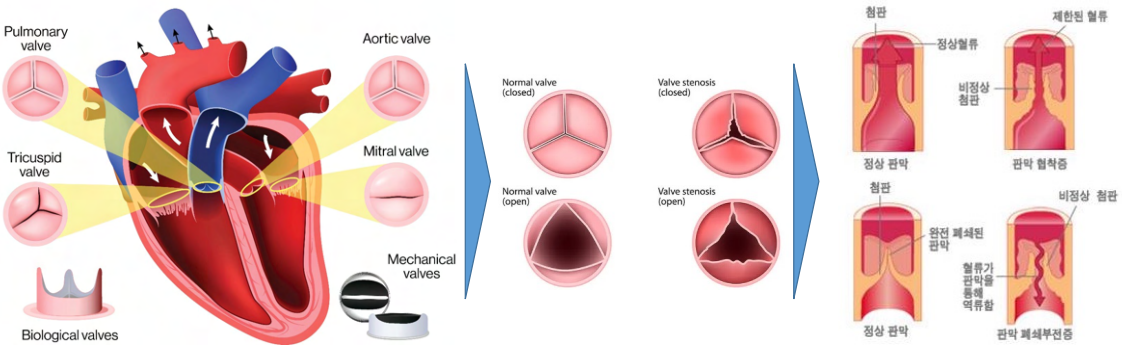
KEIMYUNG UNIVERSITY

But?



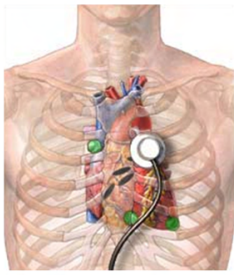
KEIMYUNG UNIVERSITY

What is heart valve disease?

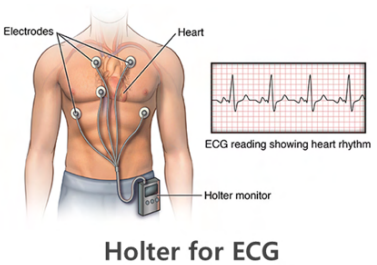


KEIMYUNG UNIVERSITY

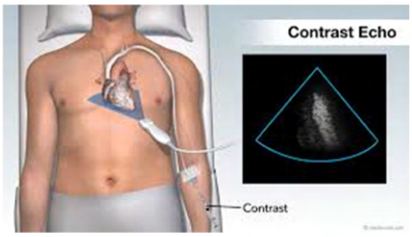
How to diagnose heart valve disease?



Auscultation



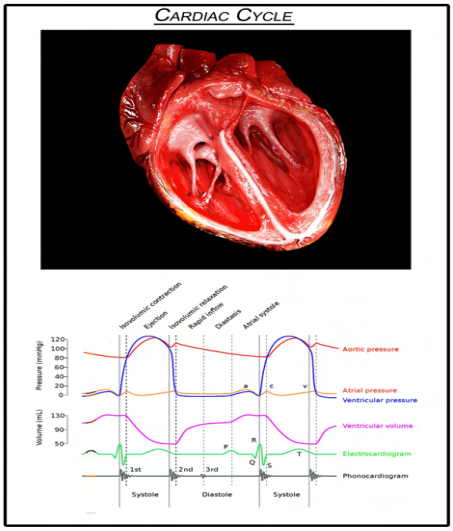
Holter for ECG

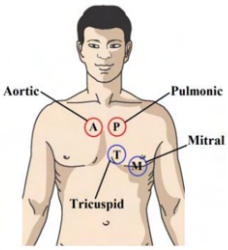


Heart ultrasound

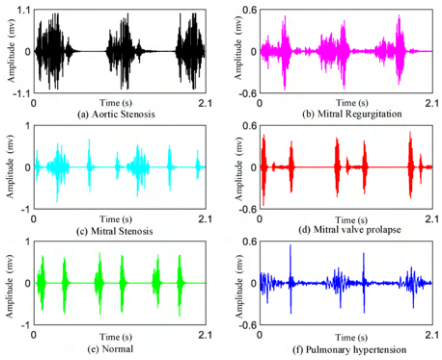
KEIMYUNG UNIVERSITY

Why do we need to auscultate the heart sound?





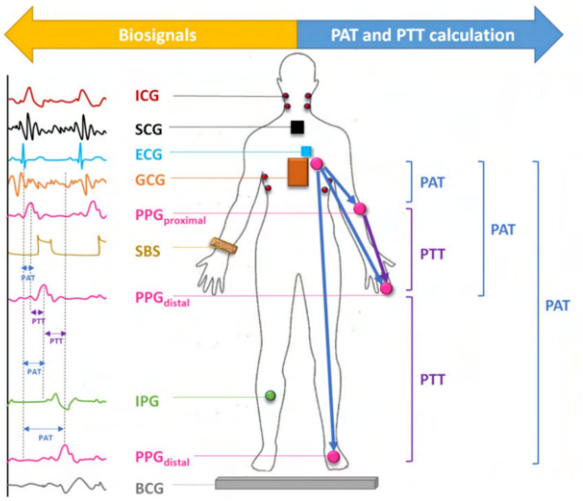
(a) heart sound auscultation position



(b) PCG in several CVD.

KEIMYUNG UNIVERSITY

Multimodal technology



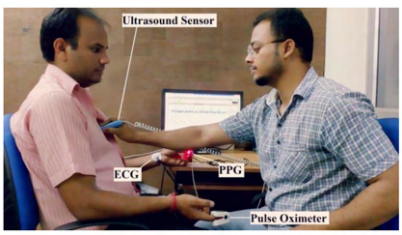
ICG: Impedance cardiography
SCG: Seismocardiography
ECG: Electrocardiography
GCG: Gyrocardiography
IPG: Impedance plethysmography
PPG: Photoplethysmography
BCG: Ballistocardiography
SBS: Strain-based sensor
PAT: Pulse arrival time
PTT: Pulse transit time

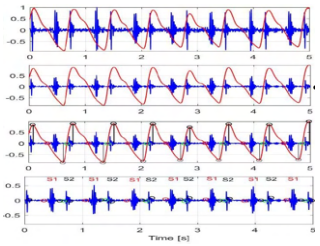
Examples of multimodal technology for cardiovascular health monitoring.

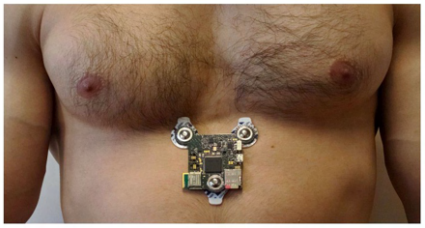
KEIMYUNG UNIVERSITY

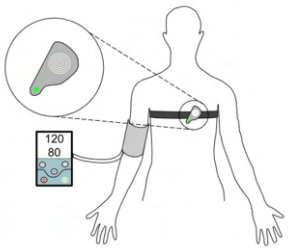
Current research

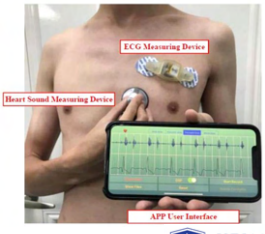












Current research in PCG-based multimodal technology for heart health monitoring.

KEIMYUNG UNIVERSITY

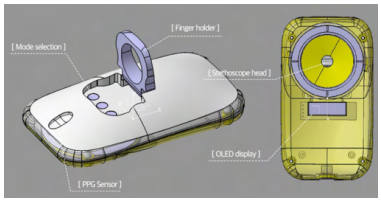
Digital or smart stethoscope

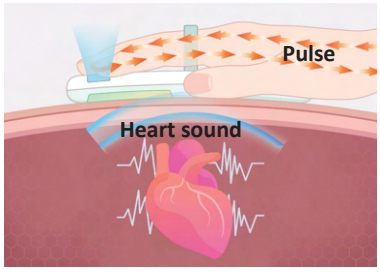


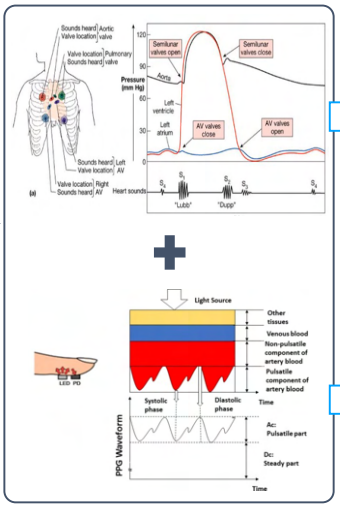
Various smart stethoscopes.

KEIMYUNG UNIVERSITY

Prototype in useability study







Heart Sound (PCG)

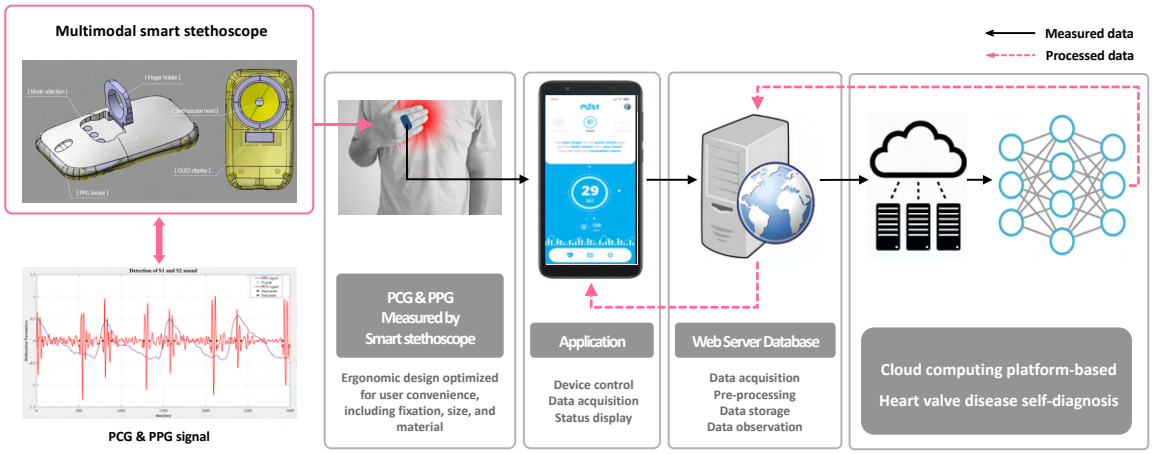
- 승모판막 협착증
- 승모판막 폐쇄부전증
- 대동맥판 역류
- 동맥판 개존증

Photoplethysmography (PPG)

- 심근경색
- 심방세동
- 부정맥

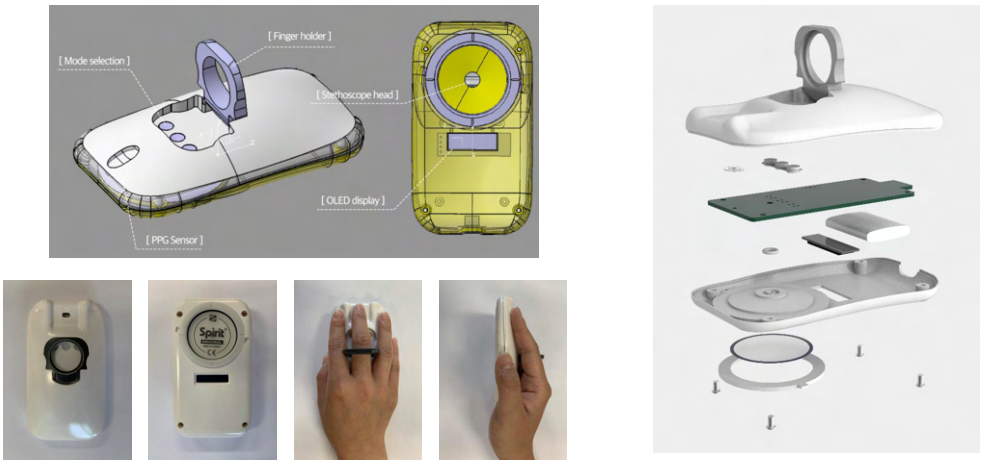
KEIMYUNG UNIVERSITY

Prototype in useability study



KEIMYUNG UNIVERSITY

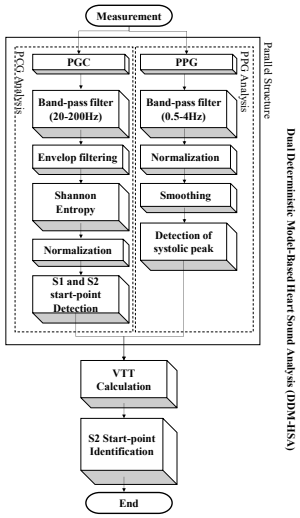
New shape design

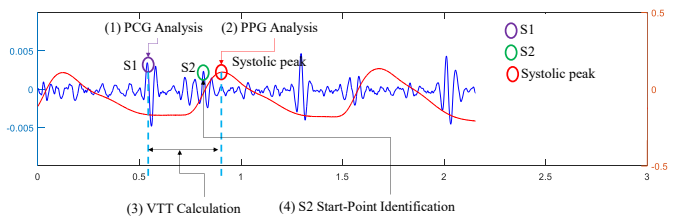


Pictures of new shape design of the multimodal smart stethoscope.

KEIMYUNG UNIVERSITY

Dual Deterministic Model-Based Heart Sound Analysis





Heart sound analysis by developed dual deterministic model-based algorithm.

"DDM-HAS: Dual Deterministic Model-Based Heart Sound Analysis for Daily Life Monitoring" Sensors, Vol. 23, No. 2423, pp. 1-17, 2023

KEIMYUNG UNIVERSITY

Prototype in useability study

Prototype →
EMG Sensor →

Stethoscope →
EMG Sensor →

Pictures of prototype in useability study.

"Novel Design of a Multimodal Technology-Based Smart Stethoscope for Personal Cardiovascular Health Monitoring" Sensors, Vol. 22, No. 6265, pp. 1-12, 2022

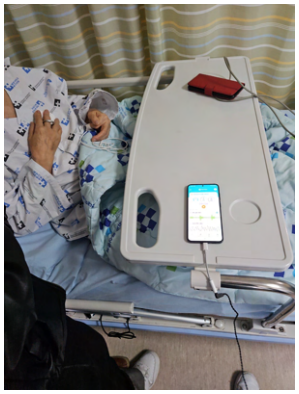
KEIMYUNG UNIVERSITY

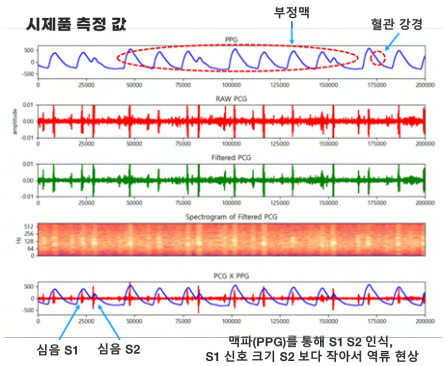
Prototype in clinical trial





중증 대동맥판막 역류
중등도 승모판 역류

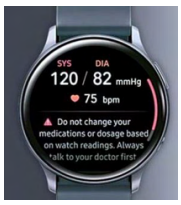




KEIMYUNG UNIVERSITY

Why is it still not working?







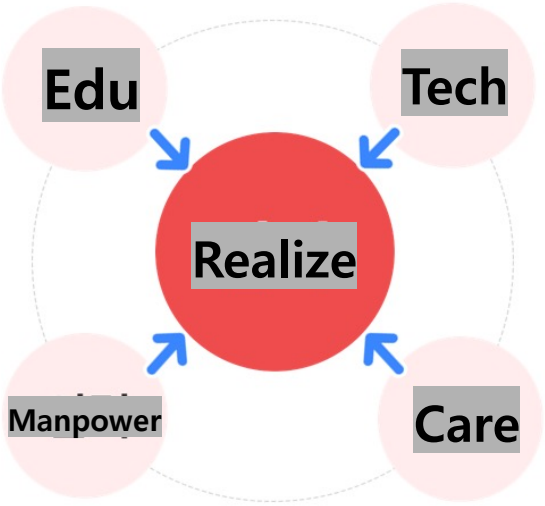


How to predict, prevent?



KEIMYUNG UNIVERSITY

Why?



KEIMYUNG UNIVERSITY

What we are doing in these days.



Living Lab Project

- **2 social welfare facilities in Daegu**
- **Keimyung University Dongsan Hospital**
- **Kyungsang Hospital**

KEIMYUNG UNIVERSITY

What we are doing in these days.



What we are doing in these days.



Cardiovascular Disease questionnaire

Using Prototypes

Physiological signal collection

Prototype usability questionnaire

Physiological signal processing

Prototype Modified Design Survey

Data Labelling

New prototype development

Database building

KEIMYUNG UNIVERSITY

A new trend, a new solution!

nature medicine

Explore content ~ About the journal ~ Publish with us ~ Subscribe

nature > nature medicine > articles > article

Article | Published: 21 February 2025

Telemedicine-based integrated management of atrial fibrillation in village clinics: a cluster randomized trial

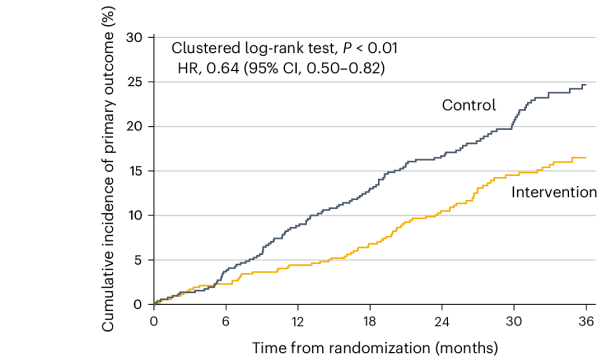
Ming Chu, Shimeng Zhang, Jinlong Gong, Shu Yang, Gang Yang, Xingxing Sun, Dan Wu, Yaodongqin Xia, Jincheng Jiao, Xiafeng Peng, Zhihang Peng, Li Hong, Zhirong Wang, Mingfang Li ✉, Gregory Y. H. Lip ✉ & Minglong Chen ✉ on behalf of the MIRACLE-AF Investigators

Nature Medicine (2025) | Cite this article

61 Altmetric | Metrics

Abstract

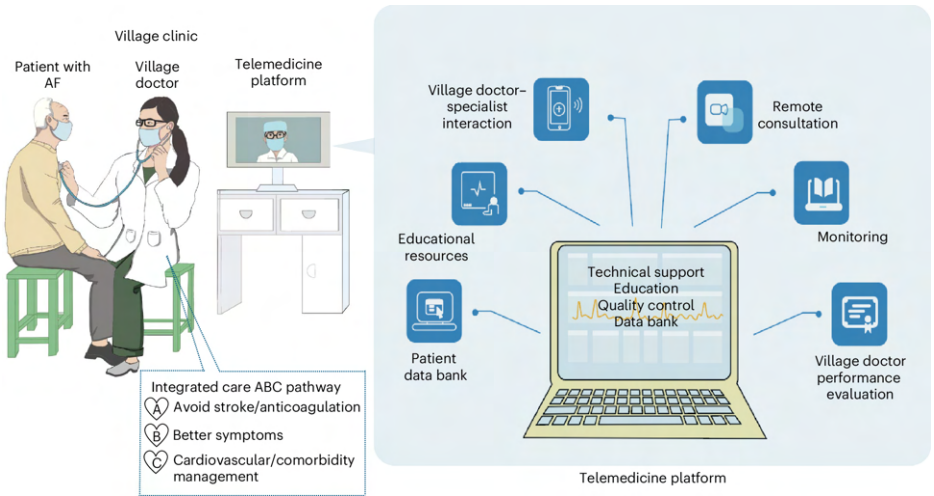
In rural China, where healthcare relies on village doctors (nonspecialized practitioners who work exclusively in their village clinics), delivering integrated atrial fibrillation (AF) management poses challenges. We developed a telemedicine-based, village doctor-led integrated care model and conducted a cluster randomized clinical trial to assess its efficacy compared to usual care. A total of 30 village clinics were randomly assigned (1:1) to the intervention or control group, with 1,039 village residents aged ≥65 years with AF (44.3% women) recruited. The primary outcome in stage 1 is adherence to integrated AF care at 12 months. In stage 2, the primary outcome is a composite of cardiovascular death, all strokes, heart failure or acute coronary syndrome hospitalization, and AF emergency visits over 36 months. Both primary outcomes were met. At 12 months, 33.1% in the telemedicine-based, village doctor-led care group and 8.7% in the usual care group met all criteria for integrated AF care (between-group difference, 24.4% (95% confidence interval (CI), 18.3–30.5%); $P < 0.001$). Over 34.0 months, 41.8% in the telemedicine-based, village doctor-led care group and 10.3% in the usual care group met all criteria for integrated AF care ($P < 0.001$). The rate of the composite cardiovascular event outcome was lower in the telemedicine-based, village doctor-led care group than in the usual care group (6.2% versus 9.6% per year; hazard ratio, 0.64 (95% CI, 0.50–0.82); $P < 0.001$). Our trial intervention by this telemedicine-based integrated care delivery model of AF care in rural villages demonstrates better adherence and improved clinical outcomes compared to usual care. ClinicalTrials.gov registration: NCT04622514.



No. at risk							
Control group	515	494	459	431	406	294	167
Intervention group	524	507	488	461	434	294	166

KEIMYUNG UNIVERSITY

A new trend, a new solution!

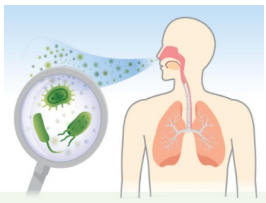


KEIMYUNG UNIVERSITY

Our plan, our goal, our hope!



CVD prediction



Pulmonary prediction



Fetal and maternal health



Remote health monitoring



Medical big data and medical education

KEIMYUNG UNIVERSITY

KEIMYUNG UNIVERSITY



weiqun@kmu.ac.kr

https://www.facebook.com/qun.wei.9

Dr.WQ

Yuna Hur (Korea University) · Sungeun Kim (Busan University of Foreign Studies) · Dong-Suk Oh (Kyungpook National University)
"Synthetic Data Generation Based on Generative AI Technologies"

생성형 인공지능 기술 기반 합성 데이터 구축

2025. 07. 10.

허윤아, 김성은, 오동석

고려대학교 KOREA UNIVERSITY

목차

1. 생애사
2. 생성형 인공지능 기술 기반 합성 데이터 구축
3. 합성 데이터 결과
4. 추후 발전 방향

2

생애사

생애사란?

- 생애사(Life History)
  - 한 개인의 **인생 전반에 걸친 경험과 기억**, 생각을 시간의 흐름에 따라 서술하거나 **재구성한 이야기**

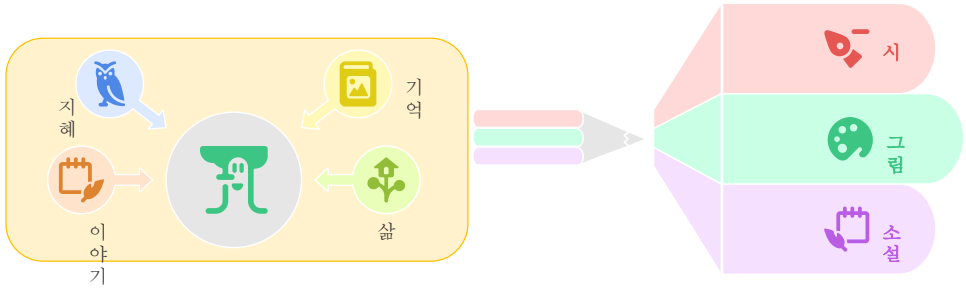
생애사	자서전
연구자가 수집·분석	본인이 직접 지필
연구 목적 포함	문학·기록 목적
질문, 인터뷰 기반 구성	자유롭게 구성

생애사와 자서전의 차이



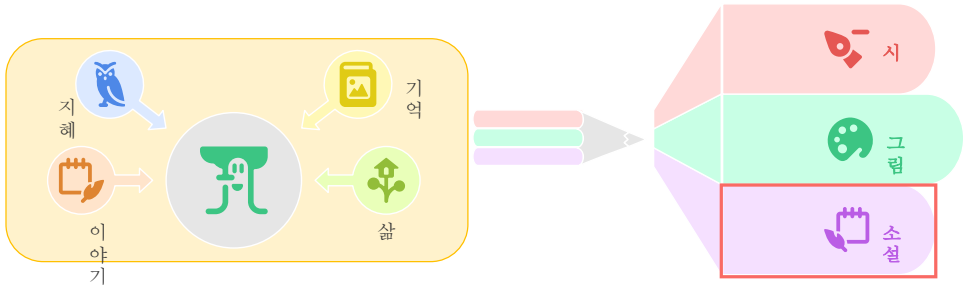
생애사

- 연구 목표
  - 개인의 삶을 통해 사회·문화·역사적 맥락 등을 고려하여 다양한 매체로 표현



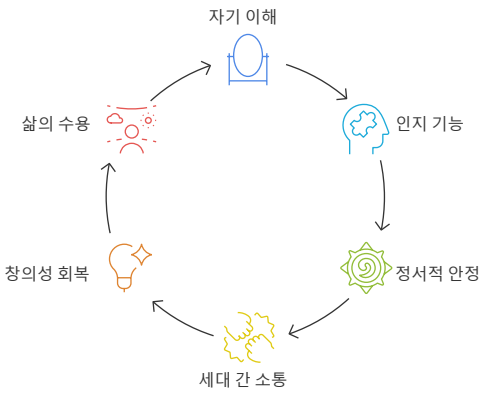
생애사

- 연구 목표
  - 개인의 삶을 통해 사회·문화·역사적 맥락 등을 고려하여 다양한 매체로 표현



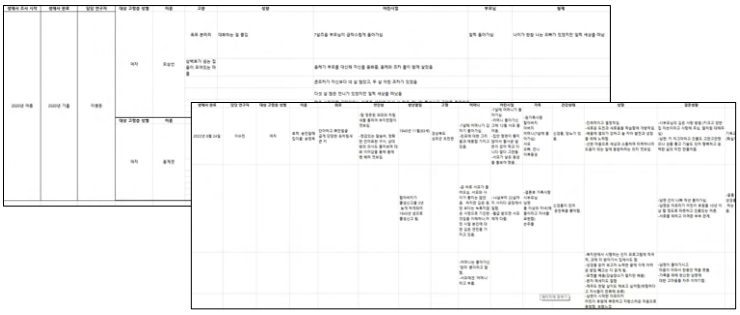
생애사 연구 효과

🌱 1. 자기 이해와 정체성 회복
🧠 2. 기억력 자극 및 인지 기능 유지
💖 3. 정서 안정 및 우울감 완화
👥 4. 세대 간 소통의 매개
🎨 5. 창의성과 자율성 회복
🙏 6. 삶의 마무리에 대한 수용과 준비



생애사 연구 한계점

- 데이터 한계
  - 노년층의 인터뷰 데이터 적음 (소수층)
  - 표준화되지 않은 데이터 구조
    - 데이터 수집자에 따른 다양한 작성 방식
  - 주관성 및 해석의 다양성
  - 다양성 확보의 어려움
  - 시간과 자원의 소모



생애사 연구 한계점

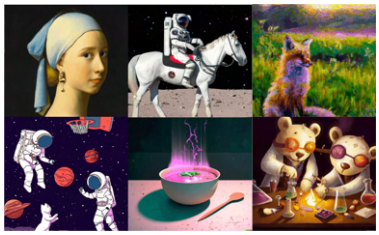
- 데이터 한계
  - 노년층의 인터뷰 데이터 적음 (소수층)
  - 표준화되지 않은 데이터 구조
    - 데이터 수집자에 따른 다양한 작성 방식
  - 주관성 및 해석의 다양성
  - 다
  - 시간과 자원의 소모

인공지능 기술을 활용하여 **데이터 확장**

생성형 인공지능 기술 기반 합성 데이터 구축

합성 데이터 (Synthetic Data)

- 실제 수집된 데이터가 아니라, **인공적으로 생성된 데이터**
  - 통계적 특성이나 구조는 **실제 데이터와 유사함**
  - 컴퓨터 알고리즘이나 시뮬레이션을 통해 생성된 **가상의 데이터셋**
- 장점
  - 실제 데이터가 없어도 생성 가능
  - 윤리 및 프라이버시 보호
  - 데이터 증강이 쉬움



Open AI의 DALL-E 2



자율주행 자동차 데이터 확장 예시

생애사 + 합성 데이터

- 단순 데이터 확장이 아니라, **<u>개인의 삶의 맥락과 의미를 유지</u>**하면서 정제·확장
- 데이터 구성 시 중요시 해야할 부분
  - 핵심 요소 확장
    - 삶의 주요 사건 : 출생, 성장, 교육, 직업, 결혼 , 자녀, 은퇴 등
    - 정체성 : 가치관, 신념, 전환점, 고난 극복 경험
    - 사회적 관계 : 가족, 친구, 공동체, 종교 등
    - 정서와 감정 : 사건에 대한 감정 반응, 후회, 기쁨, 깨달음
    - 시대적 배경 : 특정 시대·지역의 사회문화적 맥락 반영



관련연구 2

1. “On LLMs-Driven Synthetic Data Generation, Curation, and Evaluation: A Survey”, ACL 2024

- 전반적인 LLM 기반 **합성 데이터** 생성, 선별, 평가 논문
  - 합성데이터 장점
    - **합성 데이터**는 레이블링 비용 절감, 개인정보 보호, 드문 사례 학습 등에 **유용**
    - 최근 **LLM을 활용한 합성 데이터 생성**이 빠르게 주목받고 있음
  - 합성데이터 단점
    - 합성 데이터가 실제와 유사하지 않거나 **편향(bias)과 오류(hallucination)**를 내포할 위험
    - 데이터 품질 보장과 **체계적 평가 기준** 부족

관련연구 1

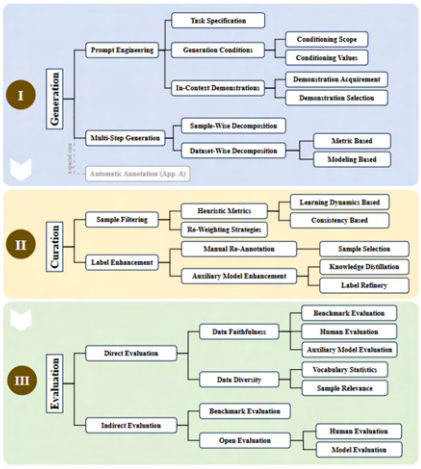
1. On LLMs-Driven Synthetic Data Generation, Curation, and Evaluation: A Survey

- 3가지 포인트 중심으로 최근 연구들을 정리

1. Generation:
- 프롬프트 기반 생성
- Few-shot & Instruction-tuned 방식

2. Curation (선별):
- 품질 기준에 따른 샘플 필터링
- Ranking, Rejection Sampling 등 사용

3. **Evaluation**:
- 정량평가: diversity, validity, accuracy
- 정성평가: human eval, task-specific outcome

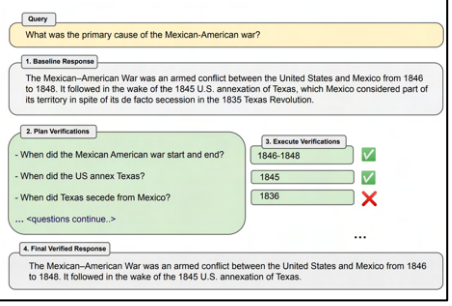


관련연구 2

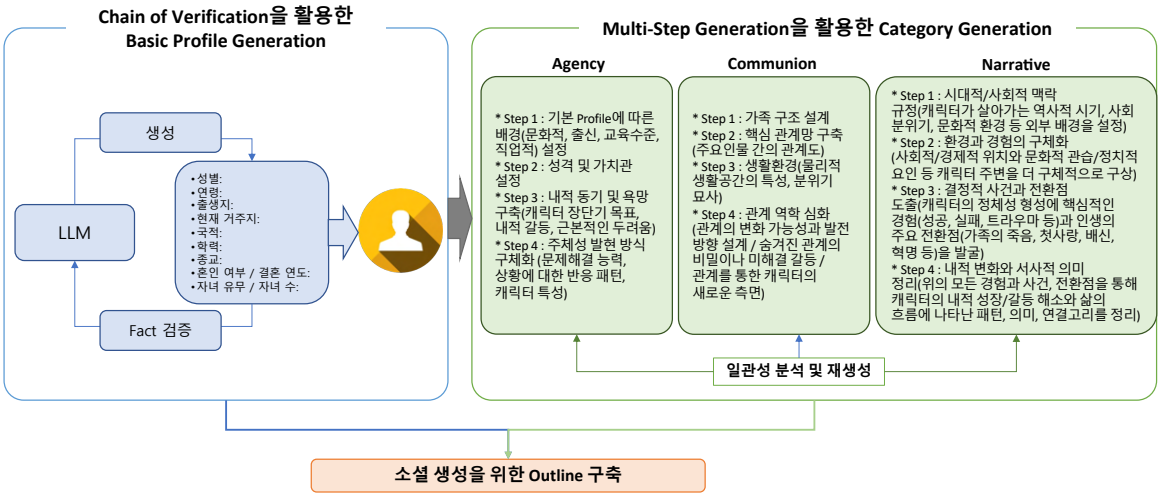
2. “Chain-of-Verification Reduces Hallucination in Large Language Models”, ACL 2024

- LLM 환각(Hallucination)을 줄이는 검증 중심 프롬프트 기법 논문
  - 대규모 언어모델(LLM)은 **정보를 잘 생성**하지만, 종종 사실과 다른 내용(Hallucination)을 생성함
  - 특히, 설명형 답변(explanatory answers)에서 오류가 더 자주 발생함

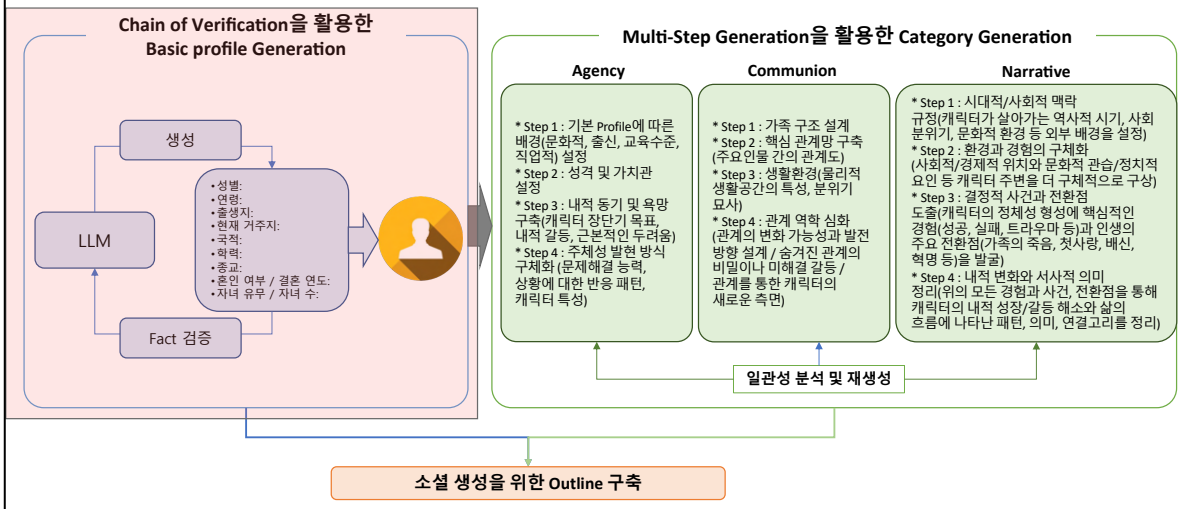
- Chain-of-Verification (CoVe) 제안
  - 답변을 생성한 후, **중간 단계별로 사실 여부를 검증**
    1. **Initial Answer Generator**: 질문에 대해 LLM이 기본 답변 생성
    2. **Verifier Chain**: 답변의 주요 문장을 분리
       → 각 문장을 **검증 프롬프트**로 다시 LLM에 질의
    3. **Final Answer Refinement**: 검증 결과를 바탕으로 **최종 답변 수정**



생성형 인공지능 기술 기반 합성 데이터 구축



생성형 인공지능 기술 기반 합성 데이터 구축



Step1 : Chain of Verification을 활용한 Basic Profile Generation

- LLM에게 Prompt를 줘서 다양하게 생성할 수 있도록 함

•**성별:** 남자 or 여자
•**연령:** 만 60세 ~ 100세
•**출생년도:** 1924~1964
•**출생지:** 한국 전국구이며 OO시 OO동까지 서술
•**현재 거주지:** 출생지랑 같아도 되고 달라도 됨
•**국적 / 민족 / 사용하는 언어:** 다양하게
•**학력:** {없음, 초등학교 졸업, 고등학교 졸업, 대학교 졸업, 석사 졸업, 박사 졸업} 다양하게하되 한국 시대 배경을 반영
•**출신대학 :** 학력에서 대학 이상인 학력은 OO대학 OO학 전공 으로 표기.
•**종교:** {없음, 기독교, 천주교, 불교} 중에서 선택
•**혼인 여부 / 결혼 연도:** 출생 년도와 시대배경(그때 당시 일찍 결혼한 부분 등)에 맞게 설정
•**자녀 유무 / 자녀 수:** 시대 배경에 맞게 자녀 수 설정

Step1 : Chain of Verification을 활용한 Basic Profile Generation 예시

- 너무 높은 학력 배제, 시대적 반영할 수 있도록 함

👤 인물 1

* 성별: 남자
* 연령: 만 89세
* 출생년도: 1936년
* 출생지: 경상남도 진주시 평거동
* 현재 거주지: 경상남도 진주시 상대동
* 국적 / 민족 / 사용하는 언어: 대한민국 / 한민족 / 한국어
* 학력: 초등학교 졸업
* 출신대학: 없음
* 종교: 불교
* 혼인 여부 / 결혼 연도: 기혼 / 1956년 결혼
* 자녀 유무 / 자녀 수: 있음 / 4남 1여

시대 반영 포인트

* **일제강점기 후반 출생,** 해방 직후와 한국전쟁을 겪은 세대
* **6.25 전쟁 후 학업 중단** 사례 흔함 → 초등학교 졸업 후 농촌 일손 보탬
* **20세 초반에 조혼**하여 자녀를 많이 둔 가족 중심 문화
* 산업화 이전의 **전통적 불교 문화가 뿌리 깊은 지역** 반영

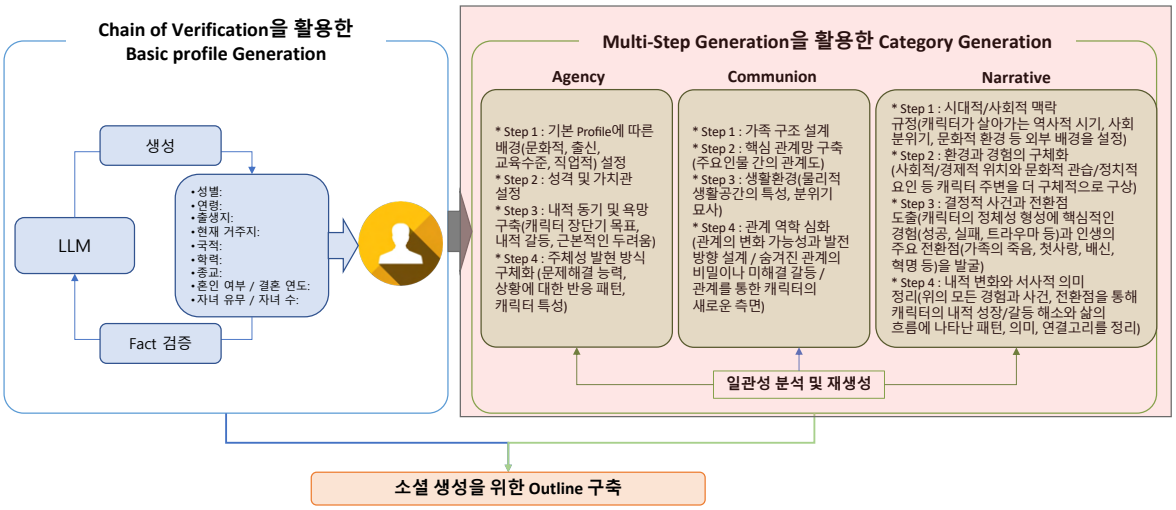
인물 2

* 성별: 여자
* 연령: 만 66세
* 출생년도: 1959년
* 출생지: 충청북도 청주시 상당구 용암동
* 현재 거주지: 서울특별시 성북구 하월곡동
* 국적 / 민족 / 사용하는 언어: 대한민국 / 한민족 / 한국어, 일본어(제2외국어로 습득)
* 학력: 대학교 졸업
* 출신대학: 충북대학교 가정교육학 전공
* 종교: 기독교
* 혼인 여부 / 결혼 연도: 기혼 / 1981년 결혼
* 자녀 유무 / 자녀 수: 있음 / 1남 2여

시대 반영 포인트

* **베이비붐 세대 말기 출생,** 도시화와 교육열 상승기의 여성
* 지방 거주 여성으로는 드물게 **국립대 진학** → 여성 교육권 확대 반영
* **1980년대 초 결혼 및 3자녀 출산 → 가족계획 정책 직전의 과도기**
* **기독교 신앙은 1980년대 여성층에서 증가하던 흐름과 부합**

생성형 인공지능 기술 기반 합성 데이터 구축

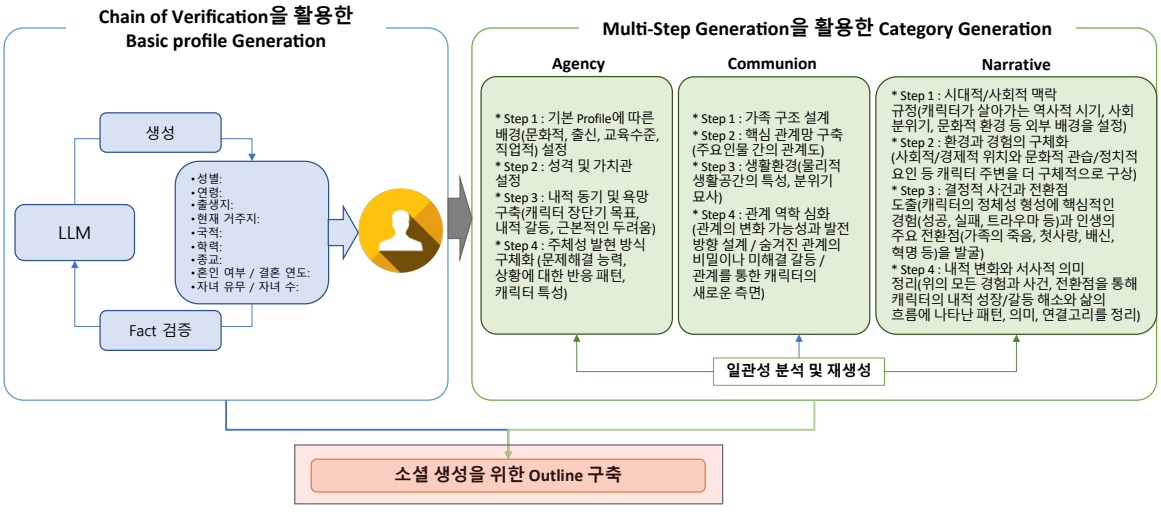


Step2 : Multi-Step Generation을 활용한 Category Generation

- Agency
  - 기본 profile에 따른 배경 설정, 성격 가치관, 주체성 구체화
- Communion
  - 가족 구성, 주요 인물 관계망, 생활 배경 등 구체화
- Narrative
  - 시대적, 사회적 설정, 환경과 경험 구체화, 결정적 사건 및 내적 변화 구성

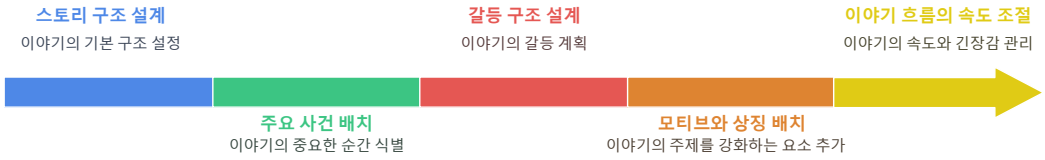
=> Profile을 기준으로 **일관성 분석 및 재생성**

생성형 인공지능 기술 기반 합성 데이터 구축

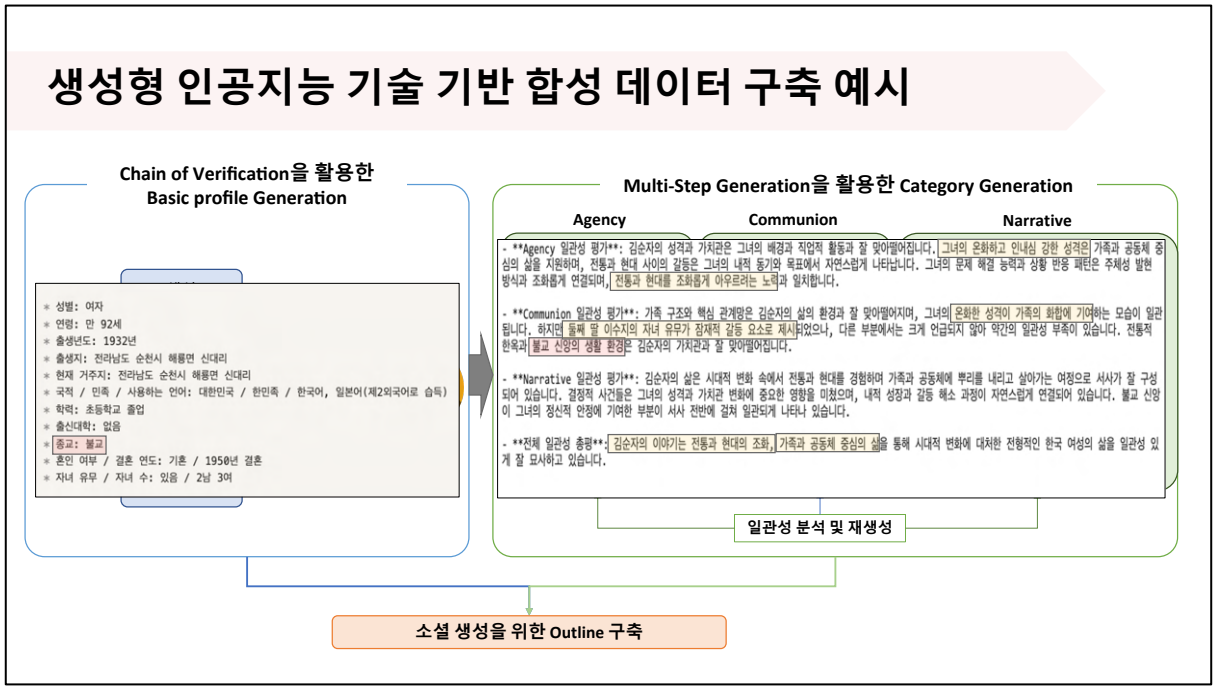


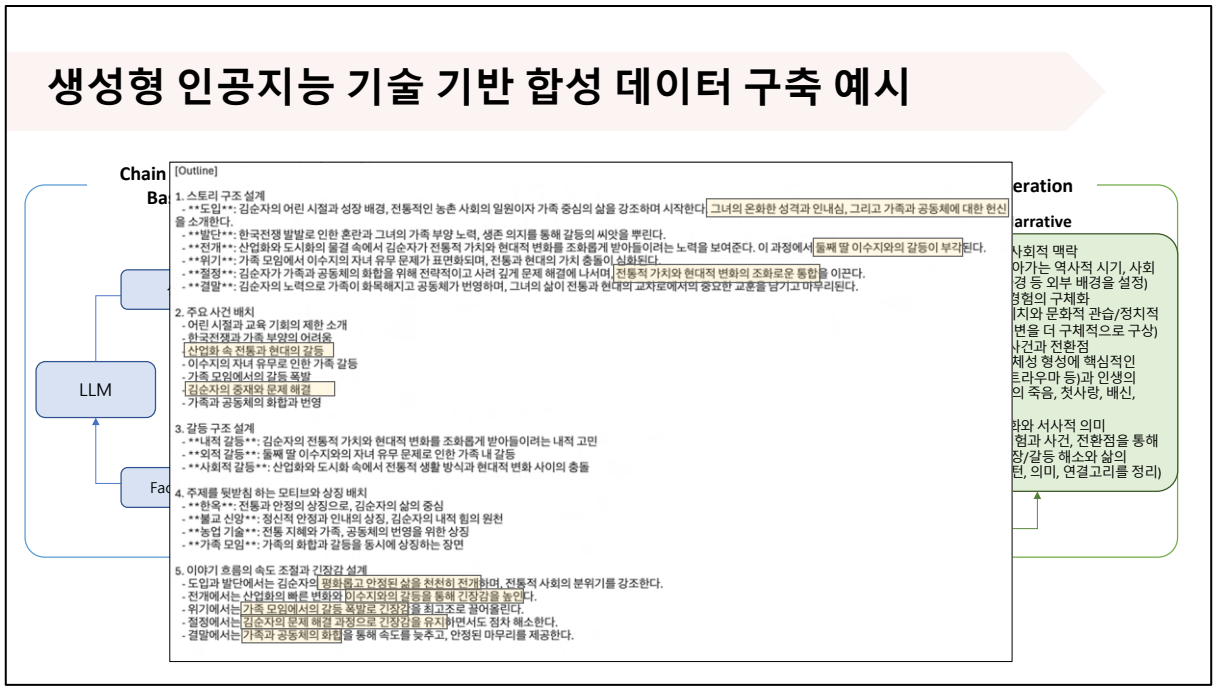
Step3 : 소설 생성을 위한 Outline 구축

- 소설 생성하기 위해 앞에서 **profile과 category generation을 기반**으로 스토리 구조, 주요 사건 및 갈등 캐치하여 스토리 생성



합성 데이터 결과


생성형 인공지능 기술 기반 합성 데이터 구축 예시
Chain of Verification을 활용한
Basic profile Generation
* 성별: 여자
* 연령: 만 92세
* 출생년도: 1932년
* 출생지: 전라남도 순천시 해룡면 신대리
* 현재 거주지: 전라남도 순천시 해룡면 신대리
* 국적 / 민족 / 사용하는 언어: 대한민국 / 한민족 / 한국어, 일본어(제2외국어로 습득)
* 학력: 초등학교 졸업
* 출신대학: 없음
* 종교: 불교
* 혼인 여부 / 결혼 연도: 기혼 / 1950년 결혼
* 자녀 유무 / 자녀 수: 있음 / 2남 3여
Multi-Step Generation을 활용한 Category Generation
Agency
Communion
Narrative
- **Agency 일관성 평가**: 김순자의 성격과 가치관은 그녀의 배경과 직업적 활동과 잘 맞아떨어집니다. 그녀의 온화하고 인내심 강한 성격은 가족과 공동체 중심의 삶을 지원하며, 전통과 현대 사이의 갈등은 그녀의 내적 동기와 목표에서 자연스럽게 나타납니다. 그녀의 문제 해결 능력과 상황 반응 패턴은 주체성 발현 방식과 조화롭게 연결되며, 전통과 현대를 조화롭게 이우르려는 노력과 일치합니다.
- **Communion 일관성 평가**: 가족 구조와 핵심 관계망은 김순자의 삶의 환경과 잘 맞아떨어지며, 그녀의 온화한 성격이 가족의 화합에 기여하는 모습이 일관됩니다. 하지만 둘째 딸 이수지의 자녀 유무가 잠재적 갈등 요소로 제시되었으나, 다른 부분에서는 크게 언급되지 않아 약간의 일관성 부족이 있습니다. 전통적 한옥과 불교 신앙의 생활 환경은 김순자의 가치관과 잘 맞아떨어집니다.
- **Narrative 일관성 평가**: 김순자의 삶은 시대적 변화 속에서 전통과 현대를 경험하며 가족과 공동체에 뿌리를 내리고 살아가는 여정으로 서사가 잘 구성되어 있습니다. 결정적 사건들은 그녀의 성격과 가치관 변화에 중요한 영향을 미쳤으며, 내적 성장과 갈등 해소 과정이 자연스럽게 연결되어 있습니다. 불교 신앙이 그녀의 정신적 안정에 기여한 부분이 서사 전반에 걸쳐 일관되게 나타나 있습니다.
- **전체 일관성 총평**: 김순자의 이야기는 전통과 현대의 조화, 가족과 공동체 중심의 삶을 통해 시대적 변화에 대처한 전형적인 한국 여성의 삶을 일관성 있게 잘 묘사하고 있습니다.
일관성 분석 및 재생성
소셜 생성을 위한 Outline 구축


생성형 인공지능 기술 기반 합성 데이터 구축 예시
LLM
[Outline]
1. 스토리 구조 설계
- **도입**: 김순자의 어린 시절과 성장 배경, 전통적인 농촌 사회의 일원이자 가족 중심의 삶을 강조하며 시작한다. 그녀의 온화한 성격과 인내심, 그리고 가족과 공동체에 대한 헌신을 소개한다.
- **발단**: 한국전쟁 발발로 인한 혼란과 그녀의 가족 부양 노력, 생존 의지를 통해 갈등의 씨앗을 뿌린다.
- **전개**: 산업화와 도시화의 물결 속에서 김순자가 전통적 가치와 현대적 변화를 조화롭게 받아들이려는 노력을 보여준다. 이 과정에서 둘째 딸 이수지와의 갈등이 부각된다.
- **위기**: 가족 모임에서 이수지의 자녀 유무 문제가 표면화되며, 전통과 현대의 가치 충돌이 심화된다.
- **절정**: 김순자가 가족과 공동체의 화합을 위해 전략적이고 사려 깊게 문제 해결에 나서며, 전통적 가치와 현대적 변화의 조화로운 통합을 이끈다.
- **결말**: 김순자의 노력으로 가족이 화목해지고 공동체가 번영하며, 그녀의 삶이 전통과 현대의 교차로에서의 중요한 교훈을 남기고 마무리된다.
2. 주요 사건 배치
- 어린 시절과 교육 기회의 제한 소개
- 한국전쟁과 가족 부양의 어려움
- 산업화 속 전통과 현대의 갈등
- 이수지의 자녀 유무로 인한 가족 갈등
- 가족 모임에서의 갈등 폭발
- 김순자의 중재와 문제 해결
- 가족과 공동체의 화합과 번영
3. 갈등 구조 설계
- **내적 갈등**: 김순자의 전통적 가치와 현대적 변화를 조화롭게 받아들이려는 내적 고민
- **외적 갈등**: 둘째 딸 이수지와의 자녀 유무 문제로 인한 가족 내 갈등
- **사회적 갈등**: 산업화와 도시화 속에서 전통적 생활 방식과 현대적 변화 사이의 충돌
4. 주제를 뒷받침 하는 모티브와 상징 배치
- **한옥**: 전통과 안정의 상징으로, 김순자의 삶의 중심
- **불교 신앙**: 정신적 안정과 인내의 상징, 김순자의 내적 힘의 원천
- **농업 기술**: 전통 지혜와 가족, 공동체의 번영을 위한 상징
- **가족 모임**: 가족의 화합과 갈등을 동시에 상징하는 장면
5. 이야기 흐름의 속도 조절과 긴장감 설계
- 도입과 발단에서는 김순자의 평화롭고 안정된 삶을 천천히 전개하며, 전통적 사회의 분위기를 강조한다.
- 전개에서는 산업화의 빠른 변화와 이수지와의 갈등을 통해 긴장감을 높인다.
- 위기에서는 가족 모임에서의 갈등 폭발로 긴장감을 최고조로 끌어올린다.
- 절정에서는 김순자의 문제 해결 과정으로 긴장감을 유지하면서도 점차 해소한다.
- 결말에서는 가족과 공동체의 화합을 통해 속도를 늦추고, 안정된 마무리를 제공한다.

추후 발전 방향

생성형 인공지능 기술 기반 합성 데이터 구축

- 한계점
  - Prompt 의 한계
    - 생애사 초점에서 다양하고 구조화된 prompt 형성의 어려움
      - Prompt 제한 ↑ -> 일관적, 비슷한 생성
      - Prompt 제한 X -> Hallucination, bias(편향), 주제에 벗어남
  - 소셜 생성을 Outline 구축 – 적합한 Prompt 설계 진행 중

- 향후 방향
  - Outline까지 완성, 소설 생성을 위한 Agent* 개발 예정

***Agent** : 주어진 환경에서 관찰(observation)을 바탕으로 행동(action)을 선택하고, 목표를 수행하는 시스템 전체를 말함
ex) GPT를 기반으로 한 챗봇 에이전트는 입력을 받아 응답을 생성하고, 사용자의 질문 맥락을 유지하며 대화 흐름을 관리

감사합니다

고려대학교 KOREA UNIVERSITY

Min Ju Kim(Daegoo University) · Seung Hwa Jeon(Kyungpook National University) · Jung Wan Kim (Daegoo University)

"Development of an NLP-Based Lexical Retrieval Training Module for Older Adults with Mild Cognitive Impairment: A Preliminary Study"

Introduction

Due to the recent rapid aging trend, the elderly population is increasing, and age-related diseases have become a significant social issue. In particular, the decline in cognitive function among older adults is emerging as a major concern, exacerbating both social and economic burdens (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2020). Recently, there has been growing interest in Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) as a target for early detection and prevention efforts aimed at delaying the progression to dementia (Petersen et al., 2001). Although individuals with MCI exhibit decreased performance in areas such as memory, working memory, and attention, they still perform relatively better than individuals with Alzheimer's disease and generally maintain normal daily functioning (Petersen et al., 1999). MCI is considered an intermediate stage between normal aging and dementia (Morris et al., 2001), and since many individuals with MCI are at high risk of progressing to dementia, early detection and prevention are essential (Steiner et al., 2017). Therefore, it is important to manage older adults with MCI from an early stage to delay the onset of dementia through preventive approaches. Cognitive decline in individuals with MCI may also lead to emotional problems such as depression and anxiety. This highlights the importance of incorporating emotional considerations into cognitive rehabilitation programs. Traditional cognitive intervention approaches include cognitive stimulation programs, memory training, and emotional and social activity programs. Among these, cognitive stimulation therapy has been reported to have a positive effect on memory and cognitive function (Belleville et al., 2018). However, such interventions require direct involvement of specialists, and due to their cost and difficulty in sustaining long-term training, they face limitations in long-term application and personalization.

Recently, AI-based cognitive intervention technologies incorporating Natural Language Processing (NLP) have drawn attention as alternatives to overcome these traditional limitations. Cognitive training utilizing NLP technology enables real-time, personalized feedback and interaction, allowing for optimization of cognitive training tailored to individual cognitive levels (Peled-Cohen & Reichart, 2024). In recent studies, older adults have reported experiencing cognitive and emotional benefits through AI-based programs (Han Kyung-hwa, 2021). AI-based cognitive training programs offer the advantage of being accessible regardless of location and significantly enhance the continuity and accessibility of training. Furthermore, repeated training has shown positive effects in various cognitive domains such as memory, attention, and language abilities. Interaction with AI also contributes to psychological stability and reduced depression, indicating meaningful emotional benefits. Therefore, this study aims to develop an NLP-based lexical retrieval training module using the GPT-4 model for older adults with MCI, and to examine the usefulness and limitations of such NLP-

based training. This research seeks to contribute to the development of accessible AI-driven lexical retrieval training and provide foundational data for future interventions targeting lexical retrieval in older adults with MCI.

Method

Participant

This study targeted two elderly women (aged 65 and 72) who were screened using the Korean Mini-Mental State Examination (K-MMSE; Kang Yeon-wook, 2006) and the Geriatric Depression Scale Short Form Korean Version (GDSSF-K; Ki Baek-seok, 1996). Participants were selected from among older adults whose cognitive function fell within the normal range and who exhibited no signs of depression. Among them, individuals whose performance fell below -1 standard deviation on the Seoul Verbal Learning Test (SVLT; Kang Yeon-wook & Na Deok-ryeol, 2003) were included. Additionally, based on the criteria of Christensen et al. (1991), an interview was conducted to exclude those with any neurological or psychiatric disorders.

Procedures

1. Structure of the Lexical Retrieval Training

In this study, five types of activities were selected and structured to develop an NLP-based lexical retrieval training module using the GPT-4 model. These activities were designed to stimulate semantic memory and strengthen semantic associations in the brain. The details of each activity are as follows:

First, the semantic association training involved generating words that fit a given category or phonological condition. This activity aimed to activate the semantic network, promote synaptic connections between words, and enhance phonological processing speed and word retrieval ability (Humphreys et al., 2020). For example, the participant was prompted by GPT-4 with instructions such as, “Name all the animals you can think of,” or “Let’s play a word chain game. Use the last syllable of the previous word to say a new one.” If an incorrect response was given, GPT-4 provided cues such as, “Animals are living things that are not humans or plants,” to help guide the participant toward the correct answer.

Second, the definition-based response training required participants to listen to a definition of an object or concept and retrieve the corresponding word. This activity enhanced not only definitional reasoning but also lexical judgment and naming abilities by encouraging the connection between semantic representation and the target word (Belleville et al., 2018). For example, after hearing, “It’s a round vegetable with layered skins that makes your eyes sting when sliced and turns sweet when cooked,” the participant was expected to respond with “onion.” If an incorrect response was given, a phonological cue such as “It starts with ‘on’ in Korean” was provided.

Third, the inference training aimed to strengthen cognitive flexibility and semantic associations by identifying commonalities among a group of words (Collins & Loftus, 1975). For instance, when asked, “What do grapes, blueberries, and plums have in

common?" the participant was expected to infer and respond with "fruits." If an incorrect response was given, explanatory features of the words were offered to assist in correct retrieval.

Fourth, the semantic memory retrieval training focused on improving strategic cognitive functions such as retrieving semantic knowledge stored in the temporal lobe under the influence of the frontal lobe, while suppressing irrelevant meanings (Moscovitch, 2002). For example, when GPT-4 asked, "Who is the Korean athlete who won an Olympic gold medal in figure skating?" the participant was expected to answer "Yuna Kim." If an incorrect response was given, GPT-4 provided a hint such as "She's also called the queen of figure skating" to facilitate correct word retrieval. Examples of the five types of lexical retrieval training are presented in <Table 1>.

NO.	Lexical retrieval training	Questions
1	Semantic Association	Please name all the vegetables you can think of. CUE: Vegetables are the edible parts of plants.
2	Phonological Association	Let's play a word chain game. I'll say a word, and you respond with another word that starts with the last syllable of the previous word. CUE : Here's a hint: think about the characteristics of the word.
3	Definition-Based Response	This is a red flower. It has thorns on its stem and layered petals. What is it? CUE : It starts with 'jang' (in Korean).
4	Inference	Listen to the three words and say what they have in common: soccer, baseball, basketball. CUE: Listen to the three words and say what they have in common : soccer, baseball, basketball.
5	Semantic Memory Retrieval	What is the name of the Korean athlete who won an Olympic gold medal in figure skating? CUE : She is also known as the queen of figure skating.

2. System Development

In this study, a lexical retrieval training system was developed using GPT-4 for older adults with Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI). The system was designed to function as a supportive companion, facilitating lexical retrieval activities. During the initial setup phase, the system's identity was clearly defined, with an emphasis on using warm and friendly language. Special attention was given to avoid complex or abstract terminology; instead, the system provided clear and specific instructions to prevent confusion for the users.

To initiate the system, the user would say, "Start cognitive stimulation activity." Upon receiving a specific command, the system would begin the activity and present a task. For example, when the system prompts, "Please name all the animals you can think of," the participant is free to respond with any animal names they remember. When a correct response is given, the system immediately provides positive feedback such as

"Great job!" to boost the participant's confidence. In the case of an incorrect response, the system offers supportive guidance, saying, "You've missed a few. If you'd like a hint, please say 'Give me a hint.'" When a hint is requested, the system provides clear cues—for instance, offering a definition such as "Animals are living creatures other than humans and plants" to aid the participant's understanding.
If the participant repeatedly gives incorrect answers or asks for the correct one, the system kindly delivers the accurate response in a gentle tone, thereby enhancing the training effect and offering emotional reassurance to the user.

Results
In this study, a lexical retrieval training program was developed for older adults with Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) using the GPT-4 model. The program was designed to allow real-time feedback from GPT-4 in response to participants' input, enabling repetitive and personalized training. The researcher observed the lexical retrieval training sessions utilizing GPT-4 and analyzed participants' responses to evaluate the system's usefulness and limitations.

1. Usefulness of the GPT-4-Based Lexical Retrieval Training
In semantic-based association training, GPT-4 provided contextually appropriate feedback, effectively guiding participant responses. When a correct response was given, GPT-4 responded with concrete and positive feedback such as, "That's right. A fly is an insect, but it's also a type of animal. Great job remembering that!" Participants showed affirmative reactions such as nodding and expressing positive emotions, suggesting that such feedback contributes to increased confidence and self-efficacy. Even in cases of incorrect responses, GPT-4 did not simply respond with "That's wrong." For example, when the topic was fruit and the participant answered "carrot," GPT-4 responded with, "Carrots are root vegetables, so they are not considered fruits. Fruits usually grow on trees or plants and often contain seeds—like apples or pears. Would you like to try again?" This kind of concrete and friendly cue encouraged participants to continue trying rather than giving up or losing focus. These responses suggest that GPT-4's feedback minimizes frustration from errors and promotes sustained engagement during lexical retrieval training. Furthermore, because the GPT-4-based training can be conducted repeatedly without constraints of location, it offers a practical alternative to traditional methods, which are often limited by time and cost. The flexibility to engage in training at any time also supports participant autonomy and points to the potential for personalized training applications.

2. Limitations and Future Improvements of the System
The implementation of the training system revealed several limitations. First, the response speed of GPT-4 was occasionally slow, disrupting the flow of real-time interaction. In such instances, participants would stare at the screen or pause with

confused expressions, which in turn negatively affected their attention and the continuity of the training session.
Second, frequent errors occurred in speech recognition, as the system sometimes failed to accurately recognize participants' utterances. This led to observable confusion and repeated attempts by participants to correct themselves. Even when correct answers were provided, misinterpretation by the system could result in misunderstandings, potentially leading to participant frustration or loss of confidence. Future research should focus on technical improvements to address these issues. Specifically, optimizing GPT-4's response latency to improve real-time interaction and enhancing speech recognition accuracy to ensure reliable processing of user input will be essential. These findings offer valuable foundational data for the practical development of a GPT-4-based lexical retrieval support system aimed at maintaining and improving the language abilities of older adults with MCI.

Conclusions

This study suggests the potential for artificial intelligence technology to be practically applied in cognitive training for older adults, and provides foundational data for the development of cognitive training systems targeting individuals with Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI). Future research should examine the usability and effectiveness of such systems through studies involving a wider range of cognitive tasks and a larger number of participants.

Reference

Kang, Y. (2006). A normative study of the Korean Mini-Mental State Examination (K-MMSE) in the elderly. Korean Journal of Developmental Psychology, 25(2), 1–12.

Ki, B. S. (1996). Preliminary study on the standardization of the Korean version of the Geriatric Depression Scale Short Form (GDSSF-K). Journal of the Korean Neuropsychiatric Association, 35(2), 298–307.

Kang, Y., & Na, D. L. (2003). Seoul Neuropsychological Screening Battery (SNSB). Incheon: Hub R&C.

Han, K. H. (2021). A consensual qualitative study on the experience of AI-based cognitive training for dementia prevention (Doctoral dissertation, CHA University, Graduate School, Gyeonggi-do, Korea).

Belleville, S., Hudon, C., Bier, N., Brodeur, C., Gilbert, B., Grenier, S., ... & Gauthier, S. (2018). MEMO+: efficacy, durability and effect of cognitive training and psychosocial intervention in individuals with mild cognitive impairment. Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, 66(4), 655-663. Christensen, K. J., Multhaup, K. S., Nordstrom, S., & Voss, K. (1991). A cognitive battery for dementia: Development and measurement characteristics. Psychological Assessment: A Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 3(2), 168.

Cisotto, G., Trentini, A., Zoppis, I., Zanga, A., Manzoni, S., Pietrabissa, G., ... & Castelnuovo, G. (2021). Acta: a mobile-health solution for integrated nudge-neurofeedback training for senior citizens. arXiv preprint arXiv:2102.08692.

Collins, A. M., & Loftus, E. F. (1975). A spreading-activation theory of semantic processing. Psychological review, 82(6), 407.

Fernandes, M. A., & Moscovitch, M. (2002). Factors modulating the effect of divided attention during retrieval of words. Memory & Cognition, 30(5), 731-744.

Humphreys, M. S., Li, Y. R., Burt, J. S., & Loft, S. (2020). How semantic processing affects recognition memory. Journal of Memory and Language, 113, 104109.

Morris, J. C., Storandt, M., Miller, J. P., McKeel, D. W., Price, J. L., Rubin, E. H., & Berg, L. (2001). Mild cognitive impairment represents early-stage Alzheimer disease. Archives of neurology, 58(3), 397-405.

Moscovitch, M., & Winocur, G. (2002). The frontal cortex and working with memory. Principles of frontal lobe function, 188, 209.

Petersen, R. C., Smith, G. E., Waring, S. C., Ivnik, R. J., Tangalos, E. G., & Kokmen, E. (1999). Mild cognitive impairment: clinical characterization and outcome. Archives of neurology, 56(3), 303-308.

Petersen, R. C., Doody, R., Kurz, A., Mohs, R. C., Morris, J. C., Rabins, P. V., ... & Winblad, B. (2001). Current concepts in mild cognitive impairment. Archives of neurology, 58(12), 1985-1992.

Peled-Cohen, L., & Reichart, R. (2024). A Systematic Review of NLP for Dementia-Tasks, Datasets and Opportunities. arXiv preprint arXiv:2409.19737.

Petersen, R. C. (2004). Mild cognitive impairment as a diagnostic entity. Journal of internal medicine, 256(3), 183-194.

Steiner, A. B. Q., Jacinto, A. F., Mayoral, V. F. D. S., Brucki, S. M. D., & Citero, V. D. A. (2017). Mild cognitive impairment and progression to dementia of Alzheimer's disease. Revista da Associação Médica Brasileira, 63(7), 651-655.

교육부 글로벌 인문사회 융합연구 : 고령층 인공지능 생애사 프로그램 개발 과제 공동연구(2024-2027)

Development of an NLP-Based Lexical Retrieval Training Module for Older Adults With Mild Cognitive Impairment : A Preliminary Study

Min Ju Kim*, Seung Hwa Jeon**, Jung Wan Kim***

*Major in Speech-Language pathology, Dept. of Rehabilitation Science, Graduate School, Daegu University, Doctor Course Completion
**Dept. of French Language and Literature, Kyungpook National University, Professor
***Dept. of Speech-Language pathology, Daegu University, Professor

PURPOSE

- 최근 급속한 고령화 현상이 심화되면서 인지기능의 저하로 인한 노인의 삶의 질 저하 및 사회적 부담이 크게 증가하고 있음
- 최근에는 치매로의 진행을 감소시키기 위해, 특히 경도인지장애(Mild Cognitive Impairment;이하 MCI)에 대한 관심이 증가하고 있음(Petersen.,2001)
- MCI는 적절한 관리와 중재가 이루어지지 않을 경우 상당한 비율로 치매로 발전할 가능성이 있음
- 따라서 조기 발견과 치매로 진행되는 시간을 더디게 하는 예방적 차원의 접근이 필수적임(Steiner et al., 2017)
- MCI노인의 인지기능 저하는 우울 및 불안과 같은 정서적인 문제를 유발할 수 있음

  → 인지 재활의 중재에서 정서적인 문제를 고려하는 프로그램을 구성하는 것의 중요성을 의미함

Development of an NLP-Based Lexical Retrieval Training Module for Older Adults With Mild Cognitive Impairment : A Preliminary Study

PAGE 03

PURPOSE

- MCI의 인지기능 향상을 위해 다양한 중재 접근법이 제시
  ex) 인지자극 프로그램, 기억력 훈련, 정서적 및 사회적 활동 프로그램 등이 적용
- 특히 인지자극 치료는 노인의 기억력 및 인지기능 개선에 긍정적 효과를 보이는 것으로 보고됨(Belleville 등, 2018).
- 기존의 중재 방법 → 대면, 전문가의 개입 없이는 지속적인 훈련 및 피드백 제공이 어려움
- 기존 방법의 한계를 극복하기 위한 대안으로 자연어처리(Natural Language Processing, NLP) 기술을 접목한 AI 기반의 인지 중재 기술이 개발
- AI 기반의 인지 중재 기술은 노인의 인지 상태에 따라 맞춤형으로 실시간 피드백과 상호작용을 제공
- 최근 연구에서도 AI 기반 프로그램을 통해 인지 및 정서적 효과를 경험했다고 노인들이 보고한 바 있음(한경화, 2021)

Development of an NLP-Based Lexical Retrieval Training Module for Older Adults With Mild Cognitive Impairment : A Preliminary Study

PAGE 04

PURPOSE

- 이에 본 연구는 경도인지장애 노인을 대상으로 GPT-4 모델을 적용한 NLP 기반 어휘 인출 훈련 모듈을 개발하고, NLP 기반 어휘 인출 훈련의 유용성 및 한계점을 파악
- 이를 통해 접근 가능한 AI의 어휘 인출 훈련을 개발하고 AI를 활용한 경도인지장애의 어휘 인출 훈련을 위한 기초 자료를 제공하고자 함

Development of an NLP-Based Lexical Retrieval Training Module for Older Adults With Mild Cognitive Impairment : A Preliminary Study

PAGE 05

METHOD

1. PARTICIPANT

- 여성 노인 2명(65세, 72세)
- 한국판 간이 정신상태 검사(Korean Mini-Mental state Examination, K-MMSE, 강연욱, 2006)
- 한국판 단축형 노인 우울 척도 (Geriatric Depression Scale Short Form Korean Version, GDSSF-K, 기백석, 1996)를 실시
  → 인지기능이 정상 범주에 해당, 우울감이 없는 노인
- 서울 구어 학습 검사(Seoul Verbal Learning Test: SVLT, 강연욱, 나덕렬, 2003)
  → 결과-1SD 이하인 노인
- 이차적으로 Christensen 등(1991)의 기준 → 신경학적 및 정신적 질병이 있는 자는 제외

Development of an NLP-Based Lexical Retrieval Training Module for Older Adults With Mild Cognitive Impairment : A Preliminary Study

PAGE 06

METHOD

2. PROCEDURES

1. 어휘 인출 훈련 구성

의미기억을 자극함과 동시에 대뇌의 의미 연결을 강화하기 위한 활동 → 총 5가지 훈련을 선정하여 구성

첫째, 의미연상 훈련은 특정 범주어 및 음운 조건에 해당하는 단어들을 연상하여 말하는 활동
→ 이는 의미망 활성화를 통해 어휘 인출을 유도하고 의미망 네트워크 활성화로 단어 간 시냅스 연결을 증진
→ 음운 처리 속도, 단어 인출 능력을 높임(Humphreys et al., 2020).

ex) GPT-4 : *'동물 이름을 모두 말해보세요', '끝말잇기를 해볼게요. 마지막 글자를 이용해서 다른 단어를 말씀해보세요'*
→ 대상자가 조건에 맞는 단어를 연상하고 응답하게 함
오반응 : *'동물은 사람과 식물을 제외한 생물이예요'*와 같이 단어에 대한 설명 및 특징을 단서로 제공
→ 대상자의 단어 인출을 촉진

METHOD

2. PROCEDURES

1. 어휘 인출 훈련 구성

둘째, 정의 듣고 대답하기 훈련은 특정 물건이나 개념에 대한 정의를 듣고 이해하여 그 정의에 부합하는 단어를 인출하도록 돕는 활동 → 의미적 표상과 해당 단어를 연결하도록 유도(Belleville et al., 2018)
ex) GPT-4 : '*겹겹이 쌓인 둥근 채소로 칼로 썰면 눈이 맵고, 조리하면 단맛이 강해져요*'라는 정의를 들려줌,
→ 대상자가 '*양파*'라는 단어를 떠올려 응답
오반응 : '*양으로 시작하는 단어에요*'와 같이 음운적 단서를 제공 → 대상자의 단어 인출을 촉진

셋째, 추론 훈련은 제시된 여러 단어의 공통점을 파악하는 과정을 통해 인지적 유연성과 의미적 연결성을 강화하는 활동 (Collins & Loftus, 1975).
ex) GPT-4 : '*포도, 블루베리, 자두의 공통점은 무엇인가요?*'
→ 대상자가 '*과일*'이라는 공통점을 추론하여 응답
오반응 : 단어에 대한 설명 및 특징을 단서로 제공 → 참여자의 단어 인출을 촉진

Development of an NLP-Based Lexical Retrieval Training Module for Older Adults With Mild Cognitive Impairment : A Preliminary Study

METHOD

2. PROCEDURES

1. 어휘 인출 훈련 구성

넷째, 의미기억 인출훈련은 일반적으로 측두엽에 저장되어있던 의미지식에서 전두엽의 영향을 받아 인출을 하고 불필요한 의미들을 억제하는 등 인지적인 요소들을 전략적으로 사용하는 능력을 향상시킬 수 있는 활동(Moscovitch, 2002)

ex) GPT-4 : '*피겨스케이팅에서 올림픽 금메달을 딴 한국 선수의 이름은 무엇인가요?*'
→ 대상자는 '*김연아*'라고 응답을
오반응 : '*피겨 여왕이라고 불리기도 해요*'라는 단서를 제공함으로써 단어 인출을 촉진

METHOD

2. 시스템 제작

1) 초기 설정

- 본 연구에서는 GPT-4를 통해 경도인지장애(Mild Cognitive Impairment, MCI) 노인들을 위한 어휘 인출훈련 시스템을 제작
- 이 시스템은 어휘 인출 활동을 지원하는 동행자 역할을 수행하도록 설계
  → *" 당신은 경도인지장애(MCI)를 가진 노인분들을 위한 인지활동 동행자입니다"*
- 시스템의 정체성을 명확히 정의하였으며 따뜻하고 친절한 언어 사용을 강조
- 복잡한 용어나 추상적 용어를 배제하고, 구체적이고 명료한 지시만을 제공하여 대상자가 혼란스럽지 않도록 구성

2) 대화 스타터 설정

- 시작은 *" 인지 자극 활동 시작해 "* 로 설정

3) 문제 제시

- 대상자가 구체적인 명령어를 말하면, 시스템은 인지 활동을 시작하고 문제를 제시
  → *" 동물의 이름을 모두 말해보세요 "*

Development of an NLP-Based Lexical Retrieval Training Module for Older Adults With Mild Cognitive Impairment : A Preliminary Study

METHOD

2. 시스템 제작

4) 응답 제시

- 대상자는 자신이 기억하는 동물의 이름을 자유롭게 응답
  "강아지, 고양이, 코끼리.."
  → 정반응 : 즉각적으로 *"잘 하셨어요!"*라는 긍정적 피드백을 제공, 대상자의 자신감을 향상
  오반응 : *"아직 몇 개가 빠졌네요. 힌트가 필요하시면 '힌트 주세요'라고 말씀해 주세요"*라는 안내를 통해 추가적인 도움을 요청
  → 기회를 부여

5) 힌트 요청 시 단서 제공

- 대상자가 힌트를 요청하면 시스템은 명확한 단서를 제공
  " 동물은 사람과 식물을 제외한 모든 생물이에요" 와 같은 구체적인 정의를 통해 대상자의 이해를 도움

6) 오답 보일 경우 정답 제시

- 대상자가 반복적으로 오답을 제시하거나 정답 제시를 요청
  → 정확한 정답을 친절한 어조로 제공하여 훈련 효과를 극대화하고 대상자에게 심리적 안정감을 줌

7) 다음 문제 제시

Development of an NLP-Based Lexical Retrieval Training Module for Older Adults With Mild Cognitive Impairment : A Preliminary Study

PAGE 11

RESULT

- 본 연구에서는 GPT-4 모델을 적용하여 경도인지장애 노인을 위한 어휘 인출훈련을 제작
- 해당 훈련은 대상자의 반응에 GPT-4가 실시간으로 피드백을 제공하고 반복적이고 개별화된 훈련이 가능하도록 설계
- 연구자는 GPT-4 모델을 적용한 어휘 인출훈련 과정을 관찰하면서 실제 대상자의 반응을 파악하였고 이를 통해 유용성 및 한계점을 확인

1. GPT-4 모델을 적용한 어휘 인출훈련의 유용성

- GPT-4는 상황적 맥락에 맞는 피드백을 제공 → 대상자들의 반응을 효과적으로 유도
- 정반응을 보인 경우,'*맞아요, 파리는 곤충이지만 분명 동물의 한 종류예요. 아주 잘 떠올리셨어요!*'와 같이 GPT-4의 구체적이고 긍정적인 피드백 → 대상자는 고개 끄덕임과 긍정적인 정서 표현 함
  → 이는 대상자의 자신감 및 자기 효능감 향상에 긍정적으로 작용할 것임을 시사

Development of an NLP-Based Lexical Retrieval Training Module for Older Adults With Mild Cognitive Impairment : A Preliminary Study

PAGE 12

RESULT

- 오반응의 경우에도 단순히 '*틀렸어요*'라고 표현하지 않음
- 주제가 과일일 때, 대상자가 '*당근*'이라고 응답하면, '*당근은 뿌리채소라 과일은 아니에요. 과일은 나무나 식물에서 열리는 열매로, 보통 씨앗이 들어 있어요. 예를 들면 사과, 배처럼요. 다시 한 번 생각해보시겠어요?*'와 같은 구체적이고 친절한 단서를 제공
  → 대상자들은 포기하지 않고 다시 시도하거나 생각을 멈추지 않는 행동을 함
  → 이러한 대상자들의 반응은 오류에 따른 좌절감을 최소하하는 긍정적인 영향과 지속적인 참여를 유도

- 또한 GPT-4 모델을 적용한 어휘 인출훈련은 장소에 구애받지 않고 반복적으로 훈련이 가능하다는 점
→ 기존의 전통적인 방식이 지닌 시간적·경제적 제약을 보완할 수 있는 대안으로서의 가능성을 보여줌
→ 나아가 대상자들이 시간에 구애받지 않고 훈련에 접근할 수 있는 점은 자율성 측면에서도 긍정적이며 개별 맞춤형 훈련의 적용 가능성을 시사

RESULT

2. 시스템의 한계점 및 향후 개선 방향

- 첫째, GPT-4의 반응 응답 속도가 느려 실시간 상호작용의 흐름을 방해하는 경우
  → 대상자들은 화면을 응시하며 기다리거나, 고개를 갸우뚱하며 반응을 멈추는 행동
  → 이는 주의 집중을 떨어뜨려 지속적인 훈련 흐름을 방해할 수 있는 요인

- 둘째, 음성 인식 과정에서 대상자들의 발화를 정확하게 인식하지 못하는 문제로 빈번하게 오류가 발생
  → 대상자가 당황하거나 정정을 시도하며 반복 발화하는 모습이 관찰
  → 이로인해 대상자가 정답을 제시했음에도 불구하고 잘못된 판별이 이루어져 대상자의 혼란을 초래할 수 있을 것으로 사료

- 향후 연구에서는 이러한 문제점을 해결하기 위한 기술적 보완이 필수적
  → 구체적으로 GPT-4의 응답 속도를 최적화하여 실시간 상호작용의 질을 높이고, 음성 인식 정확성을 개선하여 대상자의 발화가
  정확히 반영될 수 있도록 보완해야 할 것으로 보임
  → 이러한 결과는 GPT-4를 통해 경도인지장애 노인의 어휘 인출 능력 유지 및 향상을 위한 실질적인 시스템 구축에 유용한 기초 자료로 활용될 수 있을 것임

Development of an NLP-Based Lexical Retrieval Training Module for Older Adults With Mild Cognitive Impairment : A Preliminary Study

CONCLUSIONS

- 본 연구는 인공지능 기술이 노인의 인지훈련에 실질적으로 활용될 수 있는 가능성을 시사
- MCI 노인을 위한 인지훈련 시스템 개발에 기초 자료를 제공
- 향후 연구에서는 다양한 인지 과제와 많은 대상자로 한 연구로 시스템의 활용성 및 효과성을 살펴볼 필요성이 있을 것으로 사료

REFERENCE

- 강연욱 (2006). K-MMSE(KOREAN-MINI MENTAL STATE EXAMINATION)의 노인 규준 연구. 한국심리학회지: 발달, 25(2), 1-12.
- 기백석 (1996). 한국판 노인 우울 척도 단축형의 표준화 예비연구. 신경정신의학, 35(2), 298-307.
- 강연욱, 나덕렬 (2003). 서울신경심리검사. 인천: 휴브알앤씨.
- 한경화. "치매예방을 위한 AI-기반 인지훈련 경험에 대한 합의적 질적 연구." 국내박사학위논문 차의과학대학교 일반대학원, 2021. 경기도
- BELLEVILLE, S., HUDON, C., BIER, N., BRODEUR, C., GILBERT, B., GRENIER, S., ... & GAUTHIER, S. (2018). MEMO+: EFFICACY, DURABILITY AND EFFECT OF COGNITIVE TRAINING AND PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERVENTION IN INDIVIDUALS WITH MILD COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT. JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN GERIATRICS SOCIETY, 66(4), 655-663.
- PETERSEN, R. C., DOODY, R., KURZ, A., MOHS, R. C., MORRIS, J. C., RABINS, P. V., ... & WINBLAD, B. (2001). CURRENT CONCEPTS IN MILD COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT. ARCHIVES OF NEUROLOGY, 58(12), 1985-1992.
- STEINER, A. B. Q., JACINTO, A. F., MAYORAL, V. F. D. S., BRUCKI, S. M. D., & CITERO, V. D. A. (2017). MILD COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT AND PROGRESSION TO DEMENTIA OF ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE. REVISTA DA ASSOCIAÇÃO MÉDICA BRASILEIRA, 63(7), 651-655.
- COLLINS, A. M., & LOFTUS, E. F. (1975). A SPREADING-ACTIVATION THEORY OF SEMANTIC PROCESSING. PSYCHOLOGICAL REVIEW, 82(6), 407.
- FERNANDES, M. A., & MOSCOVITCH, M. (2002). FACTORS MODULATING THE EFFECT OF DIVIDED ATTENTION DURING RETRIEVAL OF WORDS. MEMORY & COGNITION, 30(5), 731-744.
- HUMPHREYS, M. S., LI, Y. R., BURT, J. S., & LOFT, S. (2020). HOW SEMANTIC PROCESSING AFFECTS RECOGNITION MEMORY. JOURNAL OF MEMORY AND LANGUAGE, 113, 104109.

Development of an NLP-Based Lexical Retrieval Training Module for Older Adults With Mild Cognitive Impairment : A Preliminary Study

THANK YOU!

D3

SangWook Park · JungWan Kim (Daegu University)

"A Case Study on User Experience (UX) and Adaptability in the Use of an AI-Based Computerized Cognitive Rehabilitation Program"

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Due to the rapid aging of the population, cognitive decline in older adults has emerged as a major public health issue, not only diminishing individuals' quality of life but also increasing social and economic burdens. Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI), in particular, is recognized as an intermediate stage that may progress to dementia, highlighting the importance of early diagnosis and intervention. As a result, various intervention strategies aimed at maintaining or improving cognitive function are being actively studied. Among these, computerized cognitive rehabilitation programs are highly valued for their flexibility and autonomy, allowing users to train regardless of location.

Compared to traditional paper-based tasks or therapist-centered interventions, computerized cognitive rehabilitation programs offer enhanced accessibility and repeatability, along with advantages such as digital feedback, adjustable difficulty levels, and personalized task design. Recently, a variety of cognitive training programs have been developed using mobile devices, kiosks, and tablets, and artificial intelligence (AI)-based personalized cognitive rehabilitation systems have also emerged. However, the effectiveness and acceptance of these technology-based interventions can vary significantly depending on the user's digital literacy and physical or sensory characteristics.

Older adults aged 70 and above often have limited familiarity with digital devices and may face physiological constraints such as visual impairments, hand tremors, joint stiffness, and hearing loss, which can hinder the use of computerized cognitive rehabilitation programs. They may also experience emotional responses such as psychological resistance to new technologies, lack of confidence, and frustration from repeated failures, which can negatively affect their engagement and willingness to continue using the programs.

Given these factors, designing elderly-friendly interfaces and conducting usability evaluations—specifically, user experience (UX) analysis and adaptability assessments—are essential prerequisites for ensuring program effectiveness. Data centered on users' actual experiences can guide developers and clinicians in making improvements. Particularly, promoting repeated use and encouraging voluntary participation are crucial for achieving long-term cognitive intervention outcomes.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the user experience and adaptability of a computerized cognitive rehabilitation program based on actual use by older adults in their 70s, and to propose directions for improving the program and increasing its acceptability among this population. After using the program over a set period, participants completed a survey assessing their overall satisfaction, ease of use, feedback features, interest level, and any inconveniences they experienced. The study aims to provide empirical foundational data for designing elderly-friendly digital cognitive interventions by analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data. The key elements examined in this study include:

- Assessing older adults' overall perceptions and satisfaction with the program.
- Identifying elements for UI/UX improvement through evaluation of operability and visual design.
- Examining the impact of feedback features (e.g., scores, voice guidance) on user engagement and motivation.
- Proposing ways to improve the program based on reported discomforts (e.g., visual fatigue, difficulty with touch operations).
- Conducting in-depth analysis of open-ended responses to understand older adults' subjective experiences, including perceived strengths and weaknesses of the program.

2. Methods

2.1 Participants

This study involved 24 voluntary participants in their 70s who were capable of using digital devices (tablets or kiosk-based terminals), recruited from community welfare centers and public health centers in City A. All participants had a Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE) score of 24 or higher, indicating that they were at the stage of mild cognitive impairment or early cognitive decline associated with aging. Participation was granted only after they received a full explanation of the study and provided written informed consent. The average age of participants was 73.6 years (SD = 2.4), with 70.8% female and 29.2% male.

2.2 Overview of the Computerized Cognitive Rehabilitation Program

The computerized cognitive rehabilitation program used in this study comprised tasks across seven domains aimed at strengthening attention, memory, executive function, and language abilities. Participants used the program for 30 minutes per day, three times a week, over the course of one week, using a touchscreen-based interface. Immediate feedback was provided after each task, including scoring and voice messages to promote a sense of achievement and motivation. The entire process was

initially guided by an individual instructor, after which participants performed the tasks independently, with research staff available for support as needed.

2.3 UX and Adaptability Survey Composition

After completing the program, participants were provided with a survey consisting of 20 closed-ended items and 3 open-ended items to comprehensively evaluate their user experience. The survey covered four major areas: overall usage experience, operability and visual design, feedback and interest factors, and discomfort during use. Responses were recorded using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). A detailed breakdown of the survey items is presented in <Table 1>.

Table 1. UX Adaptability Items and Open-ended Questions

Number	Item Content
General Perception of Use	
1	The program was generally easy to use.
2	I had no difficulty understanding how to use the program.
3	I felt cognitively stimulated after using the program.
4	I would like to use it again.
5	I would recommend it to others.
Operation and Visual Design	
6	Touch operation was easy.
7	Button locations were clearly identifiable.
8	The font size and color made it easy to read.
9	Visual information was not overly complex.
10	Menu navigation was intuitive.
Feedback and Engagement Elements	
11	The score feedback was helpful.
12	The voice feedback was helpful.
13	I found the program interesting.
14	The level of difficulty was appropriate.
15	I felt a sense of accomplishment.
Difficulties Experienced During Use	
16	My eyes became fatigued.
17	It was difficult to operate due to hand tremors or joint problems.

18	The voice guidance was too fast or hard to understand.
19	The screen layout was confusing.
20	The repetitive tasks felt boring.
Open-ended Questions	
21	What did you like most about using the program?
22	Were there any difficulties or inconveniences while using the program?
23	If the program were to be improved, what changes would you like to see?

2.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed by calculating the mean (M), standard deviation (SD), and frequency (%). Open-ended responses were analyzed using thematic analysis to extract key response categories.

3. Results

3.1 Overall Perception of Use

This section assessed older adults' overall satisfaction, comprehension, willingness to reuse the program, and likelihood of recommending it to others. The overall average score was 4.32, indicating a very high level of acceptance and trust in the program. The highest-rated item was “The program was generally easy to use” (M = 4.5), suggesting that the user interface and experience (UI/UX) were designed with sufficient consideration for older adults’ cognitive and physical abilities. Similarly, high scores were reported for “I would like to use the program again” (M = 4.4) and “I would recommend it to others” (M = 4.2), indicating a positive and lasting impression that goes beyond initial curiosity. The item “I felt cognitively stimulated after using the program” (M = 4.2) is particularly noteworthy, as it reflects participants' subjective experiences of mental engagement, suggesting the potential clinical effectiveness of the cognitive training. The item “I had no difficulty understanding the program” (M = 4.3) implies that explanations and components were well communicated, which is especially important given that older adults often experience slower information processing. These findings suggest that the program effectively applied clear instructions and accessible language.

3.2 Operation and Visual Design

This domain evaluated how convenient and intuitive the users found the program’s interface and controls, with an average score of 4.18, reflecting relatively high satisfaction. The item “Touch controls were easy to use” (M = 4.1) carries particular significance, as older adults often face challenges such as hand tremors, joint stiffness, and slower reaction times. The high score suggests that button size, placement, and

response speed were well optimized. High scores for “Button locations were clear” (M = 4.3) and “Menu navigation was intuitive” (M = 4.3) also indicate that the information architecture matched user expectations. A simple layout—such as assigning one function per screen and visually emphasizing the “Back” button—may have been effective. Although “Font size and color were comfortable to read” received a slightly lower score (M = 4.0), it was still positive. However, given that visual feedback is a sensitive issue for older adults, additional features such as contrast enhancement, adjustable font size, or night mode should be considered in future improvements. The item “Visual information was not overly complex” (M = 4.2) suggests that the amount and arrangement of information were well controlled, which is important given older adults’ difficulties with processing multiple pieces of information simultaneously.

3.3 Feedback and Engagement

This section evaluated how engaging the users found the program and the effectiveness of feedback (e.g., scores, voice prompts) in motivating cognitive activity. The overall average was 4.24, indicating very high satisfaction. The items “I found the program interesting” (M = 4.3) and “I felt a sense of achievement” (M = 4.3) are especially meaningful, as older adults often lack motivational stimuli in daily life. The sense of accomplishment after completing tasks suggests that the cognitive challenges and feedback were well designed. The item “The task difficulty was appropriate” (M = 4.4) implies that the program's adaptive difficulty settings—such as offering easy, medium, and difficult levels—were effective. Ensuring tasks are not overly difficult is essential for maintaining engagement. “Score feedback was helpful” (M = 4.2) and “Voice feedback was useful” (M = 4.0) indicate the effectiveness of immediate feedback systems. Given that older adults may be sensitive to auditory information, voice feedback can enhance emotional engagement and comprehension, while score feedback can boost self-efficacy.

3.4 Discomfort During Use

This section focused on discomfort experienced during program use, with an average score of 2.32, indicating relatively low levels of discomfort. Since lower scores reflect fewer difficulties, the results suggest minimal overall issues, although specific areas for improvement emerged. The lowest-scoring item was “It was difficult to operate due to hand tremors or joint issues” (M = 2.1), indicating that physical touch control remains a barrier for some users. This underscores the need for design enhancements such as larger on-screen buttons, voice command options, or assistive devices (e.g., stylus pens, remote controls). The items “My eyes became fatigued” (M = 2.3) and “I felt confused by the screen layout” (M = 2.2) suggest that improvements in visual design may be necessary. Considering older adults' limited attention spans, features such as task time limits or eye-protective screen settings may be beneficial. The item “Voice instructions were too fast or difficult to understand” (M = 2.4) appears somewhat inconsistent with previous positive responses to voice feedback, indicating a need for

adjustable voice speed or clarity. For users with cognitive decline or hearing loss, slow-paced instructions, replay functions, and accompanying subtitles may be helpful. Lastly, “Repetitive tasks felt boring” (M = 2.6) had a relatively higher score in this section, indicating that some users experienced task fatigue. Increasing task variety, adding gamified elements, or incorporating story-based content may help address this issue.

Table 2. Response Analysis for UX and Adaptability Items

Number	Item Content	M	SD
General Perception of Use			
1	The program was generally easy to use.	4.5	0.7
2	I had no difficulty understanding how to use the program.	4.3	0.8
3	I felt cognitively stimulated after using the program.	4.2	0.9
4	I would like to use it again.	4.4	0.8
5	I would recommend it to others.	4.2	0.9
Operation and Visual Design			
6	Touch operation was easy.	4.1	1.0
7	Button locations were clearly identifiable.	4.3	0.8
8	The font size and color made it easy to read.	4.0	1.1
9	Visual information was not overly complex.	4.2	0.9
10	Menu navigation was intuitive.	4.3	0.7
Feedback and Engagement Elements			
11	The score feedback was helpful.	4.2	0.9
12	The voice feedback was helpful.	4.0	1.0
13	I found the program interesting.	4.3	0.8
14	The level of difficulty was appropriate.	4.4	0.7
15	I felt a sense of accomplishment.	4.3	0.8
Difficulties Experienced During Use			
16	My eyes became fatigued.	2.3	1.2
17	It was difficult to operate due to hand tremors or joint problems.	2.1	1.3
18	The voice guidance was too fast or hard to understand.	2.4	1.1
19	The screen layout was confusing.	2.2	1.0
20	The repetitive tasks felt boring.	2.6	1.3

3.5 Open-ended Responses

3.5.1. What did you like about using the program?

Respondents most frequently mentioned enjoyment, cognitive stimulation, and ease of use as positive aspects of the program. Comments such as “It felt like playing a game,” “Time passed quickly,” and “It seems helpful for preventing dementia” suggest that the program was perceived not merely as a functional training tool but as an engaging activity. Especially for older adults, the comment that it “makes you think” served as a key indicator of cognitive stimulation. Neutral responses indicated that while the program was easy to use, it was not particularly impressive, and some noted that although it initially felt fresh, maintaining long-term interest was challenging. Negative feedback included remarks such as “The tasks were repetitive and monotonous” and “The content felt childish,” highlighting the need for content design that better matches the user’s age and cognitive level.

3.5.2. Were there any inconveniences or difficulties while using the program?

Positive responses emphasized that the interface was intuitive and presented little inconvenience. However, neutral and negative responses revealed several issues, particularly related to physical limitations (e.g., hand tremors, visual discomfort) and interface design. Comments such as “Touching the screen is hard because my hands shake,” “The font is too small and strains my eyes,” and “I didn’t know what to press” underline the importance of accessible UI/UX design for older users. Neutral feedback also pointed out issues such as the need for adjustable speech speed and the lack of directional cues during menu navigation, suggesting the need for more fine-tuned user interface adjustments.

3.5.3. What improvements would you like to see in the program?

Positive respondents agreed that the program was fundamentally beneficial and proposed enhancements such as increased game variety, achievement rewards, and the addition of challenges to support sustained motivation. These suggestions reflect the view that the program should go beyond short-term engagement and foster long-term habit formation and intrinsic motivation. Neutral responses commonly included requests for technical improvements such as adjustable font sizes, speech speed control, and personalized difficulty levels. These highlight the need for personalized settings that accommodate diverse users in terms of age, device familiarity, and cognitive ability. Negative feedback pointed to basic usability and content redesign needs, with comments such as “The buttons are too small and hard to press,” “The screen layout is confusing,” and “The content is boring.”

Table 3. Analysis of Responses to UX Open-ended Questions

Type	Response Conten
Q1. What did you like about using the program?	
Positive	It was fun like a game, so time passed quickly.
	It felt like I was using my brain, which I think will help prevent dementia.
Neutral	I was worried at first, but it was easier to follow than I expected.
	The content was average, and the instructions were clear, so it wasn't too difficult.
	The usage wasn't difficult, but nothing particularly memorable stood out.
	It was novel since it was my first time using such a program, but it became boring over time.
	Honestly, nothing really stood out. I just spent time on it.
Negative	The problem-solving was repetitive and felt the same, so I got bored quickly.
	The content felt childish for an adult.
Q2. Were there any difficulties or inconveniences while using the program?	
Positive	There weren't any particular difficulties. It worked better than I expected.
	It was easy to use, and I adapted quickly.
	No major issues, and the operation was intuitive.
Neutral	My fingers are less sensitive, so sometimes the touch didn't register well.
	Swiping between screens was a bit confusing.
	The voice guide was too fast—having a replay option would be helpful.
Negative	The text was too small, so my eyes got tired quickly.
	It was hard to control because of hand tremors.
	The screen layout was cluttered, and I didn't know what to press.
Q3. If the program were to be improved, what changes would you suggest?	
Positive	I'd keep using it if more varied games were added.
	It would be more fun if there were more levels and challenges.
	It would be nice to receive rewards that give a sense of accomplishment.
Neutral	I hope the voice guide speed can be adjusted.
	A feature to customize the difficulty level would be helpful.
	I'd like to be able to change the font size or text color.
Negative	The buttons were too small and hard to press. I hope the interface gets larger.
	The screen was too cluttered, so I didn't know where to start.

The content was boring and repetitive, so I lost interest quickly.

---

4. Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate that even individuals in their 70s can report generally positive user experiences with a computerized cognitive rehabilitation program. In particular, repetitive problem-solving tasks, immediate feedback, and appropriate difficulty adjustments were identified as key elements that enhanced user engagement. This aligns with previous findings that emphasize the critical role of feedback in motivating older adults and stimulating cognitive activity. Furthermore, the high intention to reuse the program observed in this study suggests its potential for sustainable digital intervention among the elderly population.

However, some participants reported visual fatigue and difficulties with the speed of audio instructions, pointing to limitations in age-friendly design. For older adults experiencing presbyopia or hearing loss, the speed and format of information delivery can significantly affect cognitive processing. Therefore, the availability of personalized settings—such as font size adjustment and voice speed control—may be crucial factors influencing continued use and overall user satisfaction.

Additionally, the older adult population is highly heterogeneous, meaning that task complexity and information processing speed can vary considerably between individuals. This underscores the need for personalized UX design that considers a wide range of factors, including cognitive level, sensory function, and digital literacy. For example, rather than offering fixed difficulty levels or a single feedback method, providing multiple user-selectable modes may yield more effective outcomes.

Maintaining user interest is another critical consideration. Some participants noted that repeated use of the program reduced its novelty and engagement value, highlighting the need for content diversification. This suggests that cognitive rehabilitation programs designed for long-term use must strike a balance between the benefits of repetition and the risk of user fatigue. Incorporating diverse visual elements and carefully selected gamification strategies may help sustain user motivation and deepen immersion.

Finally, while this study is limited by its small sample size, its value lies in presenting user-centered data that inform directions for improving UX design for older adults. Future research should include both quantitative and qualitative studies involving more diverse older populations. Longitudinal research designs will be particularly important for verifying correlations between program usage and actual cognitive improvement. In addition, environmental factors—such as home-based use and family support—should also be considered in evaluating the effectiveness and sustainability of program implementation.

고령자를 위한 전산화 인지재활 프로그램의 사용자 경험 및 적응도 평가

박상욱 (대구대학교 언어치료학과 강사)

EASPP 2025

연구 배경 및 필요성

- 초고령사회 진입 상황
  - ✓2024년 65세 이상 인구 비율 '약 18%'
  - ✓빠르게 늘어나는 고령층 인지기능 저하 문제
- 사회적 의미
  - ✓경도인지장애(MCI) → 치매로 전이될 가능성 증가
  - ✓인지적 독립성이 삶의 질 향상에 핵심

연구 배경 및 필요성

- 전산화 인지재활의 장점
  - ✓반복 훈련 가능(사용 횟수 및 성과 자동 기록)
  - ✓시간·장소 제약 없음(복지관, 가정 등 자유롭게 사용)
  - ✓자율 사용 유도(고령자 스스로의 사용 편의성 제공)
- 디지털 환경에 대한 고령층 특성
  - ✓터치스크린 익숙하지 않음
  - ✓조작에 대한 심리적 부담 존재
  - ✓디지털 불편감이 수용성 저해 요인

연구 목적

- 사용자 경험(UX) 평가
  - ✓고령자 관점에서 화면 구성·조작 난이도·흥미도 분석
- 적응도 및 수용성 분석
  - ✓사용 후 지속 의사와 자율 조작 여부 측정
- 정량·정성적 분석 병행
  - ✓설문 결과 + 개방형 문항 + 면담 내용을 종합
- 개선 방향 현장 반영
  - ✓UI/UX 개선을 위한 정리된 사용자 피드백 제공

연구 방법 개요

- 참여자
  - ✓15명 (M 5 / F 10)
  - ✓평균 연령 72세 (70–79세)
- 절차
  - ✓사전 인지 선별 (MMSE)
  - ✓1:1 체험 (30분)
  - ✓UX 설문 + 개방형 응답 + 심층 면담

UX 설문 구성

- 문항 구성
  - ✓구조화된 20 문항 (4개 영역 × 5 문항), 개방형 3 문항
  - ✓조작 편의성 | 시각 구성 | 피드백/흥미 요소 | 불편사항
- 채점 기준
  - ✓리커트 5점 척도
  - ✓1 = 전혀 아니다 / 5 = 매우 그렇다
- 문항 예시
  - ✓"혼자 조작할 수 있었다"
  - ✓"화면 구성이 보기 쉬웠다"
  - ✓"프로그램이 재미있었다"

개방형 문항 및 면담

- 개방형 질문 (3문항)
  - ✓프로그램의 가장 좋았던 점은?
  - ✓가장 불편했던 점은?
  - ✓개선하고 싶은 점은?
- 심층 면담 예시 문항
  - ✓"계속 사용할 의향이 있으신가요?"
  - ✓"가정에도 혼자서 가능한가요?"
  - ✓"어떤 보조 기능이 있으면 좋겠나요?"

정량 결과 요약

- 평균 및 표준편차 (n=15)
  - ✓전반적 인식: 4.5 ± 0.4
  - ✓조작/시각 구성: 4.4 ± 0.5
  - ✓피드백/흥미 요소: 4.3 ± 0.6
  - ✓불편사항: 2.1 ± 0.8
  - ✓전체 평균: ≥ 3.8

사용자 반응 – 긍정적 의견

- 조작 용이성
  - ✓"큰 버튼 덕분에 실수 없이 조작했어요"
  - ✓"글씨 크기에 안경 없이도 잘 보였습니다"
- 흥미 요소 효과
  - ✓점수·칭찬 메시지·현황 표시 → 동기 부여
  - ✓"내가 학생이 된 기분이에요."
  - ✓"딸이 준 태블릿 활용이 뿌듯해요."
- 익숙한 과제 제공
  - ✓'단어 맞추기', '숫자 순서 배열'... 놀이 감성 강화

사용자 반응 – 부정적 의견

- 시간 압박으로 인한 긴장
  - ✓"손이 느려서 다 못 풀었어요."
  - ✓"조금만 더 시간이 있었으면 좋겠어요."
- 피드백 상세 부족
  - ✓"왜 틀렸는지 설명해 주면 좋겠어요."
- 감각 피로 문제
  - ✓"30분 넘으니 눈·손이 피곤했어요."
  - ✓"잠깐 멈추고 휴식하는 화면 있었으면..."

UX 개선 시사점

- 시간 조절 기능
  - ✓자동 난이도 기반 시간 설정
  - ✓사용자 설정 시간 선택 기능
- 맞춤형 피드백
  - ✓오답 시 간단한 이유/정답 이유 표시
- 감각 피로 보완
  - ✓밝기 조절, 음성 안내, 자동 휴식 유도
  - ✓터치 민감도 및 반응 속도 조절
- 강화 피드백 요소
  - ✓"어제보다 2점 상승!" 등의 동기 강화 메시지
  - ✓연속 사용 일수 통계 제공

적응도 평가 결과

- 혼자 조작 가능 여부
  - ✓두 번째부터 독자적 사용
  - ✓크거나 작은 글씨·버튼으로 다소 어려움
- 반복 사용 의사
  - ✓"하루 10분씩 하고 싶어요."
  - ✓"집에서 혼자도 쉽게 사용할 수 있다."
- 기술 부담감 완화
  - ✓체험 전 긴장감 → 체험 후 "생각보다 쉽다" 반응

개별 사례 A

- 처음엔 불안
  ✓"이걸 내가 할 수 있을까..." 표현
- 2~3회 시도 → 자립적 사용
  ✓"혼자 할 수 있어서 기분 좋았다"
  ✓"가족과 함께해도 재미있을 것 같다"

개별 사례 B

- 디지털 경험 풍부
  ✓스마트폰으로 유튜브·뉴스에 익숙한 유형
- 높은 몰입도
  ✓"게임 같아서 즐겁다"
  ✓"목표 점수를 정하고 반복하고 싶다" → 지속 사용 의지

결과 요약

- 쉬움 + 재미
  ✓고령층도 직관적 UX 덕에 빠르게 적응
- 긍정 경험 → 반복 의지 강화
  ✓#사용용이성 #흥미동기 #반복참여
- 개선요소 개선 시 수용성↑
  ✓시간·피드백·감각 지원 강화 필요

논의 및 제언

- 디지털 취약층 고정관념 타파 가능
- 확장 가능성
- 비대면 재활 프로그램
- 지역 간 중재 접근성 강화
- 개인 맞춤형 훈련 설계
- 디지털 리터러시 동시 강화 필요

연구 한계 및 향후 과제

- 표본 및 지역 제한 → 일반화 어려움
- 단기 체험 → 장기 사용 특징 분석 불가
- 개별 특성 정량 분석 부족
- 향후 연구 설계 방향
- 장기 추적조사 포함
- 인지능력 변화 정량 측정
- 정서적 반응 분석 포함

결론

- 높은 사용자 수용성 확인
- UX 설계 중요성 재확인
- 사람 중심 기술 설계 → 실제 사용으로 연결 필요

향후 연구 방향

- 맞춤형 훈련 콘텐츠 개발
- 가정 기반 장기 사용 모니터링
- 보조기기 활용 효과 검증
- 음성 안내, 터치펜 등
- 가족/돌봄자 연계 요소 강화
- AI 기반 난이도 자동 조절 기능 개발

질의응답

경청해 주셔서 감사합니다.

Amy Lee (Kyungpook National University)

"Ego Integration in Elderly Women through Narrative Therapy: A Life History Study Based on Narrative Humanities Counseling".

I. Introduction

South Korea is entering a super-aged society at the fastest pace in the world. According to Statistics Korea, individuals aged 65 and older are projected to comprise 20% of the total population by 2025, and more than 40% by 2050 (Statistics Korea, 2024).[1] Advances in science and medicine continue to increase life expectancy, contributing to dramatic shifts in the nation's demographic structure. These changes bring forth a range of social and psychological challenges, particularly for elderly women, who have a life expectancy approximately 6.8 years longer than that of men. Many of these women face emotional distress and identity confusion resulting from the loss of a spouse, retirement, and the departure of adult children. Prolonged periods of solitary living further exacerbate their social isolation and psychological vulnerability. The mental health of elderly women is closely tied to Erik H. Erikson's theory of ego integrity[2], the final stage of human psychosocial development. Erikson conceptualized this stage as the individual's ability to achieve coherence in their life narrative. This framework aligns with contemporary practices in narrative therapy[3], life story research, and autobiographical writing. Narrative therapy in particular offers elderly individuals the opportunity to reconstruct their life experiences into coherent stories, explore alternative identities, and become the authors of their own narratives, thereby promoting ego integration. In this context, ego integration in old age is not merely a matter of emotional stability, but represents the ultimate realization of human wholeness (Noh & Kang, cited in p. 525).

Taking these realities into account, the present study aims to develop a narrative therapy program rooted in literary counseling—also referred to as "narrative

[1] According to Statistics Korea, by 2025, individuals aged 65 and older will account for 20% of the population, and by 2050, over 40% (Statistics Korea).

[2] Erik H. Erikson divided the human life cycle into nine stages, identifying ego integration in old age as the final stage in which individuals experience a sense of narrative completeness. This concept is closely linked to contemporary therapeutic approaches such as narrative therapy, life history research, and autobiographical writing. Narrative therapy, in particular, offers older adults the opportunity to reconstruct their lives in narrative form, discover alternative identities, and author their own stories, thereby fostering ego integration. Thus, ego integration in later life is not merely an emotional state but can be understood as the ultimate realization of human wholeness (Noh & Kang, qtd. in 525).

[3] Michael White, a pioneer of narrative therapy, was notably reluctant to use terms such as "therapy" or "counseling." Instead, he often preferred the word "consulting" and even referred to his practice as "connecting people therapy" (Kim, qtd. in 4). This linguistic choice reflects a broader paradigm shift in the fields of psychotherapy and healing—one that emphasizes relational meaning-making over individual pathology. Consequently, the term "client" is also avoided in many narrative therapy contexts, especially in Western settings. This is because narrative therapy views "problems" not as internal defects of the individual, but as issues that are socially and culturally constructed within communities (Kim 4).

counseling" or "story therapy"—to support ego integration among elderly women in Korea. Narrative therapy was originally conceptualized by Michael White and David Epston in the 1980s, as a departure from traditional problem-centered models. It emphasizes re-authoring one's life through storytelling, thus redefining the meaning of personal experiences and supporting the formation of a more integrated sense of self (Kim, p. 4). White preferred terms such as "connecting people therapy" over "therapy" or "counseling," reflecting a paradigm shift away from pathologizing individuals and toward understanding problems as socially and culturally embedded phenomena. Accordingly, narrative therapy also avoids the term "client" and instead promotes a collaborative approach, emphasizing shared meaning-making and mutual recognition (Kim, p. 4).

There are five key reasons why narrative therapy research focusing on elderly Korean women is both timely and necessary. First, as Korea transitions rapidly into a super-aged society, the emotional and psychological support of older adults becomes increasingly important. Second, elderly individuals need opportunities to heal past wounds, reinterpret their present selves, and envision a hopeful future. Third, there is a growing social imperative to recognize the value of older adults' life experiences, enhancing their self-esteem and sense of belonging, while fostering intergenerational understanding. Fourth, the current implementation of narrative therapy for older adults in Korea remains limited, underscoring the urgent need for systematic research and program development. Fifth, narrative and emotional approaches must be considered essential components of a new paradigm in elder care and mental health policy within the context of Korea's demographic transformation.

In light of these considerations, this study seeks to explore the essential value of narrative therapy as a transformative practice that enables elderly women to become authors of their own stories and to reconstruct their identities within a socially meaningful context. By engaging elderly female participants in co-constructing, narrating, and publishing their life experiences, the study aims to examine the therapeutic impact of narrative practices and assess their potential to promote ego integration in later life.

II. Theoretical Background

1. The Lives and Narratives of the Elderly

In South Korea, longevity, while traditionally seen as a blessing, is increasingly emerging as a social issue linked to the declining quality of life among the elderly. According to the 2023 Statistics on the Elderly by Statistics Korea, the elderly poverty rate stands at 39.3%, meaning that more than one in three seniors live below the poverty line. This economic reality has driven many elderly individuals back into the labor market in order to sustain their livelihoods. The prevalence of elderly labor reflects structural conditions in which even those over the age of 70 continue to contribute to society as active workers, echoing trends observed in Japan, which entered a super-aged society earlier than Korea (Lee, 2023). However, the challenges

of aging extend beyond economics. The 2023 National Suicide Survey by the Ministry of Health and Welfare reveals that the leading causes of suicide attempts among those aged 60 and older are mental health issues (28.4% in their 60s, 28.0% in their 70s, and 25.8% in those over 80) and physical illness (21.4% in their 70s and 26.5% in those over 80). Korea's elderly suicide rate is 24.8 per 100,000 population, far exceeding the OECD average of 10.7, making it one of the highest among developed nations. These statistics underline the urgent need for psychiatric management and preventative counseling interventions targeting the elderly population.

This study emphasizes that old age should not be viewed merely as a biological phase of decline or be socially dismissed. Rather, older adults possess a wealth of life experience, and it is through narrative-based literary therapy that they can revisit, reflect upon, and reconstruct their identities. In this sense, aging is a dynamic process of ongoing relationship-building and self-exploration. Erik H. Erikson systematized the stages of human development into nine phases, identifying old age as the final stage—ego integrity—during which individuals reflect on their lives as a whole and strive for a sense of completeness and meaning (Erikson 584–586). As Korean society continues its rapid demographic transition into a super-aged society, this final stage becomes increasingly significant. The elderly in Korea have lived through war, industrialization, and intense social change, often forming their identities within a traditional, family-centered cultural framework. However, as family structures and societal roles have transformed, many elderly individuals face identity confusion and social isolation. Ego integrity is therefore deeply intertwined not only with psychological stability but also with the restoration of social relationships. Those who successfully achieve ego integrity are able to accept their life narratives, reinterpret their experiences positively, and find renewed meaning in life. This acceptance can lead to a peaceful and wise approach to death as a natural conclusion to a fulfilled life.

In contrast, failure to achieve ego integrity can result in despair, hopelessness, and a sense of worthlessness, which in turn can lead to depression and heightened social isolation among the elderly. This issue is not merely a personal concern but a national policy challenge that requires collective attention and intervention.

2. Narrative Therapy

Narrative therapy is a therapeutic approach that understands human life as constructed through stories, helping individuals assign new meaning to their experiences and ultimately supporting ego integration. Unlike traditional psychological frameworks that locate problems within the individual, narrative therapy emphasizes the sociocultural contexts in which problems are embedded. According to Kim Beon-Young, one of the prominent scholars in this field, narrative therapy enables individuals to "re-author" their life stories, allowing them to reinterpret their lives and reconstruct their identities as autonomous agents (Kim 4). This re-authoring process is critical, as it allows clients to revisit their past experiences from new perspectives and generate alternative meanings that are more empowering and growth-oriented.

The core of narrative therapy lies in the process of reconstruction. Clients are guided to reframe negatively interpreted experiences and reweave them into narratives that are hopeful, resilient, and affirming. Narrative therapy is especially effective for elderly women, who often face significant changes in life roles. The loss of a spouse, the departure of children, and reduced social participation frequently lead to emotional challenges such as loneliness and disconnection. These women often have few opportunities to share their life stories, which can negatively impact their psychological and emotional well-being. Narrative therapy provides a meaningful space for expression and reconnection, enabling them to reconstruct their identities and regain a sense of agency and value in later life. It also strengthens social connectedness and enhances intergenerational communication.

In contemporary psychotherapy, the concept of “narrative” has emerged as a core framework not only for understanding human experiences but also for healing and integration. Both narrative therapy and narrative-oriented approaches share the view that human beings are inherently storytelling creatures who construct meaning and identity through the act of narrating their lives (Kim Jinsu 97; Yang Yuseong 78). Through this narrative process, individuals restructure their experiences within temporal frameworks, fostering self-understanding, emotional integration, and renewed direction in life. These approaches also emphasize the therapeutic power of storytelling itself, where the acts of telling and listening become moments of recognition, validation, and empathetic transformation (Park Seonghee 183; Kim Hyesook 320). In this study, the researcher adopts the term “narrative therapy” inclusively to encompass both structured therapeutic and narrative-informed approaches, aiming to interpret and understand meaning within the life stories of elderly women.

III. Program Development and Research Methods

1. Research Method and Program Content

his study was designed to implement life history writing with elderly women through narrative humanities counseling based on narrative therapy, and to extend this process toward ego integration. As Korean society rapidly transitions into a super-aged structure, emotional isolation and identity loss among elderly women are becoming increasingly severe, highlighting the need for a therapeutic and humanistic counseling approach that engages their life experiences in a healing context. To this end, the study was conducted as an action research project, implemented in two locations: a welfare center in Gyeongsan, North Gyeongsang Province (2022), and a residential area in Sangyeok-dong, Daegu (2024). All participants were elderly women, and the program was developed as a customized therapeutic model combining both group and individual counseling sessions. The researcher, trained as a humanities counselor, directly participated in and led the execution of the program, enabling close observation of the practical counseling process and its effects.

The program adopted narrative therapy—classified under literary therapy—as its core methodology and was structured around a “life writing” model. The intervention went beyond simple reminiscing; participants reconstructed life events into coherent narratives and explored the emotional, identity, and meaning-laden layers within. A central method was “externalizing conversation,” which helped participants distance themselves from problems and achieve reflective insight. This process functioned as a form of psychological self-care. The counselor helped concretize emotionally significant episodes from participants' oral narratives and co-constructed them with emotional responsiveness. Furthermore, each interview was documented, and pivotal life moments were visualized using AI-generated imagery. This visualization served not just as a supplementary tool, but as a therapeutic device that enabled participants to observe their lives from a new, external perspective. Through this multidimensional approach—narration, narrative reconstruction, emotional reflection, and visual storytelling—the program demonstrated its practical potential in fostering ego integration among elderly women.

2. Research Participants

The participants in this study included nine elderly women from the Gyeongsan Senior Welfare Center in 2022, and five elderly women from the Sangyeok-dong area in Daegu in 2024. Most participants expressed difficulty with writing in Korean, which led the study to emphasize narrative therapy techniques over traditional writing. The first case study, conducted in Gyeongsan in 2022, involved individual counseling sessions where the process of “counseling–transcription–text analysis–oral life writing” was repeated and ultimately led to collaborative publication. The second case study in 2024 focused on elderly women in Sangyeok-dong, an area with a concentrated senior population. The participants, mostly between the ages of 70 and 85, were active and self-motivated, often walking from their residences to join the group sessions. In this program, participants used AI-generated drawings to visualize their “happiest memory,” employing a memory collage technique to reconstruct personal narratives both emotionally and visually. The final session included a small community publishing event, bringing together participating institutions, students, and elderly residents. In both 2022 and 2024, the research followed a similar format: one-on-one oral narrative-based counseling conducted by graduate-level researchers, with the session structure consisting of “initial group meeting–individual counseling (4 sessions)–follow-up call or meeting–final publishing gathering.”

3. Program Implementation Process

The development and execution of the program required a significant investment of time. In the Gyeongsan program, the counseling phase lasted approximately two months. This was partly due to the participants’ involvement in other cognitive enhancement programs and the time required to establish trust. However, this preparatory phase proved essential in fostering emotional security and rapport. During this period, the researcher closely observed the participants’ communication styles,

emotional expressions, and personal dispositions, which informed the design of the subsequent narrative-based individual counseling sessions. The Sangyeok-dong program involved five elderly women selected from the local community. All program activities were structured as literary therapy exercises centered on narrative techniques. In the early stages, where theoretical knowledge of oral life history was limited, professional supervision was incorporated to refine the research design. This included the development of interview questions, dialogue techniques, documentation procedures, narrative structuring strategies, and the publication process. Through this methodical preparation and the establishment of trust with elderly participants, the study successfully executed a narrative therapy-based literary therapy program with practical impact.

The program was implemented in six structured phases, each designed to guide elderly participants through a therapeutic narrative process that supports ego integration. The sequence of the program is as follows (see Table X):

Table X. Narrative Therapy Process for Ego Integration in Later Life

Step	Process Name	Description
1	Basic Theoretical Learning	Participants learn the core concepts of narrative therapy and aging. Introductory lectures cover narrative ethics, gerontology, and key life-stage issues.
2	Initial Narrative Preparation	Individual narrative sessions begin. Pre-interview materials and participant background data are collected.
3	Narrative Therapy Iteration	Continued one-on-one sessions are conducted. Stories are revised, refined, and deepened through reflective dialogue.
4	Text Analysis and Interpretation	Narrative transcripts are analyzed. Key emotional themes are extracted and follow-up questions for therapeutic exploration are developed.
5	Final Narrative Compilation	AI-generated images are created based on participants' stories. Final manuscripts and publication drafts are prepared.
6	Publication and Sharing	A small publishing event is held. Participants share their life stories and engage in ego-integrating reflection within a social context.

This study was conducted over six distinct stages, culminating in the final publication phase. Notably, stages 2 through 5 required repeated counseling sessions in which participants revised and refined their narratives through multiple iterations of narrative therapy. The oral life history methodology employed here involved both the elderly participant and the researcher as co-authors, creating the narrative through mutual emotional engagement. As each elderly participant explored their life story in depth, their personal narratives—intertwined with broader historical contexts—were reflected upon and positively reinterpreted in the present moment.

From a narrative therapeutic perspective, revisiting positive memories from the past allows individuals to rediscover their self-worth and affirm the value of a life lived with

resilience. Through structured reminiscence, participants revisit their childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and current stage of life, gaining insight into unresolved emotions and fractured relationships. This process enables the mature present self to offer new interpretations to the past—toward family members who could not be forgiven, or to earlier versions of the self—thus paving the way toward ego integration and emotional resolution.

IV. Analysis of Research Results

1. Case Study: Gyeongsan Senior Welfare Center

The program implemented in this study revealed a concrete psychological process toward ego integration in later life through the narratives of nine elderly participants. Narrative therapy functioned not as mere reminiscence but as a transformative device for reconstructing life stories. It facilitated the externalization of suppressed emotions, the reconfiguration of meaning, and the recovery of identity.

First, emotional catharsis and the release of repressed feelings were observed through narrative openness. For instance, Mr. Song's tears, Ms. Geum's recollections of her father, and Ms. Seo's acceptance of loss exemplify what Herman describes as the stages of "memory and mourning," wherein unspoken pain becomes verbalized and integrated (Herman, 178–90).

Second, the core of narrative reconstruction and identity recovery was evident. Participants such as Ms. Geum, Ms. Park, and Ms. Je were able to reinterpret negative past experiences, leading to transformative self-acceptance and identity reformation. This aligns with White's concept of "re-authoring alternative stories" (White, 117–19), as well as Ricœur's theory of "the interplay between temporality and narrative in identity construction" (Ricœur, 35–44).

Third, the importance of a relationally grounded therapeutic space emerged as a critical factor. Cases involving Ms. Park and Ms. Kim demonstrated that the absence of a "safe space for dialogue" impeded the narrative flow, underscoring White's emphasis on the necessity of a "non-judgmental environment for narrative recovery" (White, 92–95). Furthermore, the experience of "being heard" fostered the psychological outcome described by Go Mi-young as "the restoration of existential value" (Go, 78–80).

Fourth, the effects of narrative intervention at the crossroads of despair were notable. Cases involving Ms. Lee, Ms. Han, and elderly couples illustrated how psychological peace and agency were preserved even amid the pain of loss and regret. This corresponds with Erikson's assertion that ego integration in later life is characterized by "a positive review of life and an acceptance of death" (Erikson, 105–107). These findings affirm that narrative therapy functions not merely as problem-solving but as a practical tool for philosophical acceptance of one's life.

Overall, this study offers empirical support for the potential of narrative therapy as a humanities-based therapeutic approach. Kim Jinsu asserts, "True recovery is not derived from external conditions but from internal acceptance through discovering

meaning within one's own life story" (Kim, 124). Through speaking, listening, documenting, and publishing their stories, participants experienced emotional integration and narrative distance, engaging in a process where the "philosophy of a lived life" was restored through the act of storytelling.

2. Case Study: Sangyeok-dong, Daegu

The program conducted in Sangyeok-dong went beyond simplicity, demonstrating literary therapeutic practices rooted in healing-centered writing and collaborative creation. Literary therapy, in this context, activates narrative resources that shape the inner self, functioning as a form of expressive arts therapy that helps alleviate emotional pain and life crises. This approach is especially effective for elderly women, who have historically had few opportunities to construct narratives "about themselves, by themselves, and for themselves" due to lifelong obligations centered on caregiving and social expectations. Thus, the stories created in this process become what Byeon Hak-soo calls "revelations of one's own self" (Byeon, 291), contributing to the recovery of agency and reestablishment of identity.

Moreover, the narrative therapy-based literary program offered a platform for both individual reflection and collective dialogue. It fostered solidarity and empathy among participants, expanding beyond personal reflection into communal resonance and social integration. The act of publishing served as a symbolic gesture that validated each participant's story as socially meaningful and communicatively powerful. It became not only a means of externalizing one's narrative but also a mechanism for reaffirming life's dignity and legitimacy.

In addition, this experience-based narrative therapy program supported the recovery of repressed or forgotten memories. Through catharsis, life restructuring, and ego integration, elderly participants were empowered to reclaim their roles as active agents in their own lives. The published books served not only to boost participants' self-esteem but also as tools for meaningful intergenerational communication. As such, narrative therapy based on literary methods contributes not only to enhancing the quality of life for elderly individuals but also to reducing social isolation and strengthening intergenerational connections. It can be understood as a culturally embedded and socially transformative practice.

V. Conclusion

Human beings live as finite entities within the structures of time and space. Within these frameworks, we accumulate diverse life experiences, which are then formed into narratives that serve as the foundation of identity and self-understanding. This study sought to explore the therapeutic potential of narrative therapy for elderly women aged 70 and above, enabling them to revisit their life journeys and articulate memories or wounds that even they had not previously confronted. By integrating AI-generated visualizations with narrative expression, the study attempted to support emotional integration through both verbal and visual storytelling.

At the core of narrative therapy lies the integration of temporality. Humans are inherently narrative beings—we interpret ourselves through stories and seek growth and change through them. White argued that individuals can reclaim alternative stories that have been silenced by dominant narratives, thereby reconstructing their sense of identity (White, 25–30). In particular, the technique of “externalizing problems” enables elderly participants to separate themselves from their struggles, shifting the perception from “I am the problem” to “I have a problem” (Yang, 165–170).

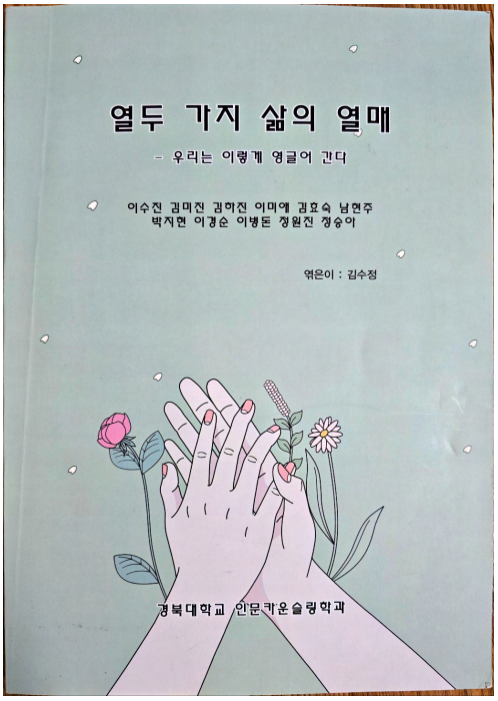
Narrative therapy begins with the assumption that people are born into stories. We live not only by the stories we tell ourselves but also by those told about us by others. These stories become the structure through which we interpret and navigate life. Because narrative therapy is fundamentally hermeneutic in nature—concerned with meaning-making—the central challenge in therapeutic settings is to help clients access alternative interpretations of their lived experiences. Practitioners must create opportunities for clients to move beyond limited constructions of self and explore new perspectives, enabling them to meet, accept, and integrate a renewed version of the self. In this sense, the act of recalling the past becomes a transformative process that can facilitate personal growth and emotional healing.

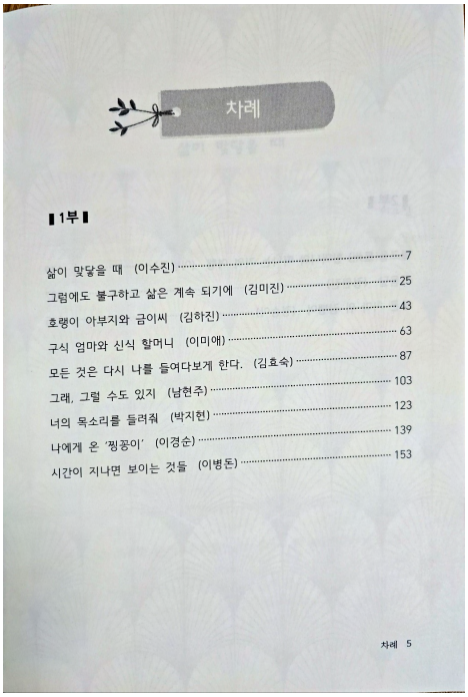
Despite its contributions, this study also revealed several limitations. First, the sample was demographically and regionally limited, consisting primarily of elderly women from Gyeongsan and the northern district of Daegu. As a result, the findings may not be generalizable to the broader elderly population in Korea. Second, while the combination of narrative therapy and AI-assisted visual storytelling appeared to have emotional effects, these outcomes were not quantitatively measured using standardized instruments. Third, some participants experienced discomfort or distance in engaging with digital technology, suggesting a gap in digital literacy that could affect accessibility and engagement.

In light of these limitations, future research should include a more diverse pool of participants in terms of region, gender, educational background, and socio-economic status. Additionally, a mixed-methods research design that incorporates pre- and post-tests using validated scales for cognitive function, depression, identity, and ego integration would enhance the reliability of findings. For the AI-assisted visual component, developing more user-friendly interfaces and emotionally adaptive personalization features could further enhance its therapeutic utility and accessibility.

Appendix 1

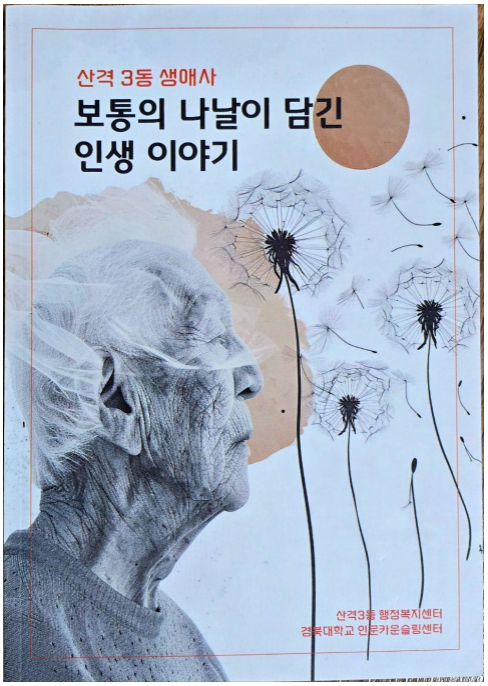
Post-Therapy Publication Materials from the Gyeongsan Senior Welfare Center

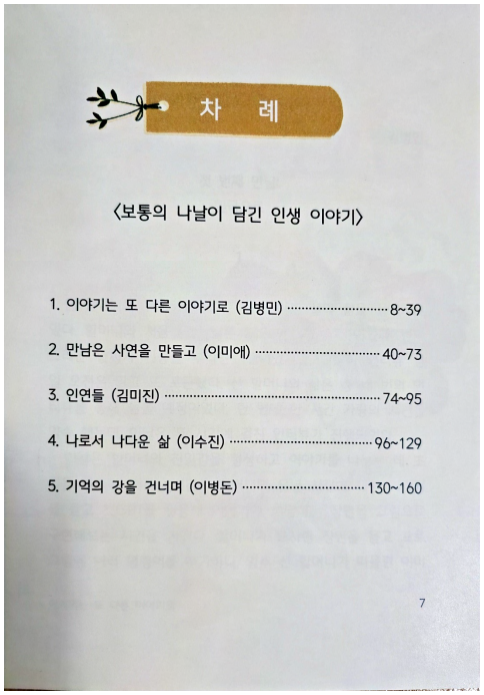




Appendix 2

Post-Therapy Publication Materials from Sangyeok-dong Narrative Therapy Program





Works Cited (Selected MLA Format Samples)

Books (Korean sources translated for MLA format):

Go, Mi-young. Narrative Therapy and Narrative Practice. Seoul: Cheongmok Publishing, 2004.

Kim, Beon-Young. Narrative Therapy and Counseling. Seoul: Solomon Books, 2007.

Kim, Jinsoo. Understanding Humanities Therapy. Seoul: Hanguk Munhwasa, 2017.

Noh, Ahn-young, and Kang, Young-shin. Personality Psychology: For Understanding and Growth. Seoul: Hakjisa, 2018.

Yang, Yu-seong. Narrative Therapy. Seoul: Hakjisa, 2004.

White, Michael. Narrative Practice. Translated by Kim Yusook et al., Seoul: Hakjisa, 2014.

Journal Articles:

Ko, Jung-eun, et al. "A Group Counseling Program for Elderly Mothers with Adult Children with Developmental Disabilities Using Narrative Therapy." Journal of Wellness, vol. 17, no. 3, 2022, pp. 337–342.

Kim, Tae-hee. "A Study on the Correlation Between Life History Writing and Narrative Identity Formation in the Elderly." Journal of Elderly Welfare Studies, no. 32, 2018, pp. 65–82.

Lee, In-sook, and Lee, Hyun-song. "Development of a Group Program for Ego Integrity in Old Age: My Life Story." Korean Journal of Gerontology, vol. 24, no. 1, 2004, pp. 37–52.

Theses and Dissertations:

Yeo, In-sook. “Development and Effectiveness of a Reminiscence-Based Narrative Therapy Program for Ego Integrity in the Elderly.” PhD diss., Kyungpook National University, 2005.

Shin, Dayoung. “A Study on the Experience of Adult Women Participating in an Autobiographical Writing Program.” Master’s thesis, Seoul National University, 2015.

English-Language Sources:

Clandinin, D. Jean, and F. Michael Connelly. Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research. Jossey-Bass, 2000.

Mandelbaum, David G. "The Study of Life History: Gandhi." Current Anthropology, vol. 14, no. 3, 1973, pp. 177–206.

White, Michael. Narrative Practice and the Externalizing of the Problem. Dulwich Centre, 1995.

Man-yu Lee (Kyungpook National University)
"Guiding AI Storytelling with Narrative Reasoning: A Life History Approach"

1. Introduction

The work of weaving human life into narratives has played an important role in various fields such as literature, history, and psychology for a long time. In particular, there has been a surge of interest in life history as a research method for studying the quality of life and aging in recent years. The life history method is gaining attention as a useful approach to understanding how specific choices and actions from the past reflect in the current lives, quality of life, and interpretations of their lives among the elderly[1].

If AI can be utilized to generate narratives that organically connect an individual's entire life, similar to life history novels, and induce emotional immersion, it could effectively implement the purpose of the life history approach. However, AI-based story generation tends to superficially summarize an individual's life or list events, leading to a lack of narrative integration and emotional depth.

To overcome these limitations, this study has designed a prompt structure based on a logical flow of thought and a reasoning-guided development method centered around core elements of life history, such as agency, communion, and social context. This approach encourages the model to follow a process of narratively inferring the significance and interconnections of important events within the context of the character's life, rather than simply listing information. This method aims to enhance both logical coherence and emotional persuasiveness during story generation, ultimately validating through experiments that it is more effective in producing richer and more immersive narratives compared to existing methods.

2. Research Background

2-1 The Advancement of Large Language Models and Their Narrative Generation Capabilities

Recent remarkable advancements in the field of Natural Language Processing (NLP) have ushered in a new phase with the emergence of Large Language Models (LLMs). Following the introduction of GPT-3, high-performance models such as GPT-4, Claude, and Gemini have been developed in succession, establishing a technical foundation capable of producing human-level results in context understanding and generation [2][3]. These models not only excel in simple sentence generation but also demonstrate stable performance in high-level language tasks such as narrative structure design, emotional expression, and character relationship depiction [4][5].

In particular, the narrative composition ability of LLMs is significantly influenced by the design of prompts. Recent studies have suggested that systematically structuring prompts or guiding the thought process in stages (Chain-of-Thought prompting) can contribute to the generation of more sophisticated narrative structures [6][7]. Such structuring strategies are noteworthy as they overcome the limitations of existing rule-based automatic generation systems—such as context disconnection and imbalance

in story development—enabling a more natural and coherent narrative composition [8]. Additionally, the Tree of Thoughts model has demonstrated that exploring problem-solving pathways in a branching tree-like manner can dramatically enhance creative text generation and narrative planning performance [9].

Thus, large language models are expanding beyond simple response generation functions into areas requiring narrative creativity, experimenting with their potential in various fields such as literary creation, screenplay writing, counseling, and educational content generation [10].

2-2 Creative Experiments Using Generative Language Models and the Potential of Life History Narratives

Experimental research aimed at evaluating the creative capabilities of LLMs has been actively conducted across various fields, particularly focusing on the applicability of AI in narrative content that reflects the flow of life and identity [4][6]. In this context, narrative generation experiments based on life history data have become an important approach to verify the extent to which AI can achieve continuous and contextual understanding of an individual's life.

For instance, using GPT-4, life history narratives based on a Structured Narrative Prompt have been generated, with expert evaluations indicating that about 87% of these narratives exhibited structural consistency and emotional persuasiveness similar to human narratives [10]. This suggests that LLMs can generate a certain level of narrative coherence and immersion, indicating the potential for AI's narrative composition capabilities to extend beyond mere information processing to the level of meaning-interpretative text construction.

Furthermore, the Story of Thought (SoT) framework has experimentally proven that the arrangement of narrative information effectively enhances the logical reasoning and accuracy of thought in LLMs [11]. However, AI-generated narratives still face challenges, particularly in genres like life history narratives that require complex temporality, reflection of identity, and emotional depth, often resulting in event-centered summaries and simplifications of character emotions [7][10]. To address this, it has been suggested that rather than simply listing input information, a stepwise information organization aligned with the flow of the narrative and the design of emotional context should be implemented.

Against this backdrop, this study aims to experimentally verify how the level of prompt structuring affects the generation results in the process of creating narratives based on life history data using large language models. Through this, it seeks to explore the potential of generative AI as a narrative tool for reconstructing life stories, along with its practical limitations.

3. Research Design and Methodology

3-1 Data Collection and Refinement Process

The data for this study is based on primary data derived from in-depth life history interviews conducted with the elderly. These interviews were designed and carried out by the life history research team, and a total of 10 participants were selected for the interviews. The interviews were not a one-time survey consisting of a single session, but rather were conducted through multiple sessions for each case, aiming to derive the internal meanings of life experiences and contexts rather than just surface-level event-centered information.

Due to the characteristics of the elderly population, various variables such as age-related constraints, health status, recall ability, and emotional sensitivity were involved in the interviews, resulting in a structurally heterogeneous nature of the overall interview data. Even for the same topic, there were significant variations in participants' response styles, emotional intensity, and levels of verbal expression, and the way the investigator posed questions also acted as a factor influencing the nature of the responses.

To standardize this non-standardized qualitative data for application in a language model-based automatic generation system, the research team systematically classified the interview content according to the core structural categories of life history narratives. In this process, the researcher avoided simple excerpts or summaries and structured the data while preserving the developmental aspects of life and internal meanings contained in each case as much as possible. This structure, designed to be used in prompts, serves as a foundation for the language model to more effectively grasp relationships between topics, temporal flow, and emotional connectivity. The data for the experiment was classified into six categories: (1) Basic, Agency, Communion, Society, Turning Point(TP), Coherence.

3-2 Prompt Template for Narrative Generation

This study was designed to focus on how prompts organize and develop information rather than on the length or amount of information in the prompts. A prompt template was constructed under the assumption that even with the same narrative elements, the narrative quality of the output can vary depending on the order in which it is presented, the context, and the way semantic connections are made.

The prompts used in the experiment were of three types, all of which included six common narrative elements (Basic, Agency, Communion, Society, Turning Point, Coherence) but were designed to have distinct differences in the way information was presented and the level of structuring.

- v1 (unstructured prompt) simply assigned the role of a "creative writer" to the AI, providing key information corresponding to the six elements and allowing it to freely construct the narrative. There were no separate instructions regarding the development of the story, style, or emotional flow, minimizing the prompt's intervention to observe the AI's autonomous interpretation and imagination. This version serves as a baseline to see how the AI constructs a life story under the least constraints.

- v2 (partially structured prompt) is based on the same narrative elements but includes brief descriptive backgrounds and emotional or contextual cues for each element. Summaries of character traits, emotional changes, and the flow of events are provided, guiding the AI to interpret and expand the narrative based on this information. This version represents a mid-level design that guides the basic flow of thought while allowing the AI to make key creative decisions on its own.
- v3 (structured prompt) is a more meticulously organized form of story generation, presenting plot components (planning, development, crisis, turning point, conclusion) sequentially according to semantic connections. Each stage includes detailed interpretive guidelines such as the character's inner motivations, emotional transitions, and changes in social context, guiding the AI to follow a flow of thought accompanied by logical reasoning and emotional development rather than merely listing information. Additionally, suggestions for stylistic devices (e.g., metaphors, repetitive structures) are included to help the AI organically combine complex narrative elements.

These three templates were designed on the premise that the prompt itself is a decisive design device that significantly influences the AI's narrative construction method, going beyond simple command levels. In particular, by analyzing how information is presented according to logical contexts, the study aims to empirically examine that the structure of the prompt is a key variable determining the quality of the output, creating substantial differences in the plot cohesion, naturalness of emotional flow, and consistency of expression in the story.

3-3 Main Experiment Design and Procedure

This study was designed to utilize OpenAI's GPT-4o model to perform automatic novel generation by combining life history-based data with three types of prompts (v1: unstructured, v2: partially structured, v3: structured) and to compare and analyze the results. The main objective of the experiment is to quantitatively examine the impact of the level of structured prompt presentation on the quality of the narrative.

The input data was composed based on six key elements of life history narratives (Basic, Agency, Communion, Society, Turning Point, Coherence) and was cumulatively combined from one to six elements depending on the experimental conditions. These combinations were cross-applied to each prompt type, and text was generated while maintaining the same system prompt and parameters (such as token count, temperature, etc.).

The experimental design was centered around two independent variables: (1) the level of prompt structuring (v1, v2, v3), and (2) the number of input elements (combinations of 1 to 6).

Through this, the study analyzed how the AI exhibits differences in narrative composition, emotional responsiveness, and story coherence based on the amount of information and the degree of stepwise instruction. The generated novels were

subsequently evaluated qualitatively and quantitatively based on four criteria: Coherence, Creativity, Immersion, and Realism, which were used to test the research hypothesis that the design of prompts induces qualitative changes in the outcomes.

4. Analysis of Narrative Generation Results and Evaluation Criteria

To evaluate the narrative generation performance of generative language models, it is necessary to qualitatively analyze not only simple accuracy or sentence-level assessments but also qualitative elements such as the logical structure of the story, creative development, and emotional immersion. To effectively capture these multidimensional characteristics, this study has designed a new narrative-specific evaluation system, moving away from existing evaluation methods.

G-Eval is an evaluation framework designed to assess the text generated by LLMs in a multidimensional manner[12]. This study references the structural evaluation method of G-Eval but introduces an independent evaluation system called NarrEval, tailored for life story generation. This system is structured around four key components: Coherence, Creativity, Immersion, and Realism. Rather than using existing evaluation prompts as they are, the prompts have been redesigned to align with the objectives of this study, allowing for more practical comparisons and interpretations.

4-1 Four Components of the NarrEval Evaluation System

To analyze the quality of life story novels generated by AI from multiple perspectives, this study has devised an independent evaluation system called NarrEval. This system aims to comprehensively consider the structural completeness of the entire story, emotional persuasiveness, creativity, and more, rather than merely focusing on sentence accuracy or grammatical completeness.

NarrEval consists of the following four components: Coherence, Realism, Creativity, and Immersion. Coherence evaluates the logical flow and structural connections of the story's development, judging whether the transitions between the introduction, development, and conclusion are natural, and whether the characters' reactions and emotions are contextually appropriate. Realism assesses whether the characters' psychology, actions, and dialogues are realistically persuasive, with the main judgment factor being whether the characters feel like real people. Creativity measures the novelty of the background setting, point of view, and event development, focusing on the presence of creative elements that break away from clichéd developments. Immersion evaluates how emotionally engaged the reader is with the story's flow, using criteria such as the vividness of scene descriptions, the effectiveness of emotional conveyance, and the creation of tension.

Each component is scored independently, but they are interpreted complementarily to understand the overall quality of the narrative constructed by the AI. To this end, this study has designed customized evaluation prompts to enable LLM-based automatic evaluation for each component, and has examined the impact of the prompt design method on story quality through quantitative score analysis of the generated results.

4-2 Evaluation of Narrative Quality Based on Prompt Structure Types

Table 1 analyzes the story outputs generated by applying three types of prompts based on the same life history item combinations, using the four evaluation criteria of NarrEval (Coherence, Realism, Creativity, Immersion) and average scores. The analysis was compared from two main perspectives: (1) unstructured vs. structured prompts, and (2) performance comparison based on the degree of stepwise differences among structured prompts.

In the first comparison, v1 received the highest average score of 4.0, with particularly notable results in Coherence (4.6) and Realism (4.8). In contrast, the structured prompts v2 and v3 recorded average scores of 3.7 and 3.9, respectively. This result suggests that structured instructions do not always lead to superior outcomes in narrative generation. It particularly shows that under conditions of high autonomy, the model can construct stories more flexibly and effectively implement human-like flow and emotional realism.

The second comparison focused on the performance differences between v2 and v3 within the structured prompts. v3 generally scored higher than v2, with particularly significant differences in Creativity (3.0 vs. 2.6) and Immersion (4.0 vs. 3.8). This suggests that presenting the narrative development flow, emotional descriptions, and stylistic guidelines in a stepwise manner can be effective in enabling AI to create more cohesive and emotionally immersive stories.

Thus, while the case with no prompt structure (v1) and the highly developed stepwise structured prompt (v3) showed relatively superior performance, the partially structured intermediate type (v2) appears to have struggled to balance between information constraints and limitations on creativity. This result empirically demonstrates that the degree and manner of structural interference in prompt design can have a significant impact on the quality of AI-generated narratives.

Table 1
Average scores of NarrEval evaluation items by prompt (v1~v3)

Prompt	Coherence	Realism	Creativity	Immersion	Avg
v1	4.6	4.8	2.7	4.0	4.0
v2	4.2	4.4	2.6	3.8	3.7
v3	4.3	4.6	3.0	4.0	3.9

4-3 Evaluations of Narrative Items Combinations and Impacts on Narrative Quality

Based on the v3 prompt, which showed the most stable performance in previous experiments, additional experiments were conducted to analyze how the combinations of input items affect the story generation results. Table 2 summarizes the average evaluation scores obtained by cumulatively combining six life history items.

The experimental results indicated that while there was no consistent improvement in quality as the number of items increased, an overall stable result around 4.0 was

maintained. Notably, the average score for the combination that included all items (Basic + Agency + Communion + Society + TP + Coherence) was the highest at 4.1, suggesting that when the AI is provided with sufficient context and background information, it can generate more compelling narratives.

On the other hand, an increase in the number of items did not consistently lead to improved scores. For instance, the combination of four items maintained relatively high scores, but the average score for the combination of five items temporarily dropped to 3.8. This observation suggests that as the amount of input information increases, the AI may face greater challenges in integrating the relationships between the pieces of information and structuring them narratively, indicating that the balance between the quantity and quality of information affects narrative quality.

In conclusion, it was confirmed that the quality of the generated results tends to be highest when the level of structuring in the prompt is high, and the input items provide sufficient context without being overly complex. This suggests that precise adjustments in prompt design and information input strategies will be necessary for future life history novel generation.

Table 2

Average score of NarrEval narrative quality assessment based on life history item combinations from Prompt v3

Prompt	Combinations	Avg
v3	Basic	3.9
	Basic+Agency	4.0
	Basic+Agency+Communion	4.0
	Basic+Agency+Communion+Society	3.8
	Basic+Agency+Communion+Society+TP	4.0
	Basic+Agency+Communion+Society+TP+Coherence	4.1

5. Conclusion

This study examined how prompt design based on key life narrative concepts—Agency, Communion, and Society—can improve the quality of life history stories generated by large language models (LLMs). Rather than relying on simple input-output prompting, we compared three types of prompts (v1–v3) that differed in their degree of contextualization, narrative guidance, and the way they led the model through a logical and meaningful sequence of thought.

Results showed that the least structured prompt (v1) performed well in Coherence and Realism, suggesting that LLMs like GPT-4o can generate plausible narrative flow even with minimal constraints. However, it lacked Creativity and Immersion, indicating limitations in constructing emotionally compelling stories without narrative scaffolding. In contrast, the most structured prompt (v3), which provided contextual cues and guided reasoning aligned with narrative concepts, demonstrated the highest overall performance, particularly in creative and immersive dimensions. This indicates that

concept-driven and logically sequenced prompt structures can effectively support the model's narrative reasoning.

Moreover, increasing the number of life history elements did not always lead to better outputs; in some cases, excessive input reduced coherence. However, when all six elements were provided within a well-structured narrative flow, the model produced the most coherent and complete stories.

These findings demonstrate that prompt design is not merely a technical interface but a critical factor in shaping how AI models construct life narratives, especially when emotional depth and meaning integration are required. Future research should expand the diversity of narrative domains and develop custom evaluation metrics that reflect the unique temporal, identity-driven, and emotional dimensions of life history storytelling.

References

[1] K. Han, (2004). Understanding Later Life Through Life History Research, Journal Of Korean Gerontology, Vol. 24, No. 4, pp. 87–106.

[2] Brown, T., Mann, B., Ryder, N., Subbiah, M., Kaplan, J. D., Dhariwal, P., ... & Amodei, D. (2020). Language models are few-shot learners. *Advances in neural information processing systems*, *33*, 1877-1901.

[3] Achiam, J., Adler, S., Agarwal, S., Ahmad, L., Akkaya, I., Aleman, F. L., ... & McGrew, B. (2023). Gpt-4 technical report. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2303.08774*.

[4] Elkins, K. (2022). *The shapes of stories: sentiment analysis for narrative*. Cambridge University Press.

[5] Yao, L., Peng, N., Weischedel, R., Knight, K., Zhao, D., & Yan, R. (2019, July). Plan-and-write: Towards better automatic storytelling. In *Proceedings of the AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelligence* (Vol. 33, No. 01, pp. 7378-7385).

[6] Wei, J., Wang, X., Schuurmans, D., Bosma, M., Xia, F., Chi, E., ... & Zhou, D. (2022). Chain-of-thought prompting elicits reasoning in large language models. *Advances in neural information processing systems*, *35*, 24824-24837.

[7] Kim, J., Heo, Y., Yu, H., & Nang, J. (2023). A multi-modal story generation framework with AI-driven storyline guidance. *Electronics*, *12*(6), 1289.

[8] Barthes, R. (2016). The death of the author. In *Readings in the Theory of Religion* (pp. 141-145). Routledge.

[9] Yao, S., Yu, D., Zhao, J., Shafran, I., Griffiths, T., Cao, Y., & Narasimhan, K. (2023). Tree of thoughts: Deliberate problem solving with large language models. *Advances in neural information processing systems*, *36*, 11809-11822.

[10] Lynch, C. J., Jensen, E., Munro, M. H., Zamponi, V., Martinez, J., O'Brien, K., ... & Gore, R. (2024). GPT-4 Generated Narratives of Life Events using a Structured Narrative Prompt: A Validation Study. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2402.05435*.

[11] Javadi, V. S., Trippas, J. R., Lal, Y. K., & Flek, L. (2024). Can Stories Help LLMs Reason? Curating Information Space Through Narrative. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2410.19221*.

[12] Liu, Y., Iter, D., Xu, Y., Wang, S., Xu, R., & Zhu, C. (2023). G-eval: NLG evaluation using gpt-4 with better human alignment. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2303.16634*.

EASPP 2025

Guiding AI Storytelling with Narrative Reasoning : A Life History Approach

경북대학교
영어영문학과 석박사통합과정
이만유

글로벌 인문사회융합연구

Contents

01 Introduction
02 Related Works
03 Experiments
04 Results
05 Conclusion

Introduction

- 프로젝트명: '고령층을 대상으로 한 생애사 프로그램 개발과 그 효능 검증 및 인공지능 생애사 프로그램의 융합적 기반 기술 개발'
  - 본 연구는 **2024**년 대한민국 교육부와 한국연구재단의 지원을 받아 수행된 연구임
- 생애사 연구는 개인의 삶을 시간의 흐름 속에서 재구성함으로써 정체성, 선택, 사회 맥락을 통합적으로 조명하는 연구 방법론으로 노년기의 삶의 질을 이해하는 데 효과적
- 이에 **AI** 기술을 활용하여 개인의 삶을 하나의 이야기로 엮는 '생애사 소설'을 생성하는 시도를 통해 과거 삶을 되돌아보고 의미를 재구성하며 정서적 안정과 치유를 도모할 수 있는 가능성을 탐색하고자 함
- **BUT! AI** 스토리 생성 방식은 사건 중심 요약에 그치며, 정서적 몰입이나 의미적 통합이 부족함
- 연구 문제: **LLM**을 활용하되 어떻게 프롬프트를 설계하면 감정적 몰입과 구조적 일관성을 갖춘 서사를 생성할 수 있는가?
- 연구 제안: 맞춤형 내러티브 가이드(Agency, Communion, Society 등)를 기반으로 한 서사의 의미를 단계적으로 추론하도록 유도하는 프롬프트 설계를 통해 **AI**의 서사 생성 능력을 개선할 수 있는지를 검토

Related Works

1. 초거대 언어 모델과 내러티브 생성 능력
   - CHAT-GPT, CLAUDE, GEMINI 등 초거대 언어 모델(LARGE LANGUAGE MODEL; LLM)은 문맥 이해력과 생성력에서 인간 수준에 근접함
   - 이들은 단순 텍스트 생성 수준을 넘어서 서사 구조 설계, 감정 표현, 인물 묘사 등 고차원적 작업 수행 가능
   - 프롬프트 설계가 성능의 핵심 변수임: 체계적 구조화와 단계적 유도(Chain-of-Thought)가 내러티브 일관성 향상에 기여.

2. 생애사 서사 실험의 의미
   - 구조화된 프롬프트 활용 시 **GPT-4**가 인간 서사와 유사한 내러티브(**87%**) 생성 가능하다는 보고 있음
   - 문제점: 여전히 사건 나열 중심, 감정 표현은 단순화됨
   - 해결 과제: 프롬프트에 시간 흐름, 감정 맥락, 전환점의 구조화된 제공 필요

Experiment

1. 데이터 수집 및 정제
   - 인터뷰 기반 생애사 1차 자료 구축
     - 고령층 10명을 대상으로 심층 생애사 면담을 수행하여 정성적 인터뷰 자료를 수집
     - 인터뷰는 고령층 대상의 다회기 면담을 기반으로 하며, 각 참여자별로 심층적 회상을 유도하기 위해 최대 3회에 걸친 인터뷰를 진행
   - 생애사 면담 설계 및 수행 방식
     - 면담의 목적은 단순한 사건 수집이 아니라, 삶의 흐름, 감정, 전환점, 관계성 등 복합적인 내러티브 요소를 포착하는 데 있음
     - 각 참여자 면담의 초기 발화 중심의 전사본 기록 → 데이터 정제 작업 → 서사 생성 과정을 거침.
   - 데이터 정제 방식과 필요성
     - 면담 발화는 대부분 구어체로 되어 있으며, 방언, 생략, 정서적 표현이 섞인 비정형 텍스트 형태.
     - 따라서 전사본을 AI 기반 서사 생성에 적합하도록 정제하기 위해, 다음과 같은 작업을 실시:
       - 정제 작업: 발화의 어순과 문법을 정리하되, 원 발화의 뉘앙스와 감정은 최대한 유지
       - 핵심 요약: 참여자의 생애를 시간 축(아동기–청년기–노년기)과 서사 항목별로 요약 → 6가지 생애사 핵심 항목으로 분류하여 AI 프롬프트의 주요 정보로 활용

Experiment

2. 생애사 서사의 6가지 구성 항목
   - 모든 참여자 데이터는 다음의 6가지 생애사 핵심 항목으로 분류되어 이야기 생성에 들어가는 주요 정보 블록이며, 다양한 조합으로 실험 수행

항목	설명
Basic	성별, 연령, 혼인, 학력, 종교 등 기본 정보
Agency	위기 상황에서의 대응, 주체성, 삶의 선택
Communion	가족, 친밀 관계, 정서적 연결망
Society	직업, 사회적 변화 대응, 사회 속 역할
Turning Point	삶의 전환점 사건, 위기 극복 경험
Coherence	시간적 흐름과 의미 연결성, 내러티브 구조

Experiment

3. 세 가지 프롬프트 설계 방식

- v1 (비구조): AI에게 '작가 역할'만 부여, 정보만 제공. 구성, 문체, 흐름은 완전 자율 → 기준선(Baseline)
- v2 (부분 구조): 각 항목에 간단한 서술적 설명과 흐름 안내 포함
- v3 (단계 구조): 기획→전개→위기→전환→결말까지 각 단계에 맞는 정보 제공. 문체, 감정, 장면 전환 등 구체 지침 포함

Experiment

Prompt(v1)

당신은 창의적인 작가입니다.

다음의 정보를 바탕으로 창의적이고 몰입감 있는 소설을 작성해 주세요.
.....

Prompt(v2)

당신은 소설을 작성하는 창의적인 작가입니다.
.....
소설 생성 단계
1. 아래의 정보를 참고해서 캐릭터를 파악하고 캐릭터의 성격, 배경, 경험을 부하게 묘사해주세요.
2. 독자가 몰입할 수 있도록 감정과 분위기를 잘 전달해 주세요.
3. 사건의 전개가 자연스럽게 이어지도록 챕터마다 구성해 주세요.
4. 각 챕터마다 1500자 이상 작성하되 각 문장은 최대한 길게 작성하고 같은 단어의 반복을 피하면서 다양한 표현을 사용해 주세요.
5. 최종적으로 소설을 생성해주세요.
.....

Experiment

Prompt(v3)

당신은 소설을 작성하는 창의적인 작가입니다.
.....
소설 생성 단계
1. 아래 제공된 정보를 참고 및 조합하여 주요 인물들의 성격, 가치관, 과거 경험을 깊이 있게 분석하여 각 인물이 품고 있는 내적 갈등과
욕망을 섬세하게 묘사해 주세요.
2. 이야기의 전개에 따라 인물들의 감정 변화(예: 희망 → 불안 → 좌절 → 각성 → 성장)를 구체적으로 보여 주되 감정 변화의 원인과 과
득력 있게 풀어내 주세요.
3. 전체 이야기를 다음 네 가지 구간으로 나누어 구성해 주세요:
- 도입부 (일상의 균열)
- 갈등 심화 (위기의 고조)
- 클라이맥스 (결정적 전환)
- 결말 (해소와 변화)
4. 각 구간은 하나의 독립된 챕터로 작성해 주세요. 각 챕터마다 "CH1. (제목)"형식으로 고유한 제목을 반드시 붙여 주세요.
제목은 '도입부', '갈등 심화' 같은 구조 이름이 아니라, 이야기 내용을 함축하거나 상징하는 문구로 창의적으로 작성해 주세요.
5. 각 챕터마다 시간, 공간, 계절, 날씨, 분위기 등을 시각, 청각, 촉각, 후각, 미각을 아우르는 오감 묘사를 풍부하게 사용하여 장면을 입체
표현해 주세요.
6. 각 챕터는 1500자 이상으로 작성해 주세요.
7. 최종적으로 흐름이 자연스럽고 인물의 감정선과 사건 전개가 유기적으로 연결되도록 전체 소설을 완성해 주세요.

Experiment

4. 메인 실험

1) 실험 설계의 독립 변인

- **프롬프트 템플릿: v1, v2, v3(비구조 → 부분 구조 → 단계 구조)**
- **생애사 항목 데이터: 총 6개 범주**

2) 실험 절차

- **총 3가지 프롬프트 유형과 6개 항목의 조합을 구성**
- **각 조건에 대해 동일한 설정 하에 GPT-4o를 통해 소설 자동 생성**
- **생성 결과물은 조건별로 서사 품질 평가 지표(NarrEval)에 따라 평가**
- **평가 기준은 정량 점수(1~5점 척도)로 환산되어 비교 분석**

Results

1. NarrEval 평가 체계

- **기존 G-Eval에서 착안한 생애사 서사 전용 평가 시스템**
- **4가지 평가 기준:**
  a. **Coherence:** 이야기 흐름의 논리성
  b. **Realism:** 인물 심리 및 사건의 사실성
  c. **Creativity:** 새로운 설정, 표현 방식
  d. **Immersion:** 감정 이입 및 몰입도
- **GPT로 자동 평가하되, 문장 단위 아닌 이야기 전체 단위의 품질 평가**

Results

NarrEval Prompt(Coherence)
당신은 이야기의 구조적 완성도와 일관성을 평가하는 전문가입니다. ..... 이야기의 일관성(Coherence)은 다음을 기준으로 평가합니다: - 이야기의 시작, 중간, 끝이 자연스럽고 논리적으로 연결되어 있는가? - 인물의 행동과 감정 변화가 앞뒤 맥락에 맞게 설득력 있게 전개되는가? - 사건 간의 전개 흐름이 부자연스럽거나 끊기지 않고 매끄러운가? ..... 점수 기준은 다음과 같습니다: 1점: 이야기 구조가 매우 단절되어 있으며, 사건 간의 연결이 부자연스럽고 인물의 행동에 개연성이 거의 없음 2점: 이야기의 흐름이 다소 끊기며, 일부 사건 전개가 논리적으로 연결되지 않음 3점: 이야기 전개가 기본적으로 연결되어 있으나 일부 전환점이나 인물의 감정 변화에 어색한 부분이 있음 4점: 대부분의 흐름과 인물 행동이 자연스럽고 설득력 있으며, 전반적인 서사가 논리적으로 구성되어 있음 5점: 이야기 전체가 매우 유기적으로 연결되어 있으며, 사건의 흐름과 인물 묘사가 뛰어난 일관성과 개연성을 가짐 ..... 당신의 작업은 이야기의 일관성(Coherence)을 1점부터 5점까지의 척도로 평가하는 것입니다. .....

Results

NarrEval Prompt(Realism)

당신은 문학 작품 속 인물 묘사의 현실성을 평가하는 전문가입니다.
당신의 역할은 주어진 이야기 속 인물들이 실제 인간처럼 느껴지는지, 그들의 사고, 감정, 행동이 맥락에 부합하고 설득력 있게 표현되었는지를 판단하는 것입니다.

인물 묘사의 현실성(Character Realism)은 다음을 기준으로 평가합니다:
- 인물의 감정, 생각, 행동이 현실적인지 혹은 과장되거나 일관성이 결여되어 있지는 않은가?
- 인물의 말과 행동이 그가 처한 상황과 환경 속에서 자연스럽게 느껴지는가?
- 독자가 인물에게 감정 이입하거나 그를 이해할 수 있을 정도로 구체적으로 묘사되어 있는가?

당신은 1점에서 5점까지의 점수를 매기며, 1점은 매우 비현실적인 인물 묘사를, 5점은 매우 사실적이고 공감 가는 묘사를 의미합니다.
.....
점수 기준은 다음과 같습니다:

1점: 인물의 감정이나 행동이 비현실적이고 납득되지 않음
2점: 인물의 묘사가 부분적으로 어색하거나 과장되어 있음
3점: 전반적으로는 현실적인데 일부 설정이나 행동에서 어색한 부분이 있음
4점: 대부분의 인물 행동과 심리가 설득력 있고 현실적임
5점: 인물의 내면과 외면 묘사가 매우 사실적이며, 독자가 자연스럽게 공감할 수 있음
....

Results

NarrEval Prompt(Creativity)

당신은 문학 작품의 창의성과 독창성을 평가하는 전문가입니다.

창의성과 독창성(Creativity & Originality)은 다음을 기준으로 평가합니다:
- 이야기가 기존에 자주 보던 진부한 전개나 설정에서 벗어나 새로운 시각이나 접근을 보여주는가?
- 인물, 사건, 배경 등의 설정이 독창적으로 느껴지는가?
- 작가의 상상력이 돋보이며, 독자에게 인상 깊은 신선함을 전달하는가?

당신은 1점에서 5점까지의 점수를 매기며, 1점은 매우 진부하고 상상력이 부족한 이야기, 5점은 매우 창의적이고 독창적인 이야기임을
니다.
.....
점수 기준은 다음과 같습니다:

1점: 매우 진부한 이야기이며, 전개 방식이나 설정에서 새로운 요소가 거의 없음
2점: 다소 익숙한 설정이나 전개가 많으며, 독창적인 요소가 부분적으로만 보임
3점: 새로운 시도나 아이디어가 있으나 일부는 흔하고 인상적이지 않음
4점: 설정과 전개가 대부분 참신하며, 상상력이 비교적 돋보임
5점: 전반적으로 매우 창의적이고 독창적이며, 상상력이 풍부하고 인상 깊음
.....

Results

NarrEval Prompt(Immersion)

당신은 독자의 감정적 몰입과 이야기의 흡인력을 평가하는 전문가입니다.
당신의 역할은 주어진 소설이 얼마나 독자의 감정을 자극하고, 이야기 속 세계에 빠져들게 만드는지를 평가하는 것입니다.

감정적 몰입과 흡인력(Emotional Engagement & Immersion)은 다음을 기준으로 평가합니다:
- 독자가 이야기 속 인물이나 사건에 감정적으로 반응하고 몰입할 수 있는가?
- 문장이나 장면 묘사가 생생하여 이야기 세계에 빠져드는 경험을 주는가?
- 독자가 이야기를 끝까지 읽고 싶도록 만드는 서사적 흡인력이 있는가?

당신은 1점에서 5점까지의 점수를 매기며, 1점은 몰입이 전혀 되지 않는 이야기, 5점은 매우 몰입되고 감정적으로 깊이 이입되는 이야기
합니다.
.....
점수 기준은 다음과 같습니다:

1점: 이야기 전개나 인물에 전혀 몰입할 수 없으며, 감정적 반응이 거의 없음
2점: 일부 장면은 흥미롭지만 전체적으로 몰입도나 긴장감이 부족함
3점: 어느 정도 흡입력은 있으나 강한 감정 이입이나 몰입을 유도하지는 못함
4점: 대부분의 장면에서 몰입이 잘 되며, 감정적인 연대감이 형성됨
5점: 처음부터 끝까지 강한 흡입력과 감정적 이입을 유도하며, 독자를 깊이 끌어들임
.....

Results

2. 프롬프트 유형별 평가 결과

Prompt	Coherence	Realism	Creativity	Immersion	Avg
v1	4.6	4.8	2.7	4	4
v2	4.2	4.4	2.6	3.8	3.7
v3	4.3	4.6	3	4	3.9

프롬프트별(v1~v3) NarrEval 평가 항목 평균 점수

Results

2. 프롬프트 유형별 평가 결과

1) 비구조 vs 구조 프롬프트

- v1(비구조) vs v2, v3(구조화된 프롬프트들)
- 전체적으로 v1이 평균 점수(4.0)에서 가장 높음 → 자율성이 높은 환경에서 AI가 더 자연스럽고 현실감 있는 이야기 구성 가능
- v1이 Coherence와 Realism에서 구조 프롬프트보다 높은 평가 --> AI가 자유롭게 창작할 때 감정 흐름이나 인물 반응에서 더 자연스러운 이야기를 구성할 수 있음을 시사

2) 부분 구조 vs 단계 구조 비교

- 결과: 전체적으로 v3가 Creativity와 Immersion 항목에서 특히 우수
  - v3는 구체적 지침과 단계적 흐름 제공 → 몰입감, 표현력에서 장점
  - v2는 구조가 모호하여 자율성과 제약 사이에서 균형 실패
  - v3는 Creativity(+0.4), Immersion(+0.2) 에서 v2보다 뚜렷하게 우세 → 구체적인 단계 지시와 감정 흐름 안내가 AI로 하여금 보다 응집력 있는 서사 구성을 가능케 함을 보여줌

Results

3. 입력 항목 수에 따른 영향 (추가 실험)

Prompt	Combinations	Avg
v3	Basic	3.9
	Basic+Agency	4
	Basic+Agency+Communion	4
	Basic+Agency+Communion+Society	3.8
	Basic+Agency+Communion+Society+TP	4
	Basic+Agency+Communion+Society+TP+Coherence	4.1

프롬프트 v3 기반 생애사 항목 조합에 따른 NarrEval 서사 품질 평가 평균 점수

Results

2. 프롬프트 유형별 평가 결과

1) 주요 분석 결과

- 항목이 늘어날수록 평균 점수도 일반적으로 상승 추세
  - 특히 4개 항목까지는 꾸준한 개선이 관찰됨
  - 가장 높은 성능은 6개 항목 전부 제공 시 (Avg. 4.1)
- 그러나 5개 항목 조합에서 일시적 하락(Avg. 3.8)이 발생
  - Coherence와 Creativity 점수가 하락 → AI가 이야기 통합에 어려움을 겪은 사례로 해석 가능

2) 시사점

- 정보가 많을수록 반드시 좋은 서사가 생성되는 건 아님 → 정보량과 구조화의 균형이 중요
- 항목이 많아지면 AI는 더 복잡한 맥락 통합을 요구받기 때문에, 프롬프트 내 안내의 질이 더 중요해짐
- 결국, 서사 품질은 단순히 정보의 양이 아니라:
  - 정보의 조합 방식
  - 서사의 흐름을 어떻게 유도하는지에 달려 있음

Conclusion

1) 본 연구는 생성형 **AI(GPT-4o)**를 활용해 생애사 기반 소설을 자동 생성하는 과정에서, 프롬프트 구조화 수준이 서사 품질에 미치는 영향을 실험적으로 검증

2) 동일한 정보를 기반으로 구성 방식이 다른 세 가지 프롬프트 유형(**v1:** 비구조 / **v2:** 부분 구조 / **v3:** 단계 구조)을 비교하여, 프롬프트 설계 전략이 생성 결과에 어떤 영향을 주는지 다각적으로 분석

3) 종합 시사점

- 프롬프트 설계는 단순 명령을 넘어 **AI** 서사의 방향성과 구조를 결정짓는 핵심 변수
- 정보의 제시 순서, 단계성, 감정 구조 포함 여부가 **AI**의 내러티브 전략에 실질적 영향을 미침
- 이는 **AI** 기반 자서전, 회상치료, 개인 서사 생성 등 실용적 응용 분야에서도 설계 전략의 정교화가 필요함을 시사

4) 연구 한계 및 향후 과제

- 제한된 프롬프트 유형 및 항목 조합만 사용
- **LLM** 기반 자동 평가에 부분적으로 의존
- → 향후에는 다양한 장르와 구조에서의 정교화, 인간 중심의 서사 평가 체계, 생애사 서사 특화 지표 개발이 필요

Thank you for listening

E1

Zijie Lin(Beijing Normal University) · Jialin Xu(Renmin University)

"Philosophical Practice for Older Persons in East Asia: Unfolding Life Philosophy via Narrative Interview"

Introduction

East Asian societies are undergoing an unprecedented super-aging process, compounded by the pervasive integration of digital technologies into social life. Many older adults face loneliness and social isolation, which not only cause psychological distress but are also significantly associated with cardiovascular diseases, cognitive decline, and premature mortality. This paper proposes a narrative interviewing method as a philosophical practice to help older adults organize life experiences, foster intergenerational communication, alleviate loneliness and nihilism, and support rehabilitation or palliative care, thereby enhancing their quality of life and dignity.

As young philosophical practitioners, we aim to understand the existential distress of older adults and develop a practice tailored to the cultural context of East Asia, addressing the technological and ethical challenges of super-aging societies.

I. Existential Distress of Older Adults in a Technological Society

Based on empirical research conducted in community and care facilities in Weihai, Shandong Province, China, we identify the core of older adults' existential distress as the fragmentation of their life narratives. This issue stems from rapid societal changes driven by technological advancements. In China, the high-mobility society formed since the Reform and Opening-Up has dismantled the stability of traditional rural communities. Technological progress has not only catalyzed these transformations but also disrupted the intergenerational transmission of experience and wisdom.

In traditional societies, older adults' experiences were vital to collective wisdom. However, in rapidly modernizing societies, much of their knowledge has been rendered obsolete by technological iterations, fragmenting their once-systematic wisdom. Younger generations, more adept at adopting new technologies, often acquire higher digital literacy, while older adults require "re-socialization" to navigate digital life. This reversal of intergenerational knowledge transfer disrupts ethical roles. In some families, where children are unwilling to guide older adults or older adults resist learning digital skills, a "digital divide" emerges.

Fragmented narratives diminish older adults' sense of existence and value, while disrupted ethical roles challenge traditional family dynamics. The digital divide exacerbates loneliness and intergenerational alienation. To restore dignity and meaning, improve intergenerational relationships, and enhance quality of life, we must

listen to their stories, help them articulate their unsystematized life philosophies, and leverage digital tools to create multimodal autobiographies. These can be shared in formats appealing to younger generations, fostering mutual understanding. While digital technologies contribute to older adults' distress, they also provide tools to support narrative interviewing and multimodal autobiography creation.

II. Narrative Interviewing: Existential Oral History and Hermeneutic Paradigm

The narrative interviewing method proposed here is a philosophical practice for older adults, developed within a hermeneutic paradigm by adapting oral history techniques with an existentialist approach.

(A) The Existential Turn in Oral History

Traditional oral history seeks to reconstruct macro-historical events (e.g., wars, social movements) through individual memories, treating older adults as providers of historical data. This paper reorients oral history from "documenting history" to "affirming life," shifting from collective memory to personal life reflection, and creating multimodal autobiographies for ordinary individuals.

Narrative interviewing combines Socratic dialogue techniques to stimulate memory recall and meaning reflection. Through guided interviews, older adults recount life stories, and narrative therapy techniques help them reframe critical life choices, reconstructing coherent narratives. This process transforms fragmented experiences into cohesive stories, revealing implicit value systems and unveiling personal life philosophies.

By respecting the voices of ordinary individuals, narrative interviewing inherits oral history's democratic ethos while emphasizing personal life experiences. With philosophical practice techniques, the narration process becomes a practice of constructing existential meaning, forming a unique method for older adults and achieving an existential turn in oral history.

(B) The Hermeneutic Paradigm in Philosophical Practice

Philosophical practice is inherently hermeneutic, and narrative interviewing strictly adheres to this paradigm. Lahav suggests that an individual's "perimeter understanding" shapes their "worldview," embedded in their lifestyle. Existential distress often arises from implicit understandings of life, and philosophical practice aims to reveal and reflect on these. Heidegger describes this as the "hermeneutic situation," where individuals seek authenticity through the "hermeneutic circle."

In narrative interviewing, older adults describe past experiences based on their current understanding, shaped by Gadamer's "effective history." Unable to distance themselves temporally from their past, they require practitioner guidance to achieve "horizon fusion" with their former selves. As research notes, narrative performance involves two self-presentations: the self as narrator and the self as narrated character.

In older adults, these selves may conflict due to shifting values. Practitioners must discern continuity and ruptures to facilitate self-integration.

III. Tailored Strategies for Diverse Older Adult Groups

To address existential distress in super-aging societies, narrative interviewing must be adapted to older adults' specific circumstances, such as family support and health status.

1. Healthy Older Adults with Family Support

For those with harmonious family relationships but feeling empty or unmotivated post-retirement, narrative interviewing can focus on recalling "peak experiences" (Maslow), fostering a sense of meaning and self-actualization.

2. Older Adults with Intergenerational Gaps or without Family Support

Loneliness is a primary concern for this group. Narrative interviewing can help construct personal value, alleviating emptiness and isolation. To bridge intergenerational gaps, practitioners can present life stories in multimodal formats (e.g., videos) to facilitate communication with younger generations. Digital literacy training can further promote mutual understanding.

3. Older Adults with Chronic Illnesses or Post-Surgery Recovery

These individuals need to reconceptualize their bodies and mortality. Narrative interviewing, integrated with rehabilitation, can use embodied memory recall to help them confront pain and foster a positive outlook on life.

4. Terminally Ill or End-of-Life Patients

For terminally ill or end-of-life patients, particularly those without family support, narrative interviewing can complement palliative care to alleviate suffering and enhance death quality. Practitioners can create narrative wills, helping patients reflect on life's highs and lows, reconcile with unfulfilled wishes, and contemplate life's finitude. In East Asian cultures, where death is often taboo, guiding patients to reflect on mortality facilitates expressions of gratitude, apologies, love, and farewells, reducing fear and promoting peaceful closure.

Conclusion

This paper proposes a philosophical practice for East Asian older adults, using narrative interviewing to unveil their life philosophies amid super-aging and technological societies. In practice, ethical considerations—such as participants' acceptance, egalitarian care, and privacy protection—must be prioritized. In palliative care settings, ensuring patients' dignity, autonomy, and emotional stability requires risk mitigation measures, such as informed consent forms.

Preliminary trials of narrative interviewing have yielded promising results. Addressing concerns that young practitioners may struggle with older adults, we argue that the method's focus is on facilitating self-narration, not imposing philosophies. Practitioners require interviewing skills, hermeneutic methods, philosophical questioning, and empathy. Intergenerational differences may even encourage older adults to share, evoking memories.

Caring for older adults reflects a commitment to family, East Asian society, and our collective future. Enabling older adults to age and pass with dignity, fulfillment, and joy is a hallmark of a highly civilized society.

Reference

Achenbach, G., & Marquard, O. (2018). What matters? What is important in truth? What is crucial in the end? Leading principles in philosophical practice. Philosophical Practice, 13(3), 2171–2181.

Cheng, L. N., & Chen, Q. (2025). The value of implementing narrative wills for elderly terminal patients from the perspective of life care. Contemporary Nurse (First Decade), 32(2), 14–17.

Fang, N. (2022). Cultural feedback in the digital divide: A study on intergenerational interactions in the family WeChat domain. Journal of Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications (Social Sciences Edition), 24(5), 10–17.

Gadamer, H.-G. (2004). Truth and method (J. Weinsheimer & D. G. Marshall, Trans.). Bloomsbury. (Original work published 1960)

Heidegger, M. (1962). Being and time (J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson, Trans.). Blackwell Publishers. (Original work published 1927)

Lahav, R. (2016). Stepping out of Plato's cave: Philosophical counseling, philosophical practice, and self-transformation.

Lee, S. K. (2009). East Asian attitudes toward death—A search for the ways to help East Asian elderly dying in contemporary America. The Permanente Journal, 13(3), 55.

Maslow, A. H. (1971). The farther reaches of human nature. Viking Press.

Norrick, N. R. (2009). The construction of multiple identities in elderly narrators' stories. Ageing & Society, 29(6), 903–927.

Zhan, X. J. (2024). The end of life in technological embodiment and possible ethical choices. Medicine and Philosophy, 45(12), 29–33.

Zhang, L.-Z. (2014). The dimension of hermeneutics in philosophical counseling. Journal of Shandong University: Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition, 3, 129–137.

Zijie, L. (2024). Hermeneutic paradigm of philosophical practice. Paper presented at the 4th International Academic Symposium on "Humanistic Therapy in a Technological Society," Lanzhou University, Lanzhou, China.

Philosophical Practice for Older Persons in East Asia: Unfolding Life Philosophy via Narrative Interview

1. Zijie Lin (Beijing Normal University)
2. Jialin Xu (Renmin University of China)

July 10, 2025

The First International Conference of the East Asian Society of Philosophical Practice
"Philosophical Practice in 21st Century East Asia"

Introduction

Challenges: Loneliness, social isolation, and existential distress among older adults.

Objective: Propose narrative interviewing as a philosophical practice to enhance quality of life and dignity.

The First International Conference of the East Asian Society of Philosophical Practice
"Philosophical Practice in 21st Century East Asia"

Existential Distress in a Technological Society

Core Issue:

Fragmentation of life narratives due to societal and technological changes.

Causes:High-mobility societies (e.g., China's Reform and Opening-Up).

Digital divide and disrupted ethical roles.

Impact: Loneliness, alienation, and diminished sense of value.

Narrative Interviewing Method

Definition: Hermeneutic-based philosophical practice integrating Socratic dialogue and oral history.

Existential turn: From documenting history to affirming life.

Process: Guided interviews to recall stories, reframe choices, make Multimodal autobiographies (e.g., videos, texts), and uncover life philosophies.

EASPP The First International Conference of the East Asian Society of Philosophical Practice
"Philosophical Practice in 21st Century East Asia"

Hermeneutic Paradigm

Philosophical Foundation: Hermeneutics (Gadamer, Heidegger, Lahav).

Key Concepts:

Horizon fusion: Integrating past and present selves.

Hermeneutic circle: Reflecting on implicit worldviews.

Application: Practitioners facilitate self-integration through narrative performance.

Tailored Strategies for Diverse Groups

Group 1: Healthy older adults with family support → Recall peak experiences.

Group 2: Older adults with intergenerational gaps → Multimodal storytelling and digital literacy.

Group 3: Chronically ill or post-surgery → Embodied memory recall.

Group 4: Terminally ill → Narrative wills for palliative care.

EASPP The First International Conference of the East Asian Society of Philosophical Practice
"Philosophical Practice in 21st Century East Asia"

Ethical Considerations and Preliminary Results

Ethics: Informed consent, privacy protection, and dignity in palliative care.

Preliminary Results: Positive outcomes in Weihai trials (e.g., reduced loneliness).

Practitioner Role: Facilitate self-narration with empathy and hermeneutic skills.

Conclusion

Summary: Narrative interviewing unveils life philosophies, addressing existential distress.

Impact: Enhances dignity, quality of life, and intergenerational bonds.

Future: Expand training for practitioners and integrate digital tools.

EASPP The First International Conference of the East Asian Society of Philosophical Practice
"Philosophical Practice in 21st Century East Asia"

Questions and Discussion

Thank you for your attention!
We welcome your questions and insights.

Contact us: counselosophy@gmail.com
Zijie Lin（林子杰）
Jialin Xu（许佳琳）

EASPP
The East Asian Society of Philosophical Practice

The First International Conference of the East Asian Society of Philosophical Practice
“Philosophical Practice in 21st Century East Asia”

Yang Chen (X'ian Jiaotong university)
"Caring Healing: care robots and the Dignity of Older People"

Introduction

In March 2023, the World Health Organization published a report titled *"Healthy ageing: A priority for delivering universal health coverage"*.[1] The document states that every country in the world is experiencing growth in both the number and proportion of people aged 60 years and older in the population. By 2030, persons aged 60 years and older are projected to globally outnumber youth and to be double the number of children under five. By 2050, 2.1 billion people will be aged 60 years and older, with 80% living in low and middle-income countries. However, in today's era, there is a serious shortage of human care resources. Consequently, individuals from various sectors have turned their attention to artificial intelligence technology. They are attempting to address the elderly care issues resulting from the global aging population by vigorously developing care robots.

The Development of care robots

The fourth industrial revolution is rapidly transforming the healthcare landscape. As artificial intelligence technology advances, becoming more efficient and cost-effective, the trend of incorporating robots into the field of care is on the rise. In May 2002, My Spoon, an automatic feeding robot developed by Secom of Japan, was officially launched. In July 2015, Luvozo from the United States introduced the SAM doorman robot, capable of providing ward rounds and non-drug care services for the elderly through automatic navigation, remote monitoring, and a fall risk monitoring system. In November 2015, the Zora robot, developed in Australia, made its debut at the Brightwater Care Group. This robot integrates functions such as exercise, dancing, reading, and telling jokes, and can communicate with older people using voice recognition technology. In 2021, Hanson Robotics developed the first medical robot with a realistic human appearance, Grace. Grace features vital sign monitoring, disease diagnosis assistance, multilingual communication, emotion recognition and interaction, companionship, and psychological support. The emergence of Grace is viewed by many as a novel solution to the global aging crisis through care robots.

Robots can be categorized into three types based on their functions: assistive robots, companion robots, and monitoring robots.[2] (1) Assistive robots aid older individuals in performing a multitude of daily household tasks, such as dressing, washing, cleaning, and feeding. (2) Companion robots offer social and entertainment services to the elderly at home, including dancing, reading, and telling jokes. (3) Monitoring robots

[1] WHO official website link:https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/healthy-ageing--a-priority-for-delivering-universal-health-coverage
Last accessed on June 2, 2025.

[2] Wang Jue: "Is robot care for the elderly a solution to the aging problem? - From the perspective of Confucian role ethics", "Confucius Studies", Issue 6, 2024, Page 6.

provide a range of health and safety monitoring services via remote networks, such as real-time tracking of physical data, remote video calls, emergency assistance during falls, telemedicine, health consultations, medication management, and physical condition assessments. Compared to traditional human care, robotic care offers three primary advantages: (1) Services are available around the clock; (2) Services can be customized to the personal preferences and needs of older individuals; (3) Services are transparent and predictable, facilitating ease of management and monitoring for users.

As the global population aging problem becomes increasingly prominent, more integrated, anthropomorphic, and intelligent care robots are becoming an important option for future home care. Surveys and studies indicate that today's elderly population holds three attitudes towards care robots[3]:(1)Acknowledge the future trend of care robots assisting the elderly, where expectations and rejection coexist;(2) Expect robots to empower older individuals, while also anticipating that they will assume multiple roles, including life managers, health assistants, security guards, and even intimate partners;(3) Expectations are high for governments, enterprises, and society to support care robots that assist the elderly, yet there are concerns about insufficient technical literacy and the inability to integrate into the digital age. In addition, the academic community has had relevant discussions on whether care robots should be allowed to enter the medical care field. Initially, they can be divided into two positions. The opposition believes that care robots participating in the field of interpersonal relationships that require mutual respect may destroy human intimacy and solidarity and shake the ethical foundation of human society.[4] In contrast, supporters are optimistic and even welcome the prospect of care robots being introduced into the field of medical care. Care robots are superior to unqualified human care, and robotic care controlled by older people can promote their autonomy and independence, greatly reducing the possibility of frail elderly people being maliciously bullied by unqualified human carers.

The Impact of care robots on the Dignity of older people

Throughout history, dignity has always been one of the important concepts pursued in the field of philosophy, yet it remains undetermined. Defining dignity, however, is a very tricky matter.

As the mainstream Western view of dignity, Kant, starting from human rationality, defines dignity as the superior position of rationality over animality in humanity.However, Kant's view of dignity, which is based on devaluing human animality, has corresponding limitations: first, it further strengthens human domination and exploitation of animals, while making human increasingly reject their own animality.

[3] Zhou Yimin, Yao Yuzhe, Ye Xuchun: "An interpretive phenomenological study of the attitudes of new elderly people towards robot-assisted aged care", "Military caring", Issue 5, 2024, Page 59.

[4] Perihan Elif Ekmekci,Berna Arda,*Artificial Intelligence and Bioethics*,Springer,2020,p.84.

Second, it shapes human into ideal actors, denies human dependence and vulnerability, and cannot explain why those who lack rational ability (such as infants, elderly people who cannot make decisions, people in pain, and people with mental disorders) enjoy dignity.[5]This also means that the Kantian concept of dignity is not applicable in defining the dignity of older people. Therefore, Nussbaum proposed an understanding different from Kant's. She inherited Aristotle's position, starting from the animality of human beings, taking human ability as the basis for enjoying dignity, and defining dignity as the living standard that an individual can achieve in realizing his or her own "core ability". She showed that our growth and rise and fall are closely related to our own animality. Rational contemplation itself is not enough to provide a good human life. It is fundamentally wrong to view human status and understand human dignity only according to rational ability.[6]In short, dignity comes from the two goals of "what people can do and what they can become".[i] It has become a realistic path for people to achieve a dignified life. The advantage of Nussbaum's view of dignity based on the capability approach is that[7]: First, compared with Kantian dignity, it recognizes that all people are born with dignity, including those with limited cognitive abilities (such as intellectual disabilities), people with disabilities, frail elderly people and other vulnerable groups; second, it does not rely on religious beliefs, and is therefore more adaptable to secular society; third, it emphasizes that everyone should reach a "threshold" level of ability, especially focusing on the extra care and support needed by people with disabilities, to avoid excluding vulnerable groups. At the same time, in terms of the application of care robots, Amanda Sharkey also critically pointed out the disadvantages of the capability approach[8]:First, the trade-offs among the ten capabilities are difficult to handle, and the conflicts among the capabilities in practical applications are difficult to resolve; second, the capability approach lacks a unified framework, making it difficult to specifically define and measure various capabilities.

Building upon the analysis of the concept of dignity, we can further consider: How do care robots impact the dignity of older individuals? And from which aspects do they provoke a dignity crisis in the elderly?

On the one hand, the companionship provided by care robots is based on deception, which infringes on the autonomy of older people. When people grow old, loneliness and social isolation are consequently serious factors impacting on their happiness and well-being.[9]As children grow up, they either form new families or live independently,

---

[5] Zhang Rongnan: "Re-founding Dignity with Embodiment - Breaking Out of the Dilemma of Classical Western Dignity Concepts", Academic Monthly, No. 1, 2025, p. 27.

[6] Martha C. Nussbaum, *The fragility of Goodness: Luck and ethics in Greek tragedy and philosophy (revised edition)*, translated by Xu Xiangdong and Lu Meng; revised by Xu Xiangdong and Chen Wei, Nanjing: Yilin Press, 2018, preface to the revised edition, page 28.

[7] Amanda Sharkey,"Robots and human dignity: a consideration of the effects of robot care on the dignity of older people",*Ethics and Information Technology*,2014,16,pp.63-75.

[8] Amanda Sharkey,"Robots and human dignity: a consideration of the effects of robot care on the dignity of older people",*Ethics and Information Technology*,2014,16,pp.63-75.

[9] Sparrow Robert, and Linda Sparrow,"In the hands of machines? The future of aged care" ,*Minds and Machines* , 2006,16,p.147.

which greatly reduces the time they spend with their parents. Simultaneously, older individuals inevitably enter the phase of retirement.Changes in family structure and the gradual withdrawal from the labor market have gradually separated older people from their families and other social support systems. Consequently, some authors believe that the introduction of care robots can at least partially meet the social needs of older individuals. Through social training of these robots, we can influence and shape their behavior, thereby better accompanying older people.[10]However, Robert Sparrow and Linda Sparrow pointed out that Care robots accompanying older individuals may lead them to mistakenly believe that these robots possess characteristics they do not, such as sympathy, understanding, care, and love. This illusion may cause older people to feel loved and cared for by the robots, thereby experiencing the benefits of being attended to.[11] The companionship provided by care robots is inherently deceptive, and the ethical justification for this deception is questionable for several reasons. Firstly, we have an obligation to perceive the world truthfully, and it is morally erroneous to fail to understand the world accurately. Secondly, both the act of deceiving and being deceived are undesirable behaviors. The social needs of the elderly cannot be fulfilled by the illusion of companionship, and their interests and well-being cannot be genuinely advanced through such an illusion.In contrast, Mark Coeckelbergh believes that ethical concerns about deception are wrong. This concern presupposes a premise: the use of robots in caregiving establishes a virtual world that is distinct from the real world. However, there is a crucial issue with the method of distinguishing between the real world and the virtual world: Is there a clear boundary between the two? For the new generation, who have grown up in a digital information technology environment and are the future elderly, the boundary between the real world and the virtual world is not clear but rather blends together, gradually becoming blurred or even disappearing. In other words, virtual life, such as online life and virtual connections, is part of the real world.[12]

On the other hand, if the data collected by care robots is leaked, it will increase the privacy vulnerability of older individuals. In the context of robotic care, older individuals may be averse to having a third party observe their home through the remote control of care robots, and they may also object to being monitored by these robots while bathing or dressing. They likely prefer that their private space be respected and safeguarded, suggesting that robots should knock on the door as a person would and only enter the room with the individual's consent. Furthermore, there is the question of who has the right to access the data collected by care robots during their interactions with older people, and how long such data should be retained.[13]Privacy, recognized

---

[10] Kerstin Dautenhahn,"Robots We Like to Live With?! -A Developmental Perspective on a Personalized, Life-Long RobotCompanion ",*Proceedings of the 2004 IEEE International Workshop on Robot and Human Interactive Communication ,Kurashiki, Okayama Japan September 20-22*,2004,p.22.

[11] Sparrow, Robert, and Linda Sparrow,"In the hands of machines? The future of aged care" ,*Minds and Machines* , 2006,16,p.155.

[12] Mark Coeckelbergh, Care robots and the future of ICT-mediated aged care: a response to doom scenarios. *AI & Society*,2016, 31, p.457.

[13] Sharkey A, Sharkey N,Granny and the robots: ethical issues in robot care for older people. *Ethics*

universally as a human value, is a crucial component of the dignity of the elderly. Protecting the privacy of older individuals can make them feel respected and preserve their dignity, whereas a lack of such protection can lead to a severe dignity crisis for them. Firstly, monitoring robots in the care sector can be utilized to observe the living conditions of the elderly, relay information, and remind them to take their medication. Simultaneously, they can promptly alert guardians in emergency situations, such as when an elderly person falls or faints, to prevent tragedies. Secondly, in the digital age, information sharing is rapid and easily accessible. Consequently, if the data collected by care robots is compromised, the privacy vulnerabilities of the elderly are exacerbated in the technological era, and the risk of their dignity being diminished also rises.

In summary, dignity can be divided into two dimensions based on the understanding of humanity: namely, the autonomy dimension of dignity and the vulnerability dimension. The autonomy dimension of dignity recognizes the possibility of self-determination and free choice among older people in terms of their value. Even if they are weak or disabled, they should be regarded as persons and ends, not as objects or means. In an ontological sense, they also deserve equal respect. Whether this respect can be achieved through robotic care is a question that remains to be answered. The vulnerability dimension of dignity focuses on the embodiment of older people, highlighting their dependence, vulnerability, and mortality, as well as the susceptibility of their bodies and dignity to external harm. As social beings, the actual acquisition of dignity by older people relies on the assistance of others. Without care and concern from others, older people cannot obtain the self-esteem necessary to exercise their subjectivity. Thus, whether robots can provide this kind of care and support from human companions is still a matter of debate.

Moreover, as technology advances, care robots are increasingly resembling humans. Can they ultimately supplant human care? If not, what is the fundamental distinction between robotic care and human care? These questions necessitate reflection on relationships, as caring activities typically involve not just one individual but a symbiotic and interdependent relationship between the caregiver and the cared-for. Consequently, this article aims to explore care ethics, which emphasizes the importance of care and relationships, to address the aforementioned inquiries.

Care robots for older people from the view of Caring Ethics

Compared to traditional mainstream normative ethics, which is based on individuals, rights, obligations, and freedom, the concepts of care ethics—such as care, relationship, relational autonomy, and responsibility—avoid viewing the process of caring for the elderly as merely a series of tasks. Instead, they emphasize the vulnerability and dependence of older individuals. Nel Noddings believes that care ethics recognizes the roles of both carer and cared-for in establishing and maintaining

and information technology, 2012,14,p.32.

the caring relation. The carer is attentive,open to the possibility of being affectively moved and experiencing motivational displacement, and responds in a way to meet the needs of the cared-for or, at least, to maintain the caring relation. The cared-for completes the relation by acknowledging the efforts of the carer. [14]Fundamentally, care essentially reflects a mutually responsive relationship between people. It is the carer's sensitive response to the needs of the cared-for, and meeting these needs in a respectful way to enhance their well-being. At the same time, the cared-for must also respond to the carer's efforts through recognition. This response is not necessarily gratitude; it is just a way of expressing that the care has been acknowledged.She pointed out: "The role of the cared-for is essential, and its recognition is central to care ethics."[15]Joan Tronto emphasized that care is a participatory activity and a form of labor that requires commitment.Care means "everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible."[16]Differing from the perspectives of two care theorists,Selma Sevenhuijsen regards care as the ability and willingness to see and hear needs, and to take responsibility for these needs being met. She believes Nel Noddings's theory is based on the binary relationship between the carer and the cared for, which can easily be encompassed within the scope of obligation ethics, thereby losing the uniqueness of the theory. Consequently, she advocates that care is a process centered on understanding needs, and it is also a practice. Care ethics must first consider moral issues from the perspective of " attentiveness, responsibility,responsiveness and the commitment to see issues from differing perspectives"[17]. This caring attitude aims to respond to needs and support vulnerable groups. In general, various care ethicists have different interpretations of the nature of care, yet upon careful comparison, some fundamental agreements can be identified: First, care is a cognitive and moral activity that involves a dependent and reciprocal relationship between the caregiver and the cared-for, meaning that care is a relationship where both parties are concerned with their mutual well-being. Second, care must consider the complexity and diversity of the specific empirical context., and "all care involves attentiveness, sensitivity, and responding to needs."[18]。

From the perspective of care ethics, care robots cannot provide genuine human care for the elderly. The reason is that, although robots can assist the weak or disabled elderly in performing functions such as mobility, cleaning, and feeding, there remains an essential difference between robots and humans that cannot be obscured: robots are machines, driven by algorithms and various programs, and they lack human

---

[14] Nel Noddings,*Caring:A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education（Second Edition,Updated）*,Los Angeles:University of California Press,2013,p.9.

[15] Daniel Engster,*The heart of justice: Care ethics and political theory*, Oxford University Press, 2015, p.73.

[16] Joan Tronto,*Moral Boundaries:A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care*,Routledge,1993,p.101-103.

[17] Selma Sevenhuijsen,*Citizenship and the Ethics of Care:Feminist of Considerations on Justice,Morality and Politics,Routledge*,1998,P.84.

[18] Virginia Held,*The Ethics of Care:Personal, Political, and Global*,Oxford University Press, 2006, p.39.

bodies. Even if technological advancements enable robots to possess more and more human-like attributes, or even achieve a form of "humanization," robots cannot truly engage in self-reflection in complex and specific situations or make sensitive judgments as humans do. Moreover, robots will never comprehend the vulnerability that accompanies the human experience of birth, aging, illness, and death, nor can they grasp the significance of mutual dependence, care, and trust among people.In the practice of aged care, the most critical problem with robotic care compared to human care is that robots cannot provide genuine human touch. Human care is inherently a compassionate activity, whereas robotic care prioritizes rationality and efficiency, often overlooking the core needs of the elderly—to be cared for by their peers. In times of illness, disability, and vulnerability, the elderly require care from others. Vulnerability is an enduring and universal trait of humanity, aligning with the principles of care ethics. Acknowledging human vulnerability and interdependence is central to care ethics. It becomes evident that in the application of care robots for the elderly, the significance of emphasizing compassionate care is reflected in the fact that while robotic care may offer conveniences such as reduced economic costs and a lighter manpower burden, these benefits should not justify overlooking the ethical risks or costs involved. The advancement of robots in the field of care and their implementation in aged care practice is not aimed at developing new technologies for their own sake, nor at creating new market demands, nor at replacing human care. Instead, the goal is to assist the frail or disabled elderly in overcoming their vulnerable state, developing and maintaining their basic abilities, preventing or alleviating unnecessary suffering, and enabling them to live the final phase of their lives with peace and harmony.

Conclusion

Let's revisit the question posed in the second section of the previous article: Can robotic care ultimately replace human care? The answer is clearly no. If we assume that robotic care could replace human care, it's conceivable that: due to the one-sided nature of the relationship between robots and the elderly, the elderly would not receive caring attitudes and emotions from the robot. This would result in their continued isolation, as they would be unable to establish a mutually responsive caring relationship with the robot, and thus unable to forge a meaningful sense of existence with other beings.Harvard doctor Arthur Kleinman highlighted the importance and uniqueness of human care, drawing upon his own decade-long experience of caring for his wife with Alzheimer's disease as an example: "Human care, as a human activity with emotional, moral, and even religious significance, tells the moral language of suffering and healing experienced by human. It is the bedrock of our common existence ."[19]Older individuals are cared for, shown concern, and looked after in

[19] Arthur Kleinman,*The Soul of Care:The Moral Education of a Husband and a Doctor*,Penguin Publishing Group,2019,pp.3-4.

human care practices. This sense of being valued and cared for can make them feel important, rather than inconsequential. In the realm of human care, when a caring relationship is forged, the significance of older people's existence naturally comes to the fore. Consequently, the development of care robots should be centered on human needs, rather than aimed at replacing human caregivers. To enhance older people's capacity to lead meaningful lives and safeguard their dignity from the perspectives of autonomy and vulnerability, it is undoubtedly a superior option to have robots assist humans in care practices rather than to entirely substitute human caregivers with care robots.

i List of ten capabilities:

(1) ***Life*** Being able to live to the end of a life of normal length; not dying prematurely, or before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living.

(2) ***Bodily health*** Being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter.

(3) ***Bodily integrity*** Being able to move freely from place to place;to be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction.

(4) ***Senses, imagination, and thought*** Being able to use the senses,to imagine, think and reason—and to do these things in a "truly human"way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training. Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing works and events of one's own choice, religious,literary, musical, and so forth. Being able to use one's mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise. Being able to have pleasurable experiences and to avoid non beneficial pain.

(5) ***Emotions*** Being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger. Not having one's emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety.(Supporting this capability means supporting forms of human association that can be shown to be crucial in their development)

(6) ***Practical reason*** Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life.

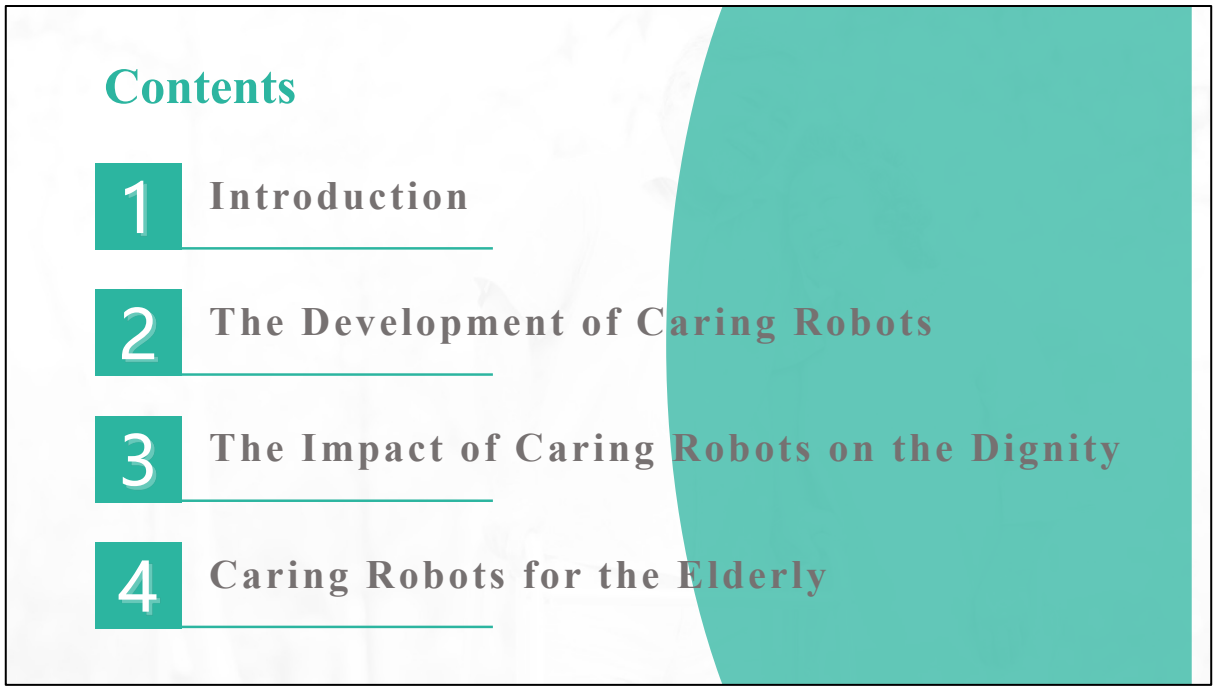
(7) ***Affiliation*** (A) Being able to live with and toward others, to recognise and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another. (B) Having the social bases of self-respect and nonhumiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. This entails provisions of non-discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation,ethnicity, caste, religion, national origin.

(8) ***Other species*** Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants and the world of nature.

(9) ***Play*** Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.

(10) ***Control over one's environment*** (A) Political. Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life;having the right of political participation, protections of free speech and association. (B) Material. Being able to hold property (both land and movable goods) and having property rights on an equal basis with others; having the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others; having the freedom from unwarranted search and seizure. In work, being able to work as a human being, exercising practical reason and entering into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other workers.


Caring Healing:
Caring Robots and
the Dignity of Older People
Speaker：Yang Chen
School：Xi'an Jiaotong University


Contents
1 Introduction
2 The Development of Caring Robots
3 The Impact of Caring Robots on the Dignity
4 Caring Robots for the Elderly



PART 01

Introduction

Healthy ageing: A priority for delivering universal health coverage

"Every country in the world is experiencing growth in both the number and proportion of people aged 60 years and older in the population. By 2030, persons aged 60 years and older are projected to globally outnumber youth and to be double the number of children under five. By 2050, 2.1 billion people will be aged 60 years and older, with 80% living in low and middle-income countries."——World Health Organization




PART 02
The Development of Caring Robots

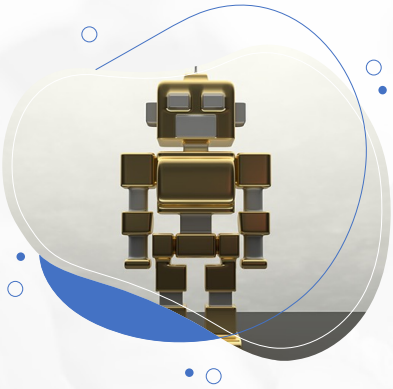

My Spoon
An automatic feeding robot developed by Secom of Japan, was officially launched in May 2002.

SAM

SAM doorman robot, which came from Luvozo of the United States,can provide ward rounds and non-drug care services for older people through automatic navigation, remote monitoring and fall risk monitoring system.



Zora



Zora robot integrates functions such as exercise, dancing, reading, and telling jokes, and can communicate with older people through voice recognition technology

Grace



Grace(the first medical robot with a realistic human appearance), which has functions such as vital sign monitoring, disease diagnosis assistance, multilingual communication, emotion recognition and interaction, companionship and psychological support.

Riba



Riba robot developed by Riken Company(Interactive Body Assisted Robot): it has a teddy bear face and can carry people from bed to wheelchair. It can recognize faces and voices and respond to verbal commands.

Care robots

1.**Assistive robots** can help older people complete a large number of daily housework, such as helping older people with daily living activities such as dressing, washing, cleaning, feeding, etc.

2.**Companion robots** can provide social and entertainment services for elderly people at home, such as performing dances, reading, and telling jokes for older people.

3.**Monitoring robots** can provide a series of health and safety monitoring services for older people through remote networks, such as real-time monitoring of older people's physical data

Three Adcantages of Care robots

1.**Services** can be provided **24 hours a day.**

2.**Services** can be tailored to the **personal preferences** and **needs** of older people.

3.**Services** are **transparent and predictable**, making them easy for users to manage and monitor.



Three Attitudes to Care robots

1.Affirm the future trend of care robots assisting older people, but expectations and rejection coexist.

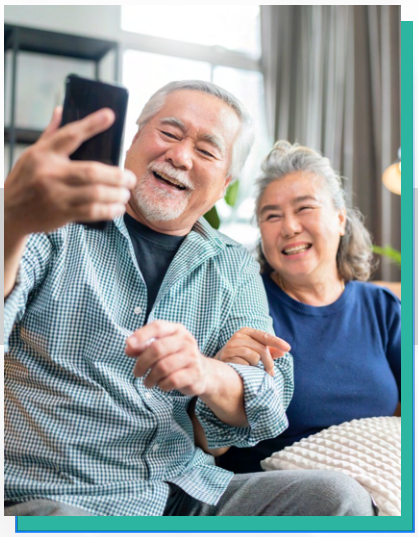
2.Expect robots to empower older people, but expect robots to play multiple roles such as life managers, health assistants, security guards, and intimate partners.

3.Expect government, enterprises, and society to support care robots assisting older people, but worry about insufficient technical literacy and inability to integrate into the digital age.



The Impact of Caring Robots on the Dignity

What is the definition of dignity?



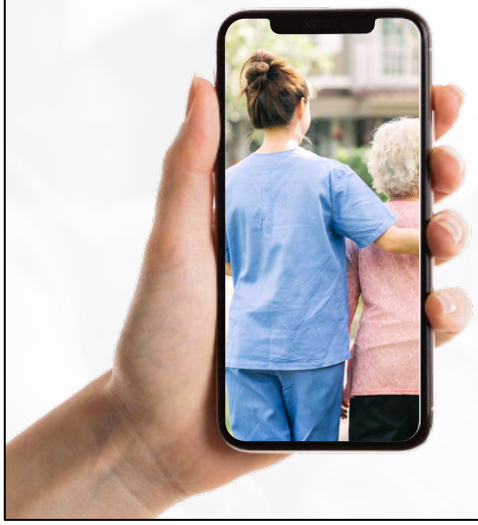
Comparison between two kinds of dignity views

Philosopher	Dignity views	Advantages and Disadvantages
Immanuel kant	***Dignity* is a superior position of rationality in humanity over animality.**	(1)It promotes people's rational value and ability to choose freely (2)It is the source of the two values of equality and respect in the West.
		(1)It further strengthens human domination and exploitation of animals, while making human increasingly reject their own animality. (2) It shapes human into ideal actors, denies human dependence and vulnerability, and cannot explain why those who lack rational ability enjoy dignity.
Martha C. Nussbaum	***Dignity* is the living standard that an individual can achieve in realizing his or her own "core ability".**	(1)It recognizes that all people are born with dignity, including those with limited cognitive abilities. (2)It does not rely on religious beliefs, and is therefore more adaptable to secular society (3)It emphasizes that everyone should reach a "threshold" level of ability, especially focusing on the extra care and support needed by people with disabilities, to avoid excluding vulnerable groups.
		(1)The trade-offs among the ten capabilities are difficult to handle, and the conflicts among the capabilities in practical applications are difficult to resolve. (2)The capability approach lacks a unified framework, making it difficult to specifically define and measure various capabilities.

Two dimensions of dignity



Autonomy	The possibility of **self-determining** and **free choice**
Vulnerability	We need to rely on **the help of others** when our bodies are sick, disabled and weak.



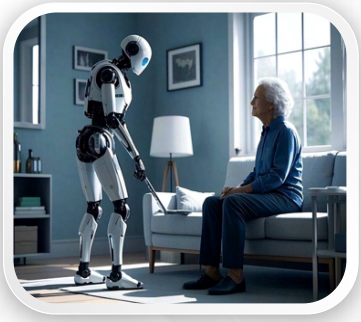
How do care robots affect the dignity of older people?

Deception

Robert Sparrow and Linda Sparrow pointed out :
"Care robots accompanying older people will make them **mistakenly believe** that robots have characteristics that they do not actually possess, such as sympathy, understanding, care and love. **This illusion** will make older people feel loved and cared for by the robots and experience the benefits of being cared for."



Deception



Is there a clear boundary between the real world and the virtual world?
——Mark Coeckelbergh

Privacy



Would you like the third person to view your home through remote control of the care robots?

Privacy



Do you want to be monitored by the care robots when you are bathing or dressing?


PART 04
Caring Robots for Older People


How should we understand the nature of care?


02
Care means "everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible."
——Joan Tronto
01
"Care ethics recognizes the roles of both carer and cared-for in establishing and maintaining the caring relation. "——Nel Noddings
03
"Care is the ability and willingness to see and hear needs, and to take responsibility for these needs being met."——Selma Sevenhuijsen


"All care involves attentiveness, sensitivity, and responding to needs."
——Virginia Held

Can robotic care eventually replace human care?





2025

Thanks for your attention!

Speaker：Yang Chen

School：Xi'an Jiaotong University

Xuan Fang · Yu Gao (NanJing University)

"Reconstructing Meaning in Philosophical Practice: A Phenomenological Exploration of the Lebenswelt of Individuals with Schizophrenia"

1. Introduction

Schizophrenia, as a classic mental disorder, has long been understood primarily within the biomedical framework, with its core manifestations summarized as symptomatic features such as hallucinations, delusions, and volitional disturbances. However, this observation-oriented diagnostic model often obscures the deeper dimensions of patients' subjective experiences. What kind of world do these patients inhabit? Where do their fears, fragmentation, and unease originate? These questions cannot be truly answered through symptomatology alone but require an exploration of their lived world (Lebenswelt) and the fundamental alterations in their relationship with the world.

Phenomenological philosophy offers a new path to understanding. In the works of Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Jaspers, human existence is not an isolated act of consciousness but rather a "Being-in-the-world" embedded in time, space, and relations with others. When this structure is disrupted, the individual's "sense of world" becomes disordered. From this perspective, phenomenological psychiatry argues that schizophrenia is not a loss of reality but a collapse of the world-structure. Patients do not entirely lose meaning but struggle to sustain themselves in a world that has become alien and hostile. In this context, the concept of the "lifeworld" (Lebenswelt) becomes crucial for understanding schizophrenia. Every individual inhabits their own lifeworld, constituted by everyday experiences, language, bodily sensations, and temporal awareness. The predicament of schizophrenia patients lies in their inability to maintain a coherent, trustworthy, and shareable world. Therefore, to truly comprehend and respond to their suffering, we must move beyond clinical indicators and instead focus on their existential state and the ruptures in meaning within their world.

This paper adopts a philosophical practice approach to explore how meaning can be reconstructed amid the collapse of the lifeworld. By introducing phenomenological methods, it seeks to transcend traditional medical models, offering a more humanistic framework for understanding schizophrenia while also contributing to interdisciplinary dialogue between psychiatry and philosophy.

2. What is the Patient's Lifeworld?

The concept of the lifeworld (Lebenswelt), first systematically proposed by Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, in The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology, was introduced to counter the "colonization" of lived experience by modern science (Husserl, 1970). As a core concept in Husserl' s phenomenological framework, the lifeworld refers to the everyday realm of experience directly perceived by subjects in a pre-reflective state, constituted through intersubjectivity. This world is fundamentally an interwoven network of meaning-

making and perceptual experience. It is neither an abstract concept nor the "reality" dissected by scientific and objective analysis, but rather the subjective reality intimately experienced through multiple dimensions — body, emotion, consciousness — forming the unconsciously trusted and relied-upon foundation of daily life.
The lifeworld encompasses the familiar dimensions of space, time, interpersonal relationships, and socio-cultural norms—a dynamic, meaningful domain where we interact with others and objects, thereby gaining a sense of stability and belonging. Key characteristics of the lifeworld include: (1) Natural Self-Evidence: In the lifeworld, we typically do not question the things around us but accept them with direct, unconditional trust. For instance, we do not doubt the solidity of the floor beneath our feet or the real existence of surrounding objects. This unconscious trust forms the basis of everyday existence. (2) Pre-Reflective Nature: Experiences in the lifeworld do not require deep reflection or rational analysis; they emerge naturally in the flow of daily activities. We do not actively "analyze" elements of the lifeworld but engage with them directly, understanding and perceiving them in an unmediated, intuitive manner. (3) Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity: While the lifeworld is subjective, it is also intersubjective — meaning we share a common understanding and experience with others. It is not merely a "private world" but a shared domain where individuals collectively construct, exchange, and transmit meaning.

3. The Disorder of the Lebenswelt (Life-World)

Phenomenological psychopathology refuses to reduce schizophrenia to a mere "brain disease" or "genetic defect." Instead, it probes: What fundamental alteration in the structure of consciousness leads to the disintegration of the patient's Lebenswelt (life-world)? The answer to this question manifests in multiple dimensions of pre-reflective self-consciousness, including the loss of reality, self-alienation, the distortion of temporal experience, and the breakdown of intersubjectivity.

3.1 Loss of the Sense of Reality

One of the core pathological features of schizophrenia is the loss of the sense of reality — that is, the disintegration of the natural understanding and coherent experience of the lived world. Within the framework of Heideggerian phenomenology, the sense of reality is regarded as a system of Bewandtnis (involvement) and Verweisungszusammenhänge (referential totality) internalized during an individual’s socialization. This system constitutes a pre-reflective "conceptual consensus," enabling individuals to grasp the basic rules of social interaction without deliberate thought (Blankenburg, 2012). However, in schizophrenia, the structure of In-der-Welt-sein (Being-in-the-world) becomes fractured, causing the world to no longer appear as a stable, meaningful whole but rather as a fragmented, incomprehensible, and alien realm. This loss of reality stems from the patient ’s inability to establish what Husserl termed the "world of the natural attitude" —that is, the inability to understand the world

directly in a non-reflective manner, forcing them to over-rationalize everyday experiences (Tang, 2020).

The disintegration of the sense of reality further manifests as common sense disturbance, wherein patients lose their intuitive grasp of the implicit rules of social interaction. Common sense, as pre-reflective practical knowledge, typically allows individualsto adapt fluidly to everyday situations. In contrast, schizophrenia patients must compensate for this deficit through conscious reasoning, resulting in rigid or socially inappropriate behavior (Stanghellin i, 2011) This impairment primarily manifests in two aspects:(1) Disturbance of synesthesia (sensory integration): Patients struggle to integrate multisensory inputs into a unified perceptual experience. For example, they may be unable to naturally combine visual, auditory, and tactile information into a coherent whole. (2)Impairment of practical knowledge: This is reflected in difficulties adapting to social conventions and interaction patterns, such as failing to understand implicit situational rules or respond appropriately to others ' emotions. Due to the lack of pre-reflective attunement, patients often appear detached or mechanical in social interactions, further exacerbating their social isolation.

The collapse of the sense of reality not only renders the patient 's world unfamiliar but also compels them to reconstruct meaning through pathological rationalization, forming a closed self-referential system. Ultimately, the patient ' s cognitive mode becomes disconnected from social consensus, trapping them in a vicious cycle of hyper-reflection and making the restoration of reality increasingly difficult.

3.2 Alienation of the Self

The self-experience of schizophrenia patients exhibits profound alienation characteristics, manifesting as the dual fragmentation described by Hendiadys: "the body devoid of life" and "the mind detached from the flesh." (Fuchs, 2009) This alienation encompasses fundamental disruptions at both the conscious and bodily levels.

At the conscious level, phenomenological theories by Parnas and Sass indicate that patients experience a disintegration of self-identity, manifested as: (1) Perceptual integration disorder—The patient's capacity for "passive synthesis" is impaired, rendering them unable to automatically integrate sensory information into a coherent whole, resulting in a fragmented representation of the world (Xu& Chen, 2017). Electroencephalogram studies show reduced γ-band synchrony in neural activity, corroborating the collapse of perceptual gestalt. (2) Blurring of self-boundaries—Patients struggle to distinguish between "self" and "non-self," experiencing thought diffusion, feelings of insertion, and delusions of alien control, where their intentions are attributed to external forces (Frith, 1992). (3) Emotional apathy — The pre-reflective empathy mechanism fails, reducing social interactions to mechanical responses and creating a "depersonalized" state of existence.

At the bodily level, the French phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty notes in Phenomenology of Perception: "Illness alters the spatiality of the body, rendering certain previously transparent bodily functions strange and conspicuous" (Merleau-

Ponty, 1962) Patients lose what Merleau-Ponty terms "bodily anonymity," evident in the following aspects:
(1) Estrangement — The body degrades from a "habitual body" to an observed object, requiring deliberate conscious control for everyday actions, exhibiting a "Cartesian"operational quality. (2) Objectification — Motor intentions dissociate from proprioceptive feedback, making limb movements feel externally driven, like "a manipulated machine" (Fuchs, 2009). (3) Pathological interpretation — Normal physiological processes (e.g., breathing, heartbeat) are imbued with delusional meanings, intensifying the opposition between body and self. Illness often leads to a drastic contraction of life space, retreating from public social spheres to the confines of home or even a sickbed. This alienation is fundamentally a rupture in temporal existence. Jaspers observes that the inherent incompleteness of the human subject escalates into an ontological crisis under pathological conditions (Fuchs, 2009).
Patients can neither maintain the continuity of consciousness nor preserve the body's role as a medium of "being-in-the-world," ultimately descending into what Heidegger describes as a "homeless" state — where the relationship between self and world is utterly reconfigured, yet no new order of meaning can be established.

3.3 Distortion of time perception
Distortion of time perception is one of the common symptoms in patients with schizophrenia, and this temporal dysregulation has profound effects on their daily lives and cognitive activities.
Building on Bergson ’s ideas, Minkowski proposed the concept of "lived time" (temps vécu), providing a theoretical framework for understanding the disturbances in temporal awareness among schizophrenia patients. Unlike conventional physical time, lived time refers to the continuous, non-quantifiable "existential time" experienced by individuals in daily life, emphasizing the subjective flow of time (Minkowski, 1970). For schizophrenia patients, lived time undergoes severe fragmentation—past experiences fail to integrate into the present, and the future loses its meaning, resulting in a shattered temporal experience detached from normal life-time. In other words, lived time is not merely a linear accumulation of moments but a process shaped by individual perception, encompassing emotions, lived experiences, and self-awareness. Thus, the temporal disturbances in schizophrenia are not simply a lack of time perception but involve a rupture in the stream of consciousness, where the connection between past and future is severed, blurring the patient ’s relationship with the self and the world.
Husserl ’ s analysis of time consciousness further elaborates on the crucial role of temporal perception in meaning-making. Normal temporal awareness is based on the coherent experience of past, present, and future. However, schizophrenia patients experience a "failure" in this temporal flow—unable to integrate past experiences into the present, leading to a fractured sense of time (Lai, 2013). In Husserl’s framework, temporality is the fundamental condition of conscious activity, and the coherence of time is the basis for human understanding of the world and self-experience. For

schizophrenia patients, past experiences cannot be retained and merged into the present, and the protentional function of time is severely disrupted, causing the stream of consciousness to lose continuity and lived experience to become fragmented. From Heidegger ' s ontological perspective, temporality constitutes the fundamental horizon through which "Dasein" (being-there) unfolds its existence. Disordered time perception means patients cannot construct an effective network of meaning—their past fails to inform the present, making every action feel like a "new beginning" (Xu, 2017). This not only affects memory and behavioral coherence but also disrupts their sense of history and individuation, stripping lived experience of continuity and meaning.

Temporal disturbances in schizophrenia extend beyond the inner world, impairing cognitive and behavioral synchronization. Patients often exhibit dysfunctional cognition, with disruptions in time sequencing and synchronization, leading to "cognitive dissonance." As Blankenburg noted, the alteration of temporal structure is the root of ontological suffering (Xu, 2017). The temporal distortion in schizophrenia detaches patients from normal daily life, trapping them in a purely subjective world where "yesterday" and "future" cease to be meaningful reference points. Their time perception stagnates — instead of flowing, time becomes frozen, lacking the normal structure of temporal awareness. In summary, time perception disorders in schizophrenia are not merely a dysregulation of clock time but a fundamental disruption of lived time, meaning construction, and self-awareness. Temporal distortion manifests as a fractured stream of consciousness, incoherent events, and fragmented lived experience, depriving patients of a sense of history and the ability to individuate.

3. 4 Intersubjective Alienation

Patients with schizophrenia often exhibit symptoms of intersubjective alienation, referring to a disruption in their relationship with both themselves and others, leading to a sense of unfamiliarity and detachment toward surrounding things and interpersonal relationships. This alienation is one of the key factors in understanding the suffering of patients. Intersubjectivity refers to the shared understanding and experiential connection established between individuals, based on the pre-reflective and direct relationship between the self and others. Husserl proposed that although each individual's consciousness and experience are subjective, through intersubjectivity, people can comprehend others' feelings and intentions, thereby forming an understanding of others. Intersubjectivity operates on two levels: primary intersubjectivity and secondary intersubjectivity. Primary intersubjectivity refers to an infant's early developmental ability to engage in direct interaction with others. This ability does not rely on language or complex cognitive processing but is instead achieved through nonverbal means such as body posture, facial expressions, eye contact, and imitation. Secondary intersubjectivity, on the other hand, involves the infant's capacity to jointly attend to and comprehend complex social situations with others. It is more sophisticated than primary intersubjectivity, requiring the infant to share experiences and emotions with others through joint attention and pointing.

Patients with schizophrenia experience impairments at the level of secondary intersubjectivity, making it difficult for them to understand others' emotions and thoughts or to be understood by others. This impairment significantly affects their social relationships and emotional connections. In interactions, patients may fail to grasp social norms, leading to misunderstandings or confusion about others' behavior and the social environment. Traditional neurocognitive theories suggest that the difficulties schizophrenia patients face in forming relationships with others stem primarily from deficits in meta-awareness, self-monitoring, and theory of mind. Frith proposed that ‘schizophrenia patients struggle to monitor their own thoughts and behavioral intentions, believing that their thoughts and actions are controlled by external forces, leading to delusional symptoms.’(Frith, 1992) However, phenomenological psychopathology critiques this theory, arguing that the fundamental issue in schizophrenia is not merely cognitive deficits but also a disruption in the relationship between the self and others. Patients lack an implicit understanding of the "rules of the game" in social environments, making it difficult for them to grasp the context and meaning of others' behavior.

From a phenomenological perspective, the boundary between the self and others is a fundamental structure of every experience. Schizophrenia patients often struggle to clearly distinguish between themselves and others, failing to maintain their bodily centrality in others' perspectives. They may feel confused in social interactions, unable to differentiate their own thoughts and feelings from those of others, and may even perceive others as "invading" their mental space. This confusion between self and other perspectives prevents patients from effectively engaging in self-other interactions, trapping them in a state of detached self-reflection and delusion. This sense of self-detachment becomes particularly pronounced in situations involving social or emotional exposure, such as leaving their parents' home, forming intimate relationships, or entering a work environment. Patients may feel observed, persecuted, or manipulated by others. Due to a lack of normal social intuition and emotional connection, schizophrenia patients often compensate by constructing hypothetical worlds. They may rely on their own logical reasoning and hypothetical constructs to interpret others and their surroundings rather than engaging in natural social interactions and empathy. This constructed world may manifest as paranoid beliefs or delusions — patients may believe they are being watched or controlled by others or that others harbor malicious intentions toward them. Although this pathological logical construction may provide temporary stability, it further deepens their alienation from the external world, as their understanding and interaction are based on pathological logic rather than natural social resonance.

Ultimately, the intersubjective alienation experienced by schizophrenia patients not only disrupts their social relationships but also damages their emotional connections. To compensate for their inability to understand others' emotions and social norms, patientsconstruct fictional worlds, which in turn intensify their sense of alienation and psychological symptoms, making it even harder for them to maintain normal social bonds and emotional exchanges. Over time, patients may become trapped in a closed,

pathological world, unable to return to normal social and emotional interactions. In summary, intersubjective alienation is one of the core sources of suffering for schizophrenia patients, and understanding this is crucial for treatment and intervention (Xu , 2015).

4. Reconstructing the Patient's Lifeworld

Phenomenology emphasizes the concept of the "lifeworld"—the unique way each individual experiences reality. In therapy, it is essential to fully respect and explore the patient's subjective understanding of the world, comprehending the logic and experiences behind their delusional or paranoid beliefs rather than immediately attempting to correct or suppress them. By understanding the patient's internal logic, therapists can help them find more flexible ways of interpretation and adaptation within their own lifeworld, thereby gradually reducing their reliance on hypothetical world constructions.

4. 1 Reconstructing the Meaning of Life for Patients

For schizophrenia patients, the progression of life is interrupted by the illness, and their sense of time and meaning becomes trapped in past experiences. To help patients emerge from this enclosed state, the therapist's task is not only to alleviate symptoms but also to assist them in re-establishing meaning in life, enabling them to open up to the future.

First, view the schizophrenic state as a temporary interruption and a fresh start in the life process. In schizophrenia, the patient's daily life and normal cognitive-emotional activities are disrupted by pathological experiences, leading to an interruption in their original life trajectory. The patient's cognitive and emotional activities often become trapped in a pathological cycle, creating a stark contrast with the typically open-ended course of life. However, this state is not a permanent endpoint but rather a pause in the life process—one that can potentially be transformed through therapy into an opportunity to reintegrate life's meaning. Therefore, treatment should be seen as a chance to help patients restart their life journey after this "interruption," allowing them to gradually restore the fluidity and openness of self-awareness.

Second, restore the primordial "signifying relations" to enable the representation of emotions. In schizophrenia, the patient's signifying relations—the meaningful connections between the self and the external world—are severely disrupted. Patients may struggle to effectively link emotions and thoughts with the external world, causing their experiences to become isolated and chaotic. Thus, the primary therapeutic task is to help patients gradually restore these "primordial signifying relations," allowing them to reinterpret, perceive, and articulate their emotional experiences. In this process, therapists can facilitate emotional "representation" through active listening, empathy, and supporting the patient's expression. This emotional representation enables patients to perceive and process their inner emotions more clearly, rather than being controlled by them or lost in emotional chaos. By reconstructing this mechanism

of emotional representation, patients can better understand their own experiences and reconnect them with the external world.

Finally, open the enclosed world toward a generative future. The temporal structure of schizophrenia patients often exhibits a "closed time" characteristic—their experiences are imprisoned in past traumas or delusions, unable to generate new meaning toward the future. This "closed time" confines patients to repetitive memories, symptoms, or rigid thought patterns, creating an endless cycle. For example, patients may repeatedly relive past traumatic events or painful emotions, unable to break free. This enclosure also means the patient's identity remains locked in a pathological definition of the past, unable to transcend past struggles and open up to new possibilities of identity. Consequently, the patient's existence is confined to a "past world" that endlessly repeats, incapable of generating new meaning or experience.To help patients break free from this enclosed temporal and identity structure, the key lies in "reconstructing the meaning of life for the patient." This reconstruction is not about imposing new beliefs but rather assisting them in gradually rebuilding an open life experience, liberating them from past imprisonment and unfolding new possibilities toward the future.

In summary, reconstructing life's meaning is not merely about alleviating symptoms but about granting patients a new temporal structure—a generative life experience oriented toward the future. By restoring an open sense of time, patients can gradually break free from the imprisonment of the past, moving toward a more fulfilling and continuous self-experience, rediscovering the flow and possibilities of life. This process takes time, but it can help patients gradually emerge from their enclosed selves, achieving the reintegration of meaning and the regeneration of self-existence.

4.2 Grasping the Patient's Mode of Being

Understanding the "mode of being" of schizophrenia patients refers to comprehending and accepting their unique experiential world, thought processes, and characteristics of interpersonal interaction. This understanding requires not only an analysis of symptoms but also a focus on the patient's state of existence in the world, helping them gradually rebuild connections with the external environment.

On one hand, attention must be paid to the patient's holistic disturbance. From Minkowski's phenomenological perspective, human psychological activities cannot be simply divided into isolated functions such as emotion, volition, and intellect. Just as these functions cannot be understood apart from everyday external interactions, in psychopathology, they should not be regarded as separate "symptoms" but rather as part of the "primordial unity" of human subjectivity (or the self). In other words, psychological states such as emotion, volition, and intellect are inherently interconnected and interpenetrating, all manifestations of the dynamic functioning of the self. Therefore, for schizophrenia or other mental disorders, the root of pathology is not a singular dysfunction of a specific psychological faculty but a disturbance in the overall structure of the self, which manifests as a holistic disruption of functions like emotion, volition, and cognition. As stated, "Madness is not a disorder of

judgment, perception, or volition but a disturbance in the internal structure of the self. The psychological state of a mentally ill person is not an isolated fragment but an expression of the self, as every psychological state reflects and expresses the entire personality." (Xu,2015). This perspective reveals the core tenet of phenomenological therapy—treatment should focus on a profound understanding of the living individual as a whole, rather than remaining at the superficial level of symptoms. Therapists need to deeply comprehend the patient's cognition, emotion, and behavior in specific contexts, paying attention to how they express the self through their entire mode of being.

On the other hand, attention must be directed to the deep structure underlying the patient's linguistic behavior. In Binswanger's view, schizophrenia and other mental disorders should not simply be defined as deviations from a certain "normal" standard but rather understood as the patient's unique way of existing and their special perspective on experiencing the world. "Binswanger emphasized the necessity of exploring linguistic phenomena, urging analysts to seek what lies behind the patient's verbal expressions (world-project) and to understand how the various parts of the patient's life form a unified structure. " (Xu, 2 0 2 0) Specifically, Binswanger believed that the key to analyzing and understanding this mode of being lies in comprehending the patient's linguistic phenomena, particularly the "world-project" behind their verbal expressions (i.e., the way the patient constructs and understands the world). Through language, patients reveal their unique perceptions and interpretations of reality, from which one can see how the various parts of their life integrate into a coherent structure. Binswanger argued that schizophrenia patients do not suffer from mere cognitive or emotional disorders but rather from a holistic mode of being in the world that differs from that of ordinary people, leading to difficulties in communication, interaction, and understanding in real life. Therefore, analysts must grasp the patient's unique "being-in-the-world" by examining the deep structure behind their verbal expressions and behaviors.

These two perspectives have significant implications for clinical practice: First, therapists must not approach treatment solely based on surface symptoms but should ground their understanding in the patient's holistic mode of being, exploring how symptoms intertwine with their life experiences, thought patterns, and emotional experiences. Second, therapists should focus on how patients express their understanding of the world through language and behavior, using these expressions to gain insight into their unique "world-project." This understanding of the patient's mode of being enables therapists to fundamentally grasp the true meaning of mental illness, thereby guiding treatment more effectively.

4.3 Reconstructing the Patient’s Inter-Subjective Relationships

By reconstructing the patient’s inter-subjective relationships, focusing on the "self-other" boundary experience, and improving emotional management, individuals with schizophrenia can regain social and emotional balance and meaning.

First, rebuilding relationships and emotional connections. Patients with schizophrenia

often struggle with emotional expression and forming relationships, frequently feeling isolated or unable to understand others. One of the therapist's roles is to help patients reestablish emotional bonds with others. Through positive relationships, patients can experience emotional warmth, which plays a constructive role in rebuilding their sense of meaning in life. The support, understanding, and acceptance gained in interpersonal interactions help patients break free from isolation and discover new purpose. For example, through group therapy or family support, patients gradually learn to trust others, regain sensitivity to others ' emotional responses, and thereby derive positive life experiences from interactions.

Second, addressing the patient's "self-other" boundary experience. Schizophrenia patients often experience confusion in distinguishing between "self" and "other," manifesting in delusions such as "others can read my mind" or "I am controlled by external forces." This blurred boundary makes it difficult for them to maintain a clear sense of self, leading to distrust, fear, or even hostility toward others. This not only affects their way of being but also fosters feelings of alienation and detachment in social settings. Therapists can help patients recognize these experiences by inquiring about and validating their boundary confusion. For instance, during therapy, the therapist may empathize with and accept the patient's feelings or use clear rules and spatial arrangements to help them reestablish self-awareness. Setting clear boundaries in sessions—such as maintaining a safe physical distance—can provide patients with a sense of security. Over time, this approach helps patients distinguish between themselves and others, reconstruct their self-awareness, and reduce the distress caused by boundary confusion.

Finally, guiding patients toward emotional and interpersonal balance. Schizophrenia patients often feel overwhelmed by emotions such as anxiety, anger, and hypersensitivity. Therapists should assist them in finding balanced coping strategies and developing awareness and understanding of their emotions. For example, when a patient exhibits anxiety, the therapist can use empathy and guidance to help them identify the source of their anxiety and analyze its underlying causes, thereby enhancing emotional regulation. Additionally, when patients feel isolated, therapists can offer care and support, allowing them to experience acceptance and connection. Through the therapeutic relationship, therapists provide consistent, stable emotional support, enabling patients to gradually build trust and explore suitable ways of self-expression in social interactions.

In summary, the therapist's role is to help schizophrenia patients find balance in their perception of the "self-other" boundary and reconstruct meaning in life through emotional connection and support. This assistance goes beyond short-term intervention; it involves sustained companionship and care, helping patients gradually emerge from isolation and engage with others. By fostering positive emotional connections, patients can regain a stronger sense of meaning and self-identity in their lives.

5. Conclusion

This study delves into the reconstruction of the lifeworld of schizophrenia patients from a phenomenological perspective. Through an analysis of their "being-in-the-world," it reveals profound disruptions in their sense of reality, temporality, spatiality, and intersubjectivity, illustrating how these disturbances lead to a fractured relationship with the external world. Schizophrenia is not merely a distortion of perception or delusion but a fundamental rupture in the lifeworld, where patients struggle to maintain their self-existence in a world perceived as hostile and alien.

This paper proposes that phenomenological reduction can help patients break free from pathological labels and restore their relationships with others and the world. By reconstructing their sense of time and space, reestablishing the fluidity of self-awareness, and gradually opening the closed temporal structure, patients can begin to unfold new meanings toward the future. This process requires not only the therapist’s empathetic listening but also a deep understanding of the patient’s lifeworld, aiding them in gradually restoring emotional connections and social functioning through language expression and interaction.

This study offers a philosophical therapeutic approach for schizophrenia patients—one that goes beyond symptom management to reconstruct the meaning structures of their lifeworld through a phenomenological lens. This method transcends the limitations of traditional medical models, proposing a healing approach centered on the patient’s subjective experience, thereby fostering interdisciplinary dialogue between psychiatry and philosophy. Through such profound philosophical practice, patients can gradually emerge from isolation and alienation on a foundation of respect and understanding, restoring normal life and social functioning, and ultimately achieving a renewed dwelling in their lifeworld.

This research holds not only theoretical significance but also provides new perspectives and methods for clinical practice. It emphasizes the restoration of psychological functioning and social adaptability by focusing on patients ’ modes of existence, emotional experiences, and interpersonal relationships. Through such humanistic care, schizophrenia patients can rediscover self-identity within a fresh interpretive framework and reconstruct their lifeworld anew.

Reference

Fuchs T. (2009). Phenomenology and psychopathology. In Gallagher S, and Sch mic king D(ed.), *Handbook of Phenomenology and Cognitive Science* (pp. 547-574). Springer.

Frith C.D. (1992). *The Cognitive Neuropsychology of Schizophrenia*. Psychology Press.

Husserl, E. (1970). *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology.* Northwestern University Press.

Lai Chengbin. (2013). Time Consciousness and Schizophrenia. *Journal of Shenzhen University (Humanities & Social Sciences),* 30(02): 58-64.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *Phenomenology of Perception* . Routledge.

Minkowski E. (1970). *Lived Time*. Nancy Metzel, trans. Evenston: Northwestern University Press.

Stanghellin i,G. (2011). Phenomenological Psychopathology, Profundity, and Schizophrenia. Philosophy*, Psychiatry & Psychology*, 18(2), 163-166.

Tang Shusheng. (2020). The Transcendental Phenomenological Approach in Psychopathology: Reinterpreting the Loss of Natural Self-Evidence. *Contemporary Chinese Values Research*, 5(06): 68-76.

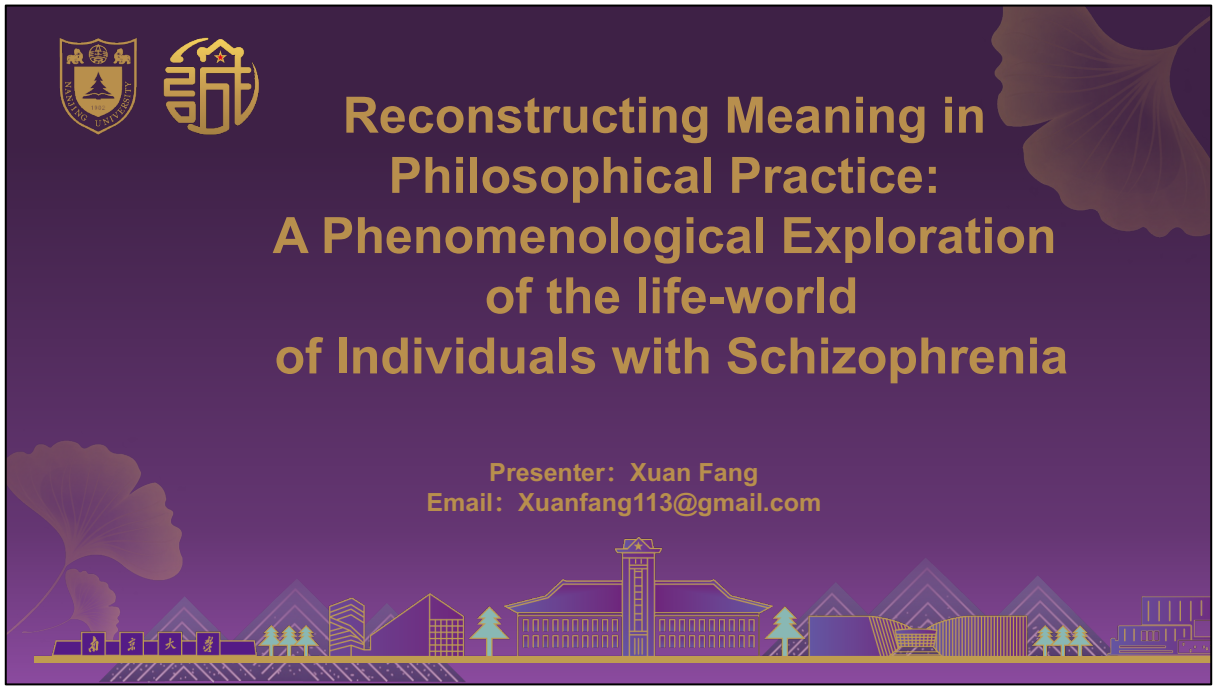
Wolfgang Blankenburg. (2012*). Der Verlustder nat ü rlichen Selbstverst ä ndlichkeit*.. Parodos Verlag.

Xu Xianjun. (2015). A Phenomenological Psychopathological Explanation of Delusional Disorder and Schizophrenia[J]. *Journal of Zhejiang University (Humanities and Socia Sciences Edition)*, 45(04): 121-129.

Xu Xianjun & Chen Wei. (2017). The Loss of Natural Self-Evidence: A Review of Blankenburg's Schizophrenia Theory. *Psychological Science*, 40(4), 1011-1016.

Xu Xianjun. (2017). From Phenomenology to Psychiatry: On Minkowski's Phenomenological Psychiatry. *Journal of Zhejiang University (Humanities and Social Sciences),* 47(05): 77-86.

Xu Xianjun. (2020). The Development of Heidegger's Ontology in Binswange r's Phenomenological Psychopathology. *Zhejiang Social Sciences*, (04): 108-115+159.


Reconstructing Meaning in Philosophical Practice: A Phenomenological Exploration of the life-world of Individuals with Schizophrenia
Presenter: Xuan Fang
Email: Xuanfang113@gmail.com


Part 1
Introduction

Schizophrenia, as a classic mental disorder, has long been understood primarily within the biomedical framework. However, this observation-oriented diagnostic model often obscures the deeper dimensions of patients' subjective experiences.

Phenomenological philosophy offers a new path to understanding—— human existence is not an isolated act of consciousness but rather a "Being-in-the-world" embedded in time, space, and relations with others. When this structure is disrupted, the individual's "sense of world" becomes disordered. In this context, the concept of the "lifeworld" (Lebenswelt) becomes crucial for understanding schizophrenia.

This paper adopts a philosophical practice approach to explore how meaning can be reconstructed amid the collapse of the lifeworld. By introducing phenomenological methods, it seeks to transcend traditional medical models, offering a more humanistic framework for understanding schizophrenia while also contributing to interdisciplinary dialogue between psychiatry and philosophy.

Part 2

What is the Patient's Life-world?

First systematically proposed: Lebenswelt by Edmund Husserl (*The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology,1970*)
was introduced to counter the "colonization" of lived experience by modern science.

In Husserl ' s phenomenological framework: the lifeworld refers to **the everyday realm of experience** directly perceived by subjects in a pre-reflective state, constituted through intersubjectivity. This world is fundamentally **an interwoven network of meaning-making and perceptual experience**. It is neither an abstract concept nor the "reality" dissected by scientific and objective analysis, but rather **the subjective reality intimately experienced through multiple dimensions** — body, emotion, consciousness — forming **the unconsciously trusted and relied-upon foundation of daily life.**

Key characteristics of the lifeworld include:

(1)**Natural Self-Evidence**: In the lifeworld, we typically do not question the things around us but accept them with direct, unconditional trust. For instance, we do not doubt the solidity of the floor beneath our feet or the real existence of surrounding objects. This unconscious trust forms the basis of everyday existence.

(2)**Pre-Reflective Nature**: Experiences in the lifeworld do not require deep reflection or rational analysis; they emerge naturally in the flow of daily activities. We do not actively "analyze" elements of the lifeworld but engage with them directly, understanding and perceiving them in an unmediated, intuitive manner.

(3)**Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity**: While the lifeworld is subjective, it is also intersubjective — meaning we share a common understanding and experience with others. It is not merely a "private world" but a shared domain where individuals collectively construct, exchange, and transmit meaning.ously trusted and relied-upon foundation of daily life.

Part 3

The Disorder of the Life-World

Phenomenological psychopathology refuses to reduce schizophrenia to a mere "brain disease" or "genetic defect." Instead, it probes: **What fundamental alteration in the structure of consciousness leads to the disintegration of the patient's life-world**? The answer to this question manifests **in multiple dimensions of pre-reflective self-consciousness**, including the loss of reality, self-alienation, the distortion of temporal experience, and the breakdown of intersubjectivity.

1. Loss of the Sense of Reality

Concept: the disintegration of the natural understanding and coherent experience of the lived world.

Within the framework of Heideggerian phenomenology, the sense of reality is regarded as a system of **Bewandtnis (involvement)** and **Verweisungszusammenhänge (referential totality)** internalized during an individual's socialization. This system constitutes a pre-reflective "conceptual consensus," enabling individuals to grasp the basic rules of social interaction without deliberate thought (Blankenburg, 2012).

In schizophrenia, the structure of In-der-Welt-sein (Being-in-the-world) becomes fractured, causing **the world to no longer appear as a stable, meaningful whole but rather as a fragmented, incomprehensible, and alien realm.** This loss of reality stems from the patient 's inability to establish what Husserl termed the "world of the natural attitude" —that is, the inability to understand the world directly in a non-reflective manner, forcing them to over-rationalize everyday experiences (Tang , 2020).

2.Alienation of the Self

This alienation encompasses fundamental disruptions **at both the conscious and bodily levels,** manifesting as the dual fragmentation described by Hendiadys: "the body devoid of life" and "the mind detached from the flesh." (Fuchs, 2009)

At the conscious level, phenomenological theories by Parnas and Sass indicate that patients experience a disintegration of self-identity, manifested as:

(1) Perceptual integration disorder—The patient's capacity for "passive synthesis" is impaired, rendering them unable to automatically integrate sensory information into a coherent whole, resulting in a fragmented representation of the world (Xu& Chen, 2017).

(2) Blurring of self-boundaries—Patients struggle to distinguish between "self" and "non-self," experiencing thought diffusion, feelings of insertion, and delusions of alien control, where their intentions are attributed to external forces (Frith, 1992).

(3) Emotional apathy — The pre-reflective empathy mechanism fails, reducing social interactions to mechanical responses and creating a "depersonalized" state of existence.

2.Alienation of the Self

At the bodily level, the French phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty notes in Phenomenology of Perception: "Illness alters the spatiality of the body, rendering certain previously transparent bodily functions strange and conspicuous" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) Patients lose what Merleau-Ponty terms "bodily anonymity," evident in the following aspects:

(1) Estrangement:The body degrades from a "habitual body" to an observed object, requiring deliberate conscious control for everyday actions, exhibiting a "Cartesian" operational quality.

(2) Objectification : Motor intentions dissociate from proprioceptive feedback, making limb movements feel externally driven, like "a manipulated machine" (Fuchs, 2009).

(3) Pathological interpretation : Normal physiological processes (e.g., breathing, heartbeat) are imbued with delusional meanings, intensifying the opposition between body and self. Illness often leads to a drastic contraction of life space, retreating from public social spheres to the confines of home or even a sickbed. This alienation is fundamentally a rupture in temporal existence. (Fuchs, 2009).

3. Distortion of time perception

'lived time' (temps vécu by Minkowski): Unlike conventional physical time, **lived time refers to the continuous, non-quantifiable "existential time" experienced by individuals in daily life, emphasizing the subjective flow of time** (Minkowski, 1970). For schizophrenia patients, lived time undergoes severe fragmentation—past experiences fail to integrate into the present, and the future loses its meaning, resulting in a shattered temporal experience detached from normal life-time. In other words, lived time is not merely a linear accumulation of moments but a process shaped by individual perception, encompassing emotions, lived experiences, and self-awareness. Thus, the temporal disturbances in schizophrenia are not simply a lack of time perception but involve a rupture in the stream of consciousness, where the connection between past and future is severed, blurring the patient 's relationship with the self and the world.

3. Distortion of time perception

Temporal disturbances in schizophrenia extend beyond the inner world, impairing cognitive and behavioral synchronization. Patients often exhibit dysfunctional cognition, with disruptions in time sequencing and synchronization, leading to **"cognitive dissonance".** As Blankenburg noted, the alteration of temporal structure is the root of ontological suffering (Xu, 2017). The temporal distortion in schizophrenia detaches patients from normal daily life, trapping them in a purely subjective world where "yesterday" and "future" cease to be meaningful reference points. Their time perception stagnates — instead of flowing, time becomes frozen, lacking the normal structure of temporal awareness.

4 Intersubjective Alienation

Concept: Intersubjective alienation referring to a disruption in their relationship with both themselves and others, leading to **a sense of unfamiliarity and detachment toward surrounding things and interpersonal relationships**.

Patients with schizophrenia experience impairments are difficult to understand others' emotions and thoughts or to be understood by others. This impairment significantly affects their social relationships and emotional connections. In interactions, patients may fail to grasp social norms, leading to misunderstandings or confusion about others' behavior and the social environment. Patients with schizophrenia experience impairments at the level of secondary intersubjectivity, making it difficult for them to understand others' emotions and thoughts or to be understood by others. This impairment significantly affects their social relationships and emotional connections. In interactions, patients may fail to grasp social norms, leading to misunderstandings or confusion about others' behavior and the social environment.

Part 4

Reconstructing the Patient's Lifeworld

Phenomenology emphasizes the concept of the "lifeworld"—the unique way each individual experiences reality. In therapy, it is essential to fully respect and explore the patient's subjective understanding of the world, comprehending the logic and experiences behind their delusional or paranoid beliefs rather than immediately attempting to correct or suppress them. By understanding the patient's internal logic, therapists can help them find more flexible ways of interpretation and adaptation within their own lifeworld, thereby gradually reducing their reliance on hypothetical world constructions.

1 Reconstructing the Meaning of Life for Patients

For schizophrenia patients, the progression of life is interrupted by the illness, and their sense of time and meaning becomes trapped in past experiences. To help patients emerge from this enclosed state, the therapist's task is not only to alleviate symptoms but also to assist them in re-establishing meaning in life, enabling them to open up to the future.

First, view the schizophrenic state as a temporary interruption and a fresh start in the life process.

Second, restore the primordial "signifying relations" to enable the representation of emotions.

Finally, open the enclosed world toward a generative future.

In summary, reconstructing life's meaning is not merely about alleviating symptoms but about granting patients a new temporal structure—a generative life experience oriented toward the future. By restoring an open sense of time, patients can gradually break free from the imprisonment of the past, moving toward a more fulfilling and continuous self-experience, rediscovering the flow and possibilities of life.

2 Grasping the Patient's Mode of Being

Understanding the "mode of being" of schizophrenia patients refers to comprehending and accepting their unique experiential world, thought processes, and characteristics of interpersonal interaction. This understanding requires not only an analysis of symptoms but also a focus on the patient's state of existence in the world, helping them gradually rebuild connections with the external environment.

On one hand, attention must be paid to the patient's holistic disturbance.

On the other hand, attention must be directed to the deep structure underlying the patient's linguistic behavior.

These two perspectives have significant implications for clinical practice: First, therapists must not approach treatment solely based on surface symptoms but should ground their understanding in the patient's holistic mode of being, exploring how symptoms intertwine with their life experiences, thought patterns, and emotional experiences. Second, therapists should focus on how patients express their understanding of the world through language and behavior, using these expressions to gain insight into their unique "world-project."

3 Reconstructing the Patient's Inter-Subjective Relationships

By reconstructing the patient's inter-subjective relationships, focusing on the "self-other" boundary experience, and improving emotional management, individuals with schizophrenia can regain social and emotional balance and meaning.

First, rebuilding relationships and emotional connections.

Second, addressing the patient's "self-other" boundary experience.

Finally, guiding patients toward emotional and interpersonal balance.

In summary, the therapist's role is to help schizophrenia patients find balance in their perception of the "self-other" boundary and reconstruct meaning in life through emotional connection and support. This assistance goes beyond short-term intervention; it involves sustained companionship and care, helping patients gradually emerge from isolation and engage with others.

Part 5

Conclusion

This paper proposes that phenomenological reduction can help patients break free from pathological labels and restore their relationships with others and the world. By reconstructing their sense of time and space, reestablishing the fluidity of self-awareness, and gradually opening the closed temporal structure, patients can begin to unfold new meanings toward the future. This process requires not only the therapist's empathetic listening but also a deep understanding of the patient's lifeworld, aiding them in gradually restoring emotional connections and social functioning through language expression and interaction.

This study offers a philosophical therapeutic approach for schizophrenia patients—one that goes beyond symptom management to reconstruct the meaning structures of their lifeworld through a phenomenological lens. This method transcends the limitations of traditional medical models, proposing a healing approach centered on the patient's subjective experience, thereby fostering interdisciplinary dialogue between psychiatry and philosophy. Through such profound philosophical practice, patients can gradually emerge from isolation and alienation on a foundation of respect and understanding, restoring normal life and social functioning, and ultimately achieving a renewed dwelling in their lifeworld.



E2

Yeonhee Lee(Gyeongsang National University) · Jiwon Shim (Dongguk University)

"Rethinking Patient Autonomy through Positive Liberty: Voluntary Hysterectomy in the Era of Posthuman"

1. Introduction

The debate over the permissible limits of medical intervention has primarily centered on questions of the boundary between treatment and enhancement regarding **the purpose of medical intervention**, whether **the means of medical intervention** align with naturalness, and whether **the degree of medical intervention** contradicts human nature. However, discussions about medical intervention need to be addressed from a more **practical perspective** in anticipation of the approaching **posthuman era.** This is because such technologies will fundamentally reconstruct individual self-determination and bodily autonomy rights, making it difficult to adequately respond with existing ethical standards.

The "posthuman era" as defined in this paper refers to the near future society where medical technologies capable of compensating for current human vulnerabilities have been successfully developed and commercialized. Posthuman is generally understood and discussed as "beings so completely transformed that they cannot represent the human species." However, human transformation through technology occurs in a practical and continuous manner, and furthermore, entirely unexpected beings may emerge as technology develops. In other words, while it may be theoretically possible to perfectly distinguish between posthuman and human, it is practically difficult to do so. Therefore, the posthuman era discussed in this paper does not refer only to the very distant future depicted in science fiction, but to **the foreseeable near future based on current trends in developing medical technologies**.[1]

Specifically, this paper focuses on the moral dilemma concerning **"voluntary hysterectomy"** among the medical cases that have become available through the expansion of medical intervention. As one solution to this dilemma, I propose a concept of patient autonomy based on **Charles Taylor's concept of freedom.**

2. Medical Technology Development and the Uterus

[1] Lee, Y. H., & Song, S. Y. (2024). Suggestions for moral education directions for the posthuman era. *Philosophy, Thought, Culture*, *46*, 316.

The uterus is a bodily organ that causes physical pain from conditions such as menstrual cramps, uterine fibroids, and uterine cancer, as well as daily inconvenience from menstruation for many women. Nevertheless, the uterus has deep social connections with female (gender) identity, creating dilemmas in women's medical choices. Even in cases where hysterectomy could be a medical option due to extreme pain caused by the uterus, it makes women hesitant. However, today some women actively consider hysterectomy as a choice for pain elimination and quality of life improvement before any problems with their uterus arise. This is related to changes in recognition following advances in medical technology.

The development of modern medical technology is bringing many changes to the meaning of life, death, and aging. For example, "aging" is sometimes understood not as a natural phenomenon but as something that can be prevented through medical intervention and is even perceived as part of disease. Furthermore, the development of medical technology expands the possibility of using medical intervention for the purpose of "enhancement" beyond "treatment." This means the possibility of transforming what was once in the realm of "fate or chance" into the realm of "choice." For instance, medical technology can now predetermine a child's eye color, gender, height, before birth, and can change the expected height of a born child. A few years ago, unverified stories circulated about some parents forcing their children to undergo vasectomies to focus on college entrance exam preparation, which could also be considered a case of using medical technology for life efficiency "enhancement." Such cases aim for "preference satisfaction" or "efficiency." Therefore, the permissibility of medical intervention in these cases does not easily gain ethical legitimacy.

However, when medical intervention does not belong to the category of treatment but is clearly related to "physical pain," the discussion becomes more complex. For instance, people generally would not consider removing their appendix preemptively out of concern about future disease. However, the case is somewhat different for breasts, ovaries, and uteruses that can cause cancer. American actress Angelina Jolie surprised many people by undergoing preventive breast removal surgery considering her family medical history.[2] Similarly, voluntary hysterectomy can be chosen for enhancement rather than treatment purposes as it can preemptively eliminate women's suffering.[3] However, the ethical permissibility of voluntary hysterectomy requires extensive discussion and debate. Moreover the uterus carries relatively greater physical and social significance compared to the appendix.

First, the uterus carries the meaning of "reproduction" in our society. Rather than women having decision-making authority over reproduction issues, they are important subjects of public discussion by the state in the context of population policy, and decisions about abortion are also discussed institutionally in the context of protecting

[2] abcNEWS. (May 14, 2013). Angelina Jolie Reveals She Had Double Mastectomy to Prevent Breast Cancer. Angelina Jolie Reveals She Had Double Mastectomy to Prevent Breast Cancer - ABC News

[3] Dunham, L. (2018, February 14). Lena Dunham on her decision to have a hysterectomy at 31. Vogue. Lena Dunham on Her Decision to Have a Hysterectomy at 31, in Her Own Words | Vogue

fetuses. Consequently, despite active discussions about women's liberation from reproduction and reproductive rights today, reproduction is still socially imposed on women. In other words, social systems powerfully prevent factors that would prevent women from giving birth. There are various social mechanisms to prevent abortion. Even when women decide to have an abortion, institutional arrangements such as requiring them to listen to the baby's heartbeat are put in place.

Simultaneously, the uterus itself symbolizes "femininity." In the past, the uterus was both disparaged as the cause of hysteria and praised as a sacred place that conceives potential life. (This perspective continues today.) Consequently, society may not accept uterine diseases as diseases themselves or as part of women's bodily organs, and may excessively assign the meaning of "loss of femininity" to women who decide on hysterectomy. This makes it difficult for women suffering extreme pain from their uterus to easily decide on uterine removal or gain social acceptance.

3. Ethical Challenges of Voluntary Hysterectomy

However, when we loosen the connection between the uterus and "reproduction" and "women," we can discuss more practical and urgent problems about the uterus in preparation for the posthuman era. Medical interventions for various purposes regarding hysterectomy can be categorized as shown in <Table 1> below.

<Table 1> Ethical Analysis of Hysterectomy

Case	Situation	Ethical Position	Purpose
Case 1	Life-threatening diseases (e.g., uterine cancer)	Permissible	Treatment
Case 2	Non-life-threatening uterine conditions (elective treatment)	Ethically acceptable: May pose life risk but hysterectomy not strictly necessary	Treatment
Case 3	Uterine cancer prevention (prophylactic)	Questionable: whether this constitutes prevention or treatment	Prevention or Treatment?
Case 4	Severe menstrual pain relief	Questionable: Not generally recognized as a serious medical condition	Quality of life improvement
Case 5	Elimination of menstrual inconvenience (no reproductive plans)	Questionable: Contrary to human nature; artificial removal is ethically problematic	Quality of life improvement
Case 6	Organ donation to transgender individuals or women seeking pregnancy	Permissible: Can benefit transgender individuals or women desiring pregnancy	Reproductive function support
Case 7	Hysterectomy for disabled women to prevent menstruation/pregnancy	Not permissible: Raises serious human rights concerns	Efficiency
Case 8	Forced hysterectomy for workplace efficiency	Not permissible (Illegal): Human rights violation	Efficiency

Among the eight cases, those expected to cause acute ethical conflicts are: removing a problem-free uterus to prevent uterine cancer (Case 3), removing the uterus to escape menstrual pain that is not generally considered a serious disease (Case 4), and choosing uterine removal for the purpose of improving quality of life by eliminating menstrual inconvenience (Case 5). To resolve these ethical conflicts, ensuring maximum autonomy for women as recipients of technology in the medical field can be one important solution.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations: Patient Autonomy Based on Positive Liberty

Modern medical ethics upholds "patient autonomy" as a core value. However, the autonomy discussed in actual medical practice is mostly reduced to negative liberty.[4][^2] Negative liberty means "a state of liberation completely free from external obstacles such as physical and legal coercion," emphasizing above all the "independence of subject." Autonomy based on this concept is reduced to a state where patients can choose what they want among various alternatives without external interference, namely "freedom of choice."[5]

However, problems arise when autonomy in medical settings is limited to merely a matter of choice possibilities. For example, when facing major medical decisions like hysterectomy, saying "It's your body, so you decide!" may sound like respecting autonomy, but in reality, it may be an attitude that transfers decision-making responsibility to the patient without sufficient information and support.

The uterus is not simply a reproductive organ but a body deeply intertwined with women's identity, aging, social roles, and existential experiences. Many women suffering from uterine fibroids or adenomyosis are recommended hysterectomy as a therapeutic alternative, but for women without childbirth experience or marriage plans, this decision is not accepted as a simple medical procedure. For a woman, maintaining or removing the uterus can become an existential choice that affects her entire life beyond simple medical judgment. For example, when a woman without childbirth experience voluntarily chooses hysterectomy, it may mean voluntarily giving up the social possibility of experiencing "motherhood." However, simultaneously, such a choice can lead to new experiences of meaningfully filling life in ways different from childbirth or child-rearing. For instance, after surgery, she might recover work performance abilities that were long disrupted, leading to promotion or job change opportunities, or it could become an opportunity to newly attempt professionally significant challenges such as acquiring professional qualifications or starting a

[4] The 'negative liberty' and 'positive liberty' presented in this presentation are based on Isaiah Berlin's distinction. Isaiah Berlin, Two Concepts of Liberty, in Four Essays on Liberty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 118-172.

[5] Charles Taylor, Philosophical Papers, Volume 2: Philosophy and the Human Sciences (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 211-229.

business. Thus, hysterectomy can be regarded as a **"choice that reconstructs the direction of life"** beyond simple therapeutic action.

Therefore, explanations of "there are several options" alone cannot sufficiently guarantee patient autonomy. When sufficient understanding and deliberation are absent, women may fall into dilemmas when facing choices about their bodies, swayed by external expectations or social perceptions. "Should I undergo hysterectomy or not?" Such internal questions are clearly moral dilemmas as they include judgments about life direction and identity. This is not only a problem for patients experiencing actual pain from the uterus. If medical intervention for "bodily enhancement" becomes routine in the future, choices for **"preventing potential inconvenience and pain"** rather than treatment may become common, placing more women in such moral choice situations.

Therefore, to truly guarantee patient autonomy in major decisions like hysterectomy, the concept of freedom must shift from negative liberty to positive liberty. According to Taylor, positive liberty is a concept that emphasizes "the exercise of the subject's capacity for self-realization and the internal and external conditions that make it possible," complementing the limitations of negative liberty. Autonomy based on positive liberty is not sufficient with merely receiving information and the absence of external interference. Positive liberty implies both the ability to interpret given information oneself, critically reflect on it in the context of one's life, and judge according to one's values and purposes, and the sociocultural conditions (such as education, social recognition, institutional support, etc.) that enable the exercise of such ability.[6] In short, autonomy becomes practically possible only when the environment itself is supported so that individuals can critically form and interpret their beliefs and values.

This demands the re-establishment of medical ethics standards in cases like voluntary hysterectomy. Autonomy does not merely mean a state without external intervention. It includes both the patient's ability to compose and take responsibility for their life and the practical conditions that make this possible. Therefore, medicine should be a process that helps women fully understand the direction and meaning of their lives and bear the judgment and responsibility for them. Particularly, beyond providing medical information, sufficient counseling, education, and psychological support systems must be established so that women can critically examine their decisions free from social prejudice or cultural expectations. In other words, creating social and cultural environments that enable patients to make autonomous choices according to their values and life contexts is also an important duty of medical ethics.

[6] Charles Taylor, Philosophical Papers, Volume 2: Philosophy and the Human Sciences (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 211-229.

Moon Hee Yoo (Dongguk University)

"Mapping the Adoption of Neuroscience in Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Scoping Review"

Introduction

Over the past few decades, counseling and psychotherapy have achieved significant empirical support for their effectiveness. However, despite such progress, the mechanisms underlying therapeutic change remain a subject of ongoing theoretical exploration. This epistemological gap has encouraged scholars to seek interdisciplinary integration, with neuroscience emerging as a particularly promising explanatory framework. Neuroscience offers a biological lens to examine emotional regulation, trauma responses, and cognitive processes, thereby complementing the phenomenological and relational paradigms traditionally emphasized in psychotherapy.

The integration of neuroscience into counseling practices is not without its challenges. The field has long grappled with tensions between humanistic, interpretive models and biological reductionism. Scholars such as Bunge (1977) and Marr (2010) have warned against simplistic mappings between neural events and psychological states, emphasizing the need for multi-level explanatory coherence. Marr's three levels of analysis—computational (what the system does), algorithmic (how it does it), and implementational (the physical substrate)—are particularly relevant in understanding how neuroscience can meaningfully contribute to psychotherapeutic models without collapsing distinct ontological layers.

In the Korean context, the adoption of neuroscience in counseling appears to have developed through relatively individual and decentralized efforts. Unlike countries with more established institutional frameworks, Korea currently lacks a unified system for incorporating neuroscience into counselor education and practice. This suggests the need for a clearer understanding of how neuroscience is being interpreted and applied in the field. Accordingly, this study conducts a scoping review of domestic Korean literature to explore the current landscape and characteristics of neuroscience adoption in counseling and psychotherapy.

Method

This study employed a scoping review methodology to comprehensively identify, classify, and analyze Korean research that incorporates neuroscience into counseling and psychotherapy. Following Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) framework, the review process included five stages: identifying the research question, searching for relevant studies, selecting studies based on inclusion/exclusion criteria, charting the data, and summarizing the results.

A total of 182 articles published out of 4,358 between 1998 and 2024 were selected from Korean academic databases including KISS, RISS, and Google Scholar. Keywords such as "neuroscience," "brain," "counseling," "psychotherapy," and "neuropsychology" were used to filter relevant studies. The inclusion criteria focused

on empirical and theoretical works that explicitly linked neuroscientific concepts with therapeutic practice or research. Excluded were articles that mentioned neuroscience only peripherally or in non-therapeutic contexts.
Each selected study was analyzed according to three major categories: (1) general characteristics (publication year, journal, discipline), (2) methodological characteristics (research design, sample, data type), and (3) neuroscience adoption characteristics (conceptual level, integration depth, theoretical source, application type). To ensure consistency, data coding was performed iteratively by two independent researchers with domain expertise.

Results

Given the word limit and structural guidelines of the conference proceedings, the results are presented in narrative form rather than in the standard tabular or graphical format commonly used in scoping reviews. The findings are organized into three categories: General Characteristics, Methodological Characteristics, and Neuroscience Adoption Characteristics.

General Characteristics

The number of publications increased notably after 2010, reflecting a growing interest in the topic. Most studies were published in interdisciplinary journals, and a significant portion were conducted in graduate school settings, suggesting that neuroscience adoption is being driven more by academic curiosity than by institutional research agendas.
Disciplinary affiliations were diverse, encompassing art therapy, clinical psychology, counseling education, and social welfare. However, only a small fraction of journals had a consistent focus on neuroscience, indicating the peripheral status of the field within Korean counseling research.

Methodological Characteristics

Among the 182 studies analyzed, a substantial majority (74%) were exploratory in nature, with only 26% addressing the effectiveness of therapeutic interventions. Descriptive research designs dominated (72%), while experimental studies accounted for just 25%, suggesting a limited emphasis on identifying causal relationships. Qualitative methodologies were the most prevalent (60%), followed by quantitative (34%) and mixed methods (7%). Although a subset of experimental studies employed neuroscientific tools such as EEG or fMRI, these were primarily utilized for correlational analysis, rather than for testing underlying mechanisms. Furthermore, many studies lacked transparency in reporting neuroscientific procedures, reflecting ongoing concerns regarding methodological rigor.
In terms of research aims, many studies focused on the feasibility or theoretical applicability of neuroscience rather than hypothesis-driven validation. The frequent use of proxy variables, such as self-reports or behavioral data in lieu of direct

neuroscientific measurement, limited the capacity to link neural activity with psychotherapeutic mechanisms in a structured or replicable manner.

Neuroscience Adoption Characteristics

Conceptually, the majority of studies adopted neuroscience at the "system level," focusing on macro-level neural structures (e.g., the limbic system, prefrontal cortex) without engaging computational or algorithmic modeling frameworks. Only 8% of studies reflected multi-level integration as conceptualized by Marr (2010), indicating limited structural alignment with contemporary cognitive neuroscience.

Although Marr's (2010) three-level model—computational, algorithmic, and implementational—provides a framework for integrating multiple levels of explanation, few studies operationalized this structure. The vast majority of studies approached neuroscience as a conceptual scaffold rather than an explanatory framework. For example, models such as Panksepp's affective systems theory or MacLean's triune brain model were often cited for their intuitive clarity, despite lacking empirical robustness. Even in the small subset of studies that mentioned multiple levels, integration was typically rhetorical rather than analytical, suggesting a lack of structural synthesis across levels. Theoretical sources were often drawn from secondary literature (37%), including non-peer-reviewed materials and popular science texts, raising concerns about epistemic rigor and conceptual precision.

Adoption remained largely conceptual, with 72% of studies showing shallow-level incorporation—mainly using neuroscience to heuristically support existing theories. While 36% of studies demonstrated theoretical alignment, only 31% reached interpretative integration across psychological and neuroscientific constructs. Most contributions remained informational (96%), with fewer addressing methods (30%), conceptual development (45%), or clinical applications (10%). Only two studies achieved comprehensive integration. These findings suggest that neuroscience adoption in Korean counseling research remains preliminary, requiring deeper structural and practical engagement.

Discussion

The findings reveal that neuroscience has been adopted in Korean counseling research primarily as a supplementary tool rather than as a transformative framework. This limited form of adoption reflects three interrelated challenges: conceptual fragmentation, institutional underdevelopment, and cognitive-theoretical conservatism.

Conceptual fragmentation is evident in the widespread use of neuroscientific terminology without accompanying theoretical grounding. This mirrors Bunge's (1977) concern about "level confusion," where psychological outcomes are attributed to biological mechanisms in the absence of explanatory mediation. Although Marr's (2010) levels of analysis offer a framework for maintaining ontological coherence, few studies engaged with this model. The result is an epistemic misalignment, where neuroscience is imported rhetorically rather than analytically.

Institutional underdevelopment further compounds the issue. Most Korean counseling programs do not include formal neuroscience education, leaving practitioners to rely on heuristic models or informal learning. Greenhalgh et al. (2004) argue that innovation cannot be sustained without appropriate structural support, and this appears true for the Korean context. In contrast to countries like the U.S., where organizations such as APA and CACREP promote neuroscience-informed curricula, Korean training systems offer no comparable scaffolding.

For example, the CACREP 2023 standards explicitly include neuroscience-related content in counselor training, promoting the integration of brain-based intervention models and neurodevelopmental understanding. Meanwhile, Korean programs rarely provide structured curricula on neuroscience, and most education remains limited to short-term workshops or device-centered training. This lack of educational infrastructure has resulted in superficial adoption, where neuroscience concepts are selectively borrowed without deep theoretical or methodological grounding.

Finally, cognitive heuristics and professional identity dynamics help explain the persistence of outdated models such as the Triune Brain theory.

As Kahneman & Frederick (2002) notes, individuals often resort to intuitive reasoning in the face of complexity, which may explain why practitioners continue to cite discredited frameworks like MacLean's triune brain model despite critiques by scholars such as Pogliano (2017). This conservatism may also stem from a desire to protect established professional identities, as Eagly and Kulesa (1997) suggest. Consequently, neuroscience is often absorbed in ways that preserve existing theoretical boundaries rather than challenge them.

This pattern may also reflect a broader epistemic rigidity. Even when studies referenced newer models—such as Cozolino's neurobiology of psychotherapy or Brewin's dual representation theory—they were often presented without clear differentiation of their disciplinary bases or explanatory levels. For instance, theories derived from cognitive neuroscience (e.g., Kolb, 2022) were cited alongside those from clinical psychology without regard to ontological coherence. This conflation results in conceptual flattening, inhibiting the development of an integrative framework.

Furthermore, the emphasis on correlational findings without attending to mechanisms of change undermines the explanatory power of neuroscience in psychotherapy.

As Kazdin (2007) emphasized, demonstrating that brain activity changes during therapy is not sufficient to explain how or why therapeutic change occurs. A shift toward experimental designs that isolate causal pathways is needed to enhance the scientific validity of neuroscience-informed counseling research.

Conclusion

This scoping review represents the first systematic attempt to map how neuroscience is being adopted within Korean counseling and psychotherapy literature. The results indicate a growing but unbalanced pattern of adoption characterized by conceptual superficiality, methodological inconsistencies, and institutional gaps.

For neuroscience to be meaningfully integrated into counseling, a paradigm shift is required—one that emphasizes multilevel theoretical coherence, structural reform in counselor education, and critical reflection on professional epistemologies. Rather than serving as a symbolic marker of scientific legitimacy, neuroscience must be translated into context-sensitive and theoretically grounded practice.

Future research should focus on developing educational models, interdisciplinary training programs, and methodological standards that can support sustainable integration. By doing so, Korean counseling can move beyond rhetorical adoption and engage in a genuinely transformative dialogue with neuroscience.

References

Arksey, H., & O'Malley, L. (2005). Scoping studies: towards a methodological framework. *International journal of social research methodology, 8*(1), 19-32.

Bunge, M. (1977). Levels and reduction. *American Journal of Physiology-Regulatory, Integrative and Comparative Physiology, 233*(3), R75-R82.

Eagly, A. H., & Kulesa, P. (1997). Attitudes, attitude structure, and resistance to change. *Environmental ethics and behavior*, (415), 122-153.

Greenhalgh, T., Robert, G., Macfarlane, F., Bate, P., & Kyriakidou, O. (2004). Diffusion of innovations in service organizations: systematic review and recommendations. *The milbank quarterly, 82*(4), 581-629.

Kahneman, D., & Frederick, S. (2002). Representativeness revisited: Attribute substitution in intuitive judgment. *Heuristics and biases: The psychology of intuitive judgment, 49*(49-81), 1-30.

Kazdin, A. E. (2007). Mediators and mechanisms of change in psychotherapy research. *Annu. Rev. Clin. Psychol, 3*(1), 1-27.

Marr, D. (2010). *Vision: A computational investigation into the human representation and processing of visual information*. MIT press.

Pogliano, C. (2017). Lucky Triune Brain: Chronicles of Paul D. MacLean's Neuro-Catchword. *Nuncius, 32*(2), 330-375.

Mapping the Adoption of Neuroscience in Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Scoping Review

Presenter: Moonhee Yu
Affiliation: Dongguk University
Session: E2 | Date: July 10, 2025

AGENDA

1. Introduction
2. Theory Background
3. Research Design
4. Result
5. Discussion
6. Conclusion
7. Q & A

Mapping the Adoption of Neuroscience in Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Scoping Review

1. Introduction

"Why Should Counseling Consider Neuroscience?"

1) Neuroscience is not a new approach

- In the late 19th century, Freud explored the neural basis of psychological phenomena—well before developing psychoanalysis.
- He challenged brain localization theories and proposed a model based on neural networks and interaction.
- Revisiting Freud's early work reveals that the link between neuroscience and counseling is not an artificial trend, but a historically rooted idea.

2) Counseling is effective—but how?

- Counseling has been shown to be effective. The debate over its efficacy ended with Smith & Glass's(1977) meta-analysis.
- However, the mechanisms behind that effectiveness—how and why it works—remain largely unresolved even today.
- Despite over 355 techniques based on psychological theory, few approaches explain change at the biological or neural level.

3

Mapping the Adoption of Neuroscience in Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Scoping Review

1. Introduction

Weighing the Pros and Cons of Neuroscience in Counseling and Psychotherapy

1) Potential Contributions(Pros)

- Neuroscience offers scientific grounding for understanding the link between clients' emotional distress and therapeutic outcomes (Jo & Choi, 2022).
- It informs counselors' understanding of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral mechanisms underlying client issues (Gao, 2021; Kim et al., 2009).
- The importance of neuroscience education and training for counselors is increasingly recognized in enhancing clinical competence (Kelsen et al., 2022).

2) Cautions and Limitations(Cons)

- Neuroscience risks biologically reducing human experiences, thereby conflicting with human-centered counseling values.
- While it explains functional brain mechanisms, it falls short of addressing subjective experience. Applying such findings directly to therapy can oversimplify complex phenomena (Wilkinson, 2018; Kay, 2009).

✓ **The key issue is not *whether* to adopt neuroscience, but *how* to adopt it meaningfully in counseling contexts.**
✓ **Not all findings from neuroscience—especially those concerning sensation, perception, and affect—are readily applicable to therapeutic practice. Consensus on selective integration is needed (Cammisuli & Castelnuovo, 2023).**

4

Mapping the Adoption of Neuroscience in Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Scoping Review

1. Introduction

3) Practical Potential of Neuroscience

- Neuroscience enhances understanding of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral mechanisms, offering new perspectives on how psychological change occurs.
- It supports counselor competence and client psychoeducation by informing areas such as memory reconsolidation and unconscious neural dynamics.

4) The Need for Balance in Adoption

- Neuroscience remains an evolving field; accumulating findings does not equate to fully explaining the human experience.
- Caution is required when applying neural mechanisms directly to clients' subjective experiences to avoid reductive interpretations.

5) Directionality and Integration Strategy

- In the U.S., long-term efforts have combined research, education, and practitioner perspectives to institutionalize neuroscience adoption.
- Korea lacks such structured approaches; a multi-level, context-sensitive exploration is needed to guide meaningful integration in counseling.

5

Mapping the Adoption of Neuroscience in Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Scoping Review

1. Introduction

6) Neuroscience Adoption in Korean Counseling: Initial Efforts and Gaps

- A few studies have applied neuroscience to specific areas like trauma, behavioral addiction, and art therapy, while others explored theoretical integration(Seo et al., 2021; Shin, et al. 2018).
- Despite a recent scoping review on memory reconsolidation(Yu, 2024), most studies lack clarity on how neuroscience is defined or applied across counseling models.
  - ✓ Overall, neuroscience-related research exists, but the scope, terminology, and adoption patterns in Korean counseling remain largely underexplored.

- **Research Purpose:**

This study aims to explore the structural characteristics of neuroscience adoption in Korean counseling and psychotherapy and examine.
By doing so, it seeks to interpret the gap between theoretical explanation and practical application, and to refine the conditions for meaningful integration.

- **Research Question: What are the characteristics of neuroscience-related research in Korean counseling and psychotherapy?**
  Through a scoping review, this study maps how neuroscience concepts are introduced and applied, identifying structural patterns and domains of integration.

6

Mapping the Adoption of Neuroscience in Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Scoping Review

2. Theory Background

1) Scientific Reductionism

- A framework that privileges the explanatory power of parts over wholes, aiming for theoretical unification and the removal of conceptual redundancy across disciplines.

→ Emphasis on theoretical consistency across sciences and the elimination of conceptual redundancy.

- Broad utilization in interdisciplinary studies, despite limitations in addressing the layered continuity and diversity of complex psychological phenomena.

→ Simultaneous limitation in explaining continuity and diversity within complex psychological phenomena.

1-1) Explanatory Structure of Neuroscientific Reductionism

- Historical development from 17th-century phrenology and lesion-based localization to 20th-century neuroimaging and neural mapping technologies.
- Enduring influence of localization and lateralization paradigms, alongside challenges in reconciling subjective experience with biological determinism.

7

Mapping the Adoption of Neuroscience in Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Scoping Review

2. Theory Background

1-2) Neuroscientific Reductionism and the Multilevel Approach

- The need to move beyond simplistic one-to-one mappings between neural structures and psychological phenomena, in response to the limitations of neuroscientific reductionism.
- Ongoing challenges regarding unverified neural models that lack scientific rigor but remain prevalent in both academic discourse and popular media.
- Recognition of the brain as a plastic and dynamic system, requiring the integration of neural, psychological, and social dimensions in explanatory models.
- Bunge's ontology of irreducible levels of reality, emphasizing level-specific coherence and independent explanatory frameworks(Bunge, 1977).
- Marr's tri-level model—computational, algorithmic, and implementational—as a non-reductive framework to interpret emotional processes and therapeutic mechanisms(Marr, 2010; Hardcastle &Hardcastle, 2015).

8

Mapping the Adoption of Neuroscience in Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Scoping Review

2. Theory Background

2) Cognitive and Psychological Attitudes Toward Neuroscience Adoption

The acceptance of neuroscience goes beyond simple adoption and is a process of interpretation and integration with existing psychological theories, so cognitive judgment and psychological attitude are key variables.

2-1) Uncritical Acceptance

- Influence of cognitive bias and overconfidence, including confirmation bias, authority bias, halo effect, and information overload, contributing to the passive acceptance of neuroscience concepts.
- Perceived scientific legitimacy based on complexity and technicality, leading to premature trust and generalization in clinical practice without sufficient verification.

2-2) Psychological Resistance

- Defensive response to perceived threats to autonomy, as explained by reactance theory, leading to resistance against externally imposed changes.
- Emergence of dissonance and defensive identity maintenance, as described in cognitive dissonance theory and resistance to change frameworks, when new ideas conflict with existing beliefs or professional identity.

9

Mapping the Adoption of Neuroscience in Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Scoping Review

2. Scoping Review

1) Scoping Review

- A literature review methodology for exploring and structuring the scope, key concepts, and research directions within a given field, particularly in areas with fragmented evidence or undefined terminology(Arksey & O'Malley, 2005).
- Increasing utilization across disciplines to address broad and exploratory research questions, especially where knowledge gaps, conceptual ambiguity, or qualitative evidence are prominent (Munn et al., 2018).
- A methodological distinction from systematic reviews, which focus on testing specific effects, by enabling conceptual mapping, thematic synthesis, and the identification of gaps in research coverage.

Category	Scoping Review	Systematic Review
Purpose	Exploration of research scope, concept clarification, identification of knowledge gaps	Evaluation of specific effectiveness, evidence synthesis
Scope of Literature	Broad and exploratory topics	Narrow topics focused on specific variables
Quality Appraisal	No	Yes
Data Extraction and Structuring	Yes	Yes
Reporting Framework	PRISMA-ScR	PRISMA

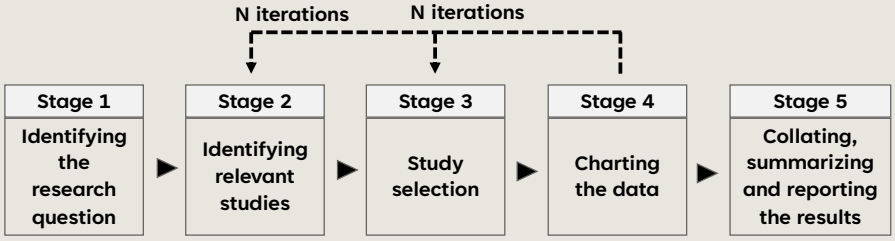
10

Mapping the Adoption of Neuroscience in Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Scoping Review

2. Scoping Review

2) Scoping Review Design and Procedural Framework

- Implementation of the five-stage process proposed by Arksey & O'Malley(2005) and Colquhoun et al. (2014).
- Use of the PRISMA-ScR checklist, developed by the Joanna Briggs Institute(JBI), for detailed reporting and procedural consistency.
- Exemption from IRB review confirmed through ethical assessment by the Institutional Review Board(IRB No. DUIRB2024-09-05).



11

Mapping the Adoption of Neuroscience in Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Scoping Review

2. Scoping Review

Stage 1. Identifying the research question

- The research question must be specific and aligned with the study's title and objectives.
  Its formulation is guided by the PCC framework(Peters et al., 2015):
  - ✓ **P** (Population): Literature in the field of counseling and psychotherapy
  - ✓ **C** (Concept): Neuroscience concepts or forms of adoption
  - ✓ **C** (Context): Studies conducted within South Korea

- **Research Question:** What are the characteristics of neuroscience-related research in Korean counseling and psychotherapy?

Stage 2. Identifying relevant studies

- Databases and search platforms: the Research Information Sharing Service(RISS), Korea Citation Index(KCI), and Google Scholar.
- The search period: **September 6 to October 15, 2024**.
- A total of **4,358 documents** were retrieved using **15 keyword combinations** in both Korean and English, focusing on terms related to counseling and neuroscience.

12

Mapping the Adoption of Neuroscience in Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Scoping Review

2. Scoping Review

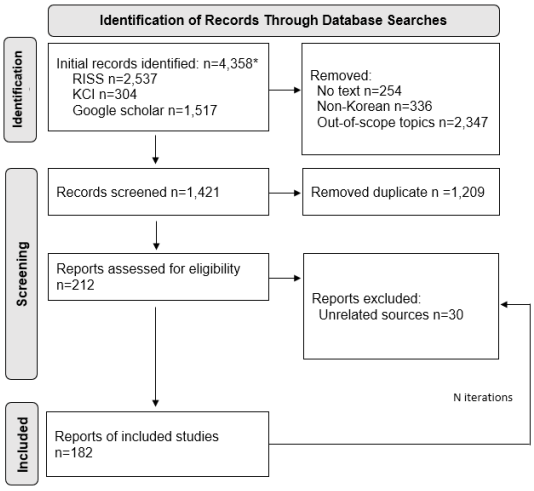
Stage 3. Study selection

- Detailed inclusion and exclusion criteria were defined in the study protocol.
- All potentially relevant full texts were screened based on predefined evidence criteria.
- Inclusion and exclusion criteria:

✓ Inclusion was based on studies addressing counseling and psychotherapy using verbal or non-verbal modalities, including neuroscience-related concepts and conducted within Korean contexts.

✓ Exclusion criteria involved studies focusing on medical treatment, rehabilitation, or development (e.g., neurofe edback training programs), as well as non-academic publications and duplicates.

✓ Eligible methodologies included quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research, with full-text availability and relevance to neuroscience adoption serving as primary screening standards.



*A total of 4,358 documents were initially identified through title-based screening across three databases.

[PRISMA-ScR]

13

Mapping the Adoption of Neuroscience in Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Scoping Review

2. Scoping Review

Stage 4. Charting the data

- To clarify the document selection process and provide transparent, logical structuring.
- Extraction criteria were aligned with the research question and inclusion standards.
- Data charted across **3 major categories** and **14 sub-categories**, including:
  - ✓ **General characteristics(6 items)**: publication type, source, affiliation, IRB, therapeutic modalities, topic focus
  - ✓ **Research characteristics(3 items)**: method (quantitative/qualitative/mixed), material type, participant group
  - ✓ **Neuroscience adoption(5 items)**: tools, levels, terminology use, source theory, integration approach

Stage 5. Collating, summarizing and reporting the results

- Organization and coding of extracted data using Excel
- Reference management with Zotero 7.0.11
- Results presented through conceptual category mapping (tables and figures)

14

Mapping the Adoption of Neuroscience in Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Scoping Review

4. Results (1) General characteristics

Neuroscience Adoption Research Structure(1998-2024)

- A total of 182 studies were published over 27 year, with a sharp increase since 2012(average 2.8/year before 2011 → 11.2/year after 2012).
- 74% of the studies appeared in academic journals, with 58% being journal articles and 33% dissertations.
- Counseling modalities included both non-verbal-based(59%) and verbal-based(41%) approaches, such as play, art, and neurofeedback.
- Most studies were affiliated with universities(82%), while 17% reported institutional support or IRB approval.

Neuroscience Adoption Research Design(1998-2024)

- The majority of studies were exploratory(74%) and employed descriptive or conceptual analysis ; only 26% focused on outcomes or interventions.
- Descriptive researches dominated(72%), with a mix of primary and secondary data across studies.
- Participants were primarily adults(28%) and adolescents(18%), but only 4% reported IRB procedures.
- Research topics were diverse, including memory, emotion, trauma, cognitive mechanisms, and identity-related variables.

15

Mapping the Adoption of Neuroscience in Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Scoping Review

4. Results (2) Research characteristics

16

Mapping the Adoption of Neuroscience in Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Scoping Review

4. Results (3) Neuroscience adoption

[Level of Information Disclosure in Neuroscience-Based Measurement Tool Studies]

	Information Disclosure		
	80-100%	60-80%	≤ 60% 이하
6Tools(n=54)	Measurement content(53/54, 98%) Tool name(51/54, 94%) Target domain(43/54, 80%)	Developer info(40/54, 74%) Tool details(39/54, 72%) Research procedure(33/54, 60%)	Theoretical basis for content (22/54, 40%)
EEG Studies(n=43)	Measurement content(43/43, 100%) Tool name(41/43, 95%) Target domain(35/43, 81%)	Developer info(32/43, 74%) Tool details(30/43, 70%) Research procedure(27/43, 63%)	Theoretical basis for content (16/43, 37%)

17

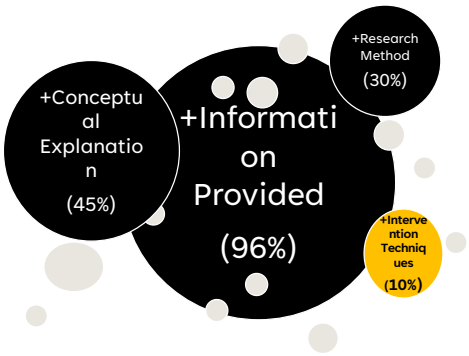
Mapping the Adoption of Neuroscience in Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Scoping Review

4. Results (3) Neuroscience adoption

[Characteristics of Neuroscience Adoption Levels]

Level	%	Combined Levels(%)	
1. Terminology Mention	19%	Level 1+2 (32%)	Level 1+2+3 (69%)
2. Conceptual Adoption	13%		
3. Theoretical Adoption	37%	Level 3+4 (68%)	
4. Interpretive Integration	31%		Level 4 (31%)
Total	100%	100%	100%

[Characteristics of Neuroscience Contribution]



18

Mapping the Adoption of Neuroscience in Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Scoping Review

5. Discussion

1) Issues of Institutional and Structural Conditions

- The adoption of neuroscience in Korean counseling and psychotherapy remains largely dependent on individual researchers' voluntary efforts, with limited institutional planning or policy-level support.
- 82% of the analyzed studies were conducted by university-affiliated researchers, yet only 17% reported receiving research funding.
- Despite the increasing global attention to neuroscience-related topics, these studies were often not incorporated into dominant discourse within major journals, limiting integration.
- This trend aligns with the bibliometric analysis by Jeong et al.(2024), which found that neuroscience had not emerged as a major keyword cluster.
- Greenhalgh et al.(2004) pointed out that without a system-level strategic expansion route, innovation uptake may remain fragmented and fail to be institutionalized.
- This study identifies such structural conditions as a critical factor in explaining the fragmented and non-systematic nature of neuroscience adoption in the Korean context.

19

Mapping the Adoption of Neuroscience in Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Scoping Review

5. Discussion

2) Methodological Skew and Empirical Deficiency

- 74% of the studies adopted exploratory approaches, with a heavy reliance on literature reviews(52%) and qualitative analyses(60%).
- This trend indicates that neuroscience-related concepts are predominantly discussed as theoretical possibilities rather than translated into practical interventions.
- Although 72% of the studies employed descriptive analysis, only 25% implemented experimental designs, and among them, only a few attempted quantitative verification of specific mechanisms.
- Kazdin(2007) emphasized that explaining mechanisms of change in psychotherapy requires empirical inquiry beyond mere demonstration of effectiveness, highlighting the necessity of addressing the "why."
- The present analysis identifies this structural gap as one of the core limitations in the adoption of neuroscience within the Korean counseling and psychotherapy context.
- In line with Bryman(2006) and Greene(2007), the absence of parallel methodological designs and interpretive integration restricts the transition of neuroscience from theoretical discourse to practical application.

20

Mapping the Adoption of Neuroscience in Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Scoping Review

5. Discussion

3) Levels of Adoption and Conceptual Bias

- The adoption of neuroscience in Korean counseling and psychotherapy is primarily concentrated at higher levels—namely, the system level(32%) and the behavioral/cognitive level(9%)—with minimal focus on the cellular(3%) and molecular(1%) levels.
- According to Marr's(2010) three-level model, psychological phenomena require integration across computational, algorithmic, and implementational levels for valid explanation, and neglecting any level compromises explanatory adequacy.
- Despite the predominance of high-level conceptual adoption, many domestic studies lack structural interpretation across multiple levels.
- Widely cited frameworks such as MacLean's triune brain model and Panksepp's affective systems theory continue to be used due to their intuitive appeal and ease of explanation, despite extensive criticism from contemporary neuroscience.
- These patterns indicate that the adoption of neuroscience is often guided more by cultural familiarity and conceptual accessibility than by scientific coherence.

21

Mapping the Adoption of Neuroscience in Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Scoping Review

5. Discussion

4) Absence of Educational Infrastructure

- Neuroscience is rarely included in the formal curriculum of counseling and psychotherapy programs in Korea, resulting in a reliance on conceptual borrowing without adequate educational preparation in clinical practice.
- This study confirms that the adopted neuroscience concepts were primarily derived from popular science books or general explanatory texts, with interpretation depending more on intuitive understanding than on analytic capacity developed through structured training.
- The notable lack of discussion around lower-level neural mechanisms suggests a foundational gap in neuroscience education.
- Field et al.(2021) emphasized that the integration of neuroscience into counseling requires critical engagement with theoretical sources, multilevel interpretive frameworks, and training grounded in experimental methodology.
- The current domestic adoption pattern fails to support such prerequisites, reinforcing a trajectory of conceptual adoption rather than practical integration.

22

Mapping the Adoption of Neuroscience in Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Scoping Review

5. Discussion

5) Scientific Rigor in Measurement Tools and Reporting

- In terms of tool usage, EEG accounted for the overwhelming majority (82%), while alternative methods such as fNIRS and heart rate variability were scarcely utilized.
- This predominance reflects practical considerations, including the noninvasiveness and low cost of EEG as well as its wide availability in domestic analytic systems; however, it simultaneously reveals limitations in measurement diversity and scientific comprehensiveness.
- Reporting on tool usage was often inconsistent, with frequent omissions of critical elements such as channel localization, measurement rationale, and citation standards.
- Munafò et al.(2017) emphasized that such incompleteness in reporting may contribute to a replication crisis and compromise the interpretive reliability of findings.
- These issues are not merely the result of individual oversight but indicative of a structural limitation stemming from the absence of standardized reporting frameworks across the field.

23

Mapping the Adoption of Neuroscience in Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Scoping Review

5. Discussion

6) Imbalance in Levels of Adoption

- Although 68% of the reviewed studies demonstrated adoption of neuroscience beyond the conceptual level , only 31% engaged in interpretive integration.
- Brewin(2014), from a psychology perspective, Cozolino(2017), from a psychotherapeutic orientation, and Kolb(2022), grounded in neuroscience, have each theorized multi-memory systems from distinct disciplinary perspectives, yet domestic studies often cite and interpret them without clear differentiation.
- This pattern suggests a lack of awareness regarding hierarchical distinctions between theories and a deficiency in epistemological discernment concerning levels of explanation.
- As a result, the same concepts are repeatedly adopted without efforts toward integrative synthesis, leading to conceptual stagnation.
- The recurrence of adoption without a coherent theoretical framework risks remaining at the level of conceptual reproduction rather than contributing to cumulative knowledge construction.

24

Mapping the Adoption of Neuroscience in Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Scoping Review

5. Discussion

7) Cognitive Bias and Interpretive Rigidity

- Kahneman and Frederick(2002) proposed that individuals tend to exhibit overconfidence in familiar information due to heuristic-driven cognitive preference.
- This study similarly identified a repeated pattern of adopting neuroscience concepts based on familiarity and intuitive appeal.
- A notable example is the continued citation of LeDoux's earlier theory even after its revision, indicating that theoretical updates are often not reflected in counseling practice(LeDoux, 2015).
- While the adoption of neuroscience through popular books such as Cozolino(2018) enhances accessibility and practical utility, it also entails limitations stemming from the absence of peer review and a lack of the oretical currency.
- This phenomenon suggests that neuroscience adoption in the field remains at the level of information transfer rather than achieving substantive theoretical transformation.

25

Mapping the Adoption of Neuroscience in Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Scoping Review

5. Discussion

8) Practical Strategies and Policy Recommendations

- In global cases of neuroscience integration, efforts have been made to incorporate neuroscience into clinical practice through structured education, intervention model development, and psychoeducational programs for clients(Field et al., 2020; Malik, 2022).
- Particularly, institutions such as the APA, AMHCA, and CACREP have institutionalized neuroscience by embedding it within educational standards and ethical guidelines, accompanied by experimental designs and psychoeducational content development.
- In contrast, neuroscience adoption in South Korea remains largely at the conceptual level, with minimal experimental application or systemic institutional support.
- Future efforts must involve the systematic design of adoption structures grounded in three pillars: theoretical coherence, practical applicability, and educational infrastructure.
- Only through such triangulated integration can neuroscience function as an operative explanatory framework within actual counseling settings.

26

Mapping the Adoption of Neuroscience in Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Scoping Review

6. Conclusion

1) Structural Overview and Scholarly Significance of Neuroscience Adoption

- This study presents the first systematic overview of the overall structure and characteristics of neuroscience adoption within counseling and psychotherapy in South Korea.
- The contribution lies in structuring dispersed information and establishing a foundational research ecology.
- Through the application of a scoping review, the study analyzed a wide range of adoption patterns, providing an exploratory foundation for future policy and practice linkages.

2) Diagnosis of Reductionist Tendencies and Gaps in Levels of Explanation

- The analysis revealed a strong bias toward biological levels of explanation in neuroscience adoption, which stands in tension with the affective and interactional nature of counseling.
- Based on Marr's(2010) levels of explanation, the study emphasizes the need for multilayered interpretation and a complementary structure for the integration of neuroscience and counseling.

3) Methodological Utility and Limitations of the Scoping Review

- The research prioritized broad exploration and scope delineation, while excluding formal assessments of study quality or theoretical-methodological coherence.
- To minimize interpretive bias, external expert review was conducted; however, future research may benefit from a multi-stage expert panel-based validation framework.

Mapping the Adoption of Neuroscience in Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Scoping Review

6. Conclusion

4) Five Strategic Proposals for the Integrative Adoption of Neuroscience in Counseling and Psychotherapy

- **Structural coordination and interdisciplinary collaboration**: To ensure the sustainability and conceptual coherence of neuroscience adoption, institutional support and interdisciplinary research networks are essential.
- **Critical acceptance and educational foundation**: Beyond popular science books, the establishment of a curriculum that enables critical analysis of theoretical origins and the tracking of conceptual evolution is required.
- **Theory-aligned research design**: Neuroscience adoption must aim not only to validate effectiveness, but also to articulate the theoretical mechanisms underlying interventions.
- **Multilayered methodological architecture**: An integrated design combining quantitative tools and qualitative interpretations is needed, along with transparency in reporting systems and interpretive standards.
- **Pragmatic integration into practice**: Neuroscience must function as a mechanism of change within counseling by promoting counselor education, developing intervention models, and conducting experimental validations.

28

Mapping the Adoption of Neuroscience in Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Scoping Review

References

Note: Selected references are shown here for presentation purposes. Full reference list is available in the submitted paper.

Cammisuli, D. M., & Castelnuovo, G. (2023). Neuroscience-based psychotherapy: A position paper. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *14*, 1101044.

Cho, Y.-E., & Choi, K.-H. (2022). Emotional Pain and Therapeutic Outcomes in Psychotherapy. *Korean society for Wellness, 17*(1), 337-348.

Gao, H.-Y. (2021). What is the outcome of counseling, and what measuring instruments are used?. *Korean Journal of Counseling, 22*(5), 45-57.

Kay, J. (2009). Toward a neurobiology of child psychotherapy. *Journal of Loss and Trauma, 14*(4), 287-303.

Kelsen, B. A., Sumich, A., Kasabov, N., Liang, S. H., & Wang, G. Y. (2022). What has social neuroscience learned from hyperscanning studies of spoken communication? A systematic review. *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews, 132*, 1249-1262.

Kim, C. D., Han. Y. J., Sohn, N. H., & Kwon, K. I. (2009). The Effective Counselor`s Factors in the Perspective of Clients who Majored in Counseling. *Korean Journal of Counseling, 10*(1), 83-107.

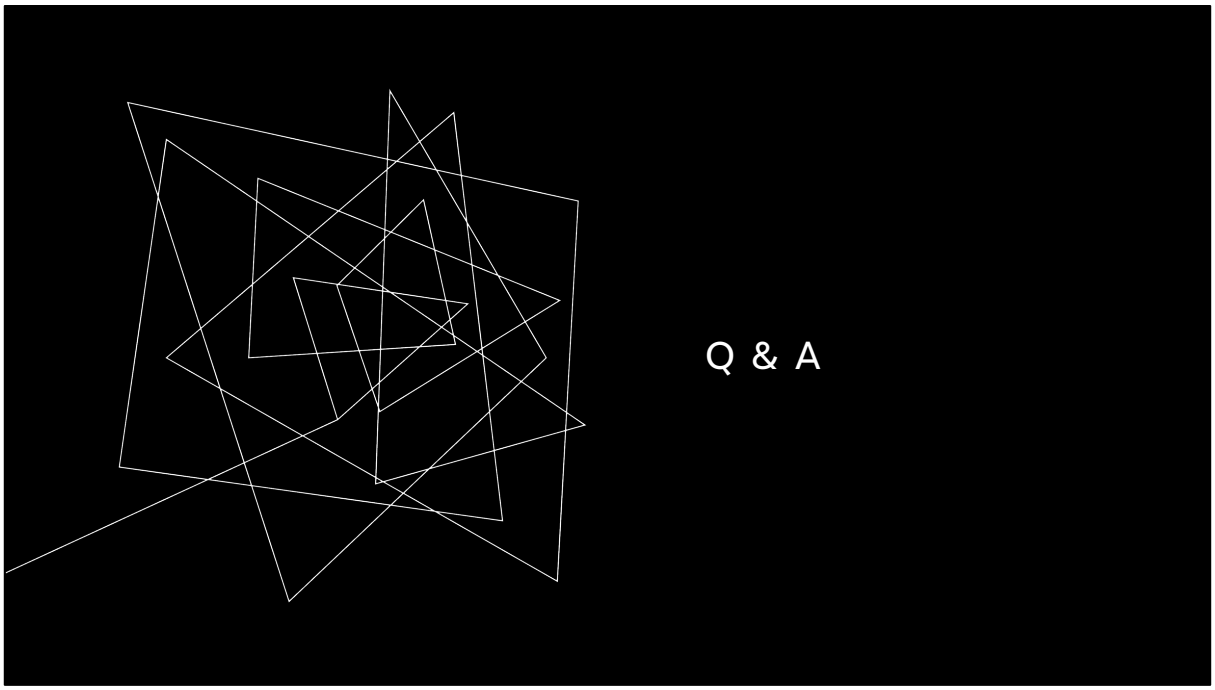
Seo, J.-H., Cho, E., Choi, Y. (2021). Narrative Therapy for Trauma: Neuroscientific Perspective Interpretation and Implications. *Family and Family Therapy, 29*(1), 113-133.

Shin, S. M., & Park, M. J. (2018). The Biopsychological Perspective on Understanding of Behavioral Addiction: Consolidating Polyvagal Theory and Motivational Balancing Theory. *Korean Journal of Psychology: General, 37(4)*, 503-530.

Smith, M. L., & Glass, G. V. (1977). Meta-analysis of psychotherapy outcome studies. *American Psychologist, 32*(9), 752-760.

Yu, M. H. (2024). Research Trends in Korea Counseling Field on the Application of Neuroscientific Memory Reconsolidation: A Scoping Review. *Asia Counseling and Coaching Review(ACCR), 6*(1), 1-15.

Wilkinson, B. D. (2018). The limits of neuroscience in counseling: A humanistic perspective and proposed model. *The Journal of Humanistic Counseling, 57*(1), 70-78.




THANK YOU
MOONhee Yu
thebraintoolbox@dgu.ac.kr
31

Hae-Duk Kim (Dongguk University)
"Subjectivity Study for a Systematic Approach to College Coaching"

In order for coaching to settle down effectively and continue to develop within the university, it is essential to explore the experiences of students and coaches who are actual participants in depth, analyze their subjective perceptions, and reflect them in the design and operation of the system.
The purpose of this study is to classify the types of subjective perceptions of coaching participation experiences for college students and coaches who participated in the GROW-Coaching, which was conducted for a total of three years from 2022 to 2024 at D University in the metropolitan area, analyze the characteristics of the type, and present the components of the coaching system suitable for university coaching.
In order to achieve the purpose of this study, the type of subjective perception of coaching participation experience was explored for students and coaches who participated in coaching conducted at universities selected as subjects using the Q methodology. A total of 40 Q samples were confirmed through a review of prior research, FGI, and in-depth interviews, and 30 students and 30 coaches participated in a P sample using the Q-sorting method to classify Statement 1 and Statement 2, consisting of 40 items, respectively. Data analysis was performed using the Ken-Q Analysis statistical tool, and the results of the study are as follows.
First, four types were derived from the 'subjectivity study of college students on the coaching participation experience conducted in universities'. Type 1. The 'type that recognizes empathy as important' is a type that recognizes that forming 'emotional empathy' is the most important factor in successful coaching by students and coaches who are customers, and that various efforts should be made to form rapport between the two in the coaching process.
Type 2. 'The type that thinks building a coaching system is important' is a type that recognizes the need to establish a student-friendly coaching system, including implementing prior orientation, providing benefits to students participating in coaching, allocating customized coaches by coaching topic, and improving the on-line coaching environment from a student's point of view.
Type 3. The 'type that values reflection' is a type that experiences perspective change, expansion and awareness of thinking, and recognizes that it is important to 'find and reflecton the answer to the problem on your own' in the coaching conversation process with the coach.
Type 4. 'The type that values coaching performance' is the type that values performance such as growth, college life adaptation, increased positive emotions, and emotional stability that can be obtained through coaching experience.
Second, four types were derived from the 'coach subjectivity study on coaching participation experience conducted in universities'. Type 1. The 'type that values expertise' recognizes the importance of the expertise and competence of coaches who participate in coaching, and it is a type that recognizes that coaching by experienced coaches is an essential factor for successful coaching, and that coaches must strive

through various methods in order to develop their expertise, such as supervision, meditation practice, and obtaining professional certificates.
Type 2. 'The type that values shared growth' is a type of recognition that coaches gain coaching experience at the same time as social contributions through university coaching, and students consider it important for coaches and students to grow at the same time as they explore themselves and go through a process of effort to achieve goals.
Type 3. "The type that thinks building a coaching system is important" is a type that coaches recognize as important to establish a system suitable for coaching, such as establishing a coaching lab or coaching institution, securing budget and space, and providing analysis data on coaching results in order for university coaching to be more active.
Type 4. "The type that values coaching performance" is a type that recognizes that it is important to accurately identify and coach students' needs in order to improve student satisfaction, which measures the performance gained through coaching, and that if students wish, they need to coach using various techniques.
Third, two studies that examined the subjective perception of students and coaches on the experience of participating in university coaching confirmed that the opinion that 'building a coaching system' was important was overlapping. Therefore, based on the subjective perception analysis of students and coaches that appeared in the research process, the components necessary for the coaching system implemented at the university were derived as follows.
The university coaching system consists of a four-step structure, and the first stage of "building a coaching infrastructure" includes establishing an organizational system for coaching operations, establishing a coaching lab or a coaching institution, and securing budget and dedicated space. The two-step component of "establishing a customized strategy for each coaching topic" includes designing a coaching program for each subject according to the needs of students and matching it with professional coaches.
The components of the third stage of 'coaching process construction' include writing and explaining coaching agreements, systematizing pre-orientation and post-feedback, and applying the same coaching dialogue model. The fourth stage of 'coaching performance analysis' includes conducting satisfaction surveys of participating students, collecting quantitative andqualitative data, deriving improvements, and reflecting the system.
By analyzing the subjective perceptions of students and coaches who actually participated in university coaching, this study provided the basis for the continuous implementation and development of coaching in universities in the future, and derived factors necessary for the establishment of a system necessary for stabilizing university coaching. This participant-centered approach can contribute to understanding the context of coaching execution and preparing a theoretical and practical basis for future program improvement and policy establishment.

동국대학교 dongguk university

A Subjectivity Study for the Systematic Approach of University Coaching

Department of Counseling and Coaching
Graduate School of Dongguk University
Hae-Duk Kim

2025.

Table of Contents

1. Research Overview
2. a research question
3. background of study
4. research methodology
5. the results of a study
6. Conclusions and Significance
7. suggestion

2

1. Research Overview

❖ Research title

A Subjectivity Study for the Systematic Approach of University Coaching

❖ the purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to study the subjectivity perception of students and coaches regarding the coaching experience conducted at the university, and to find factors for building the system so that coaching conducted at the university can be continuously implemented and developed.

3

2. a research question

❖ a research question

1. Derivation of subjective perception types of college students who have experienced coaching conducted by universities

2. Derive the type of subjective perception of coaches who have experienced coaching conducted by universities

3. What are the necessary components of the coaching system implemented by universities?

4

3. background of study

❖ Students and coaches who participated in the GROW coaching program conducted for three years from 2022 to 2024 at the Student Competency Development Center of D University in Seoul were selected as subjects for this study, and the purpose of this study was to explore, compare, and find meaning in the subjective perception of students and coaches' coaching participation experience.

5

4. Research Methodology

❖ Q Methodology

- a study to better understand an individual's subjective concept of a phenomenon -
- qualitative and quantitative mixed research methodology

❖ Application of research methodology

- Q Methodology(1) : A Study on the Subjective Perception of University Students on Coaching Participation Experience conducted in University
- Q Methodology(2) : A Study on the Coach's Subjective Perception of Coaching Participation Experience in University
- Based on the above two studies, the elements of the university coaching system are derived

6

5. Results of the study I

❖ Types of subjective perceptions of college students on coaching experiences conducted by universities

1유형	2유형	3유형	4유형
Awareness type that values empathy	What type of perception do you think building a coaching system is important	The type of perception that values reflection	Awareness type that values the performance of coaching
Through the coach's empathy and response, confidence It went up. (Z=1.25)	You can get coaching and scholarship miles I'm grateful to have. (Z=1.51)	Through the questions, I'm going to show you something new I realized (Z=1.61)	To coaches who can do coaching and consulting at the same time I want to get coaching. (z=1.39)

7

5. Results of the study 2

❖ The type of subjective perception of coaches on coaching experience conducted by universities

1유형	2유형	3유형	4유형
Awareness type that values coach expertise	Awareness type that values co-growth of coaches and students	What type of perception do you think building a coaching system is important	Coaching performance is important Thinking type of perception
under-competed coaches do coaching It is not desirable. (Z=1.2)	Through coaching, we can see how students grow It's a pleasure to watch. (Z=1.62)	Coaching labs and coaching centers in the university It should be established. (Z=1.55)	The performance of coaching is related to the student's will There is. (Z=2.1)

8

5. . Results of the study 3

Components of the college coaching system

Step 1: Build infrastructure – establish specialized organizations and labs, secure space and budget

Step 2: Establishment of custom strategy - Design program, coach matching by coaching topic

Step 3: Process - Orientation, Coaching Agreement, Feedback, Coaching Commitment, Consultation Center

Step 4: Performance Analysis - Satisfaction Survey and Data Collection, and Establishment of a Reflux System

9

6. Conclusions and Significance

This study categorized the subjective experiences of coaching participants and presented the theoretical and practical basis for the university coaching system through this. In particular, by analyzing the multidimensional perceptions of both students and coaches, it can be used as empirical data for future policy establishment and coaching program design.

In addition, coaching can be a key support strategy that can help individual college students' emotional stability and growth in the structural crisis that domestic universities are currently facing, such as a decrease in the school-age population, an expansion of the university admission system without majors, and an increase in dropouts of current students. Coaching can function as a practical intervention method that establishes an individual student's self-efficacy and self-identity beyond just career setting or academic counseling, thereby improving the quality of college life.

Therefore, this study provided a theoretical and practical basis for university coaching to establish institutional and sustainable development, and it can be used as useful basic data for establishing strategies for coaching implementation in various university contexts in the future

10

7. suggestion

This study was conducted with a focus on the first and second graders (lower grades). In the follow-up study, if a study on the experience of coaching participation is conducted for the third and fourth graders, it will be of great significance as it will be possible to look at the grounds for coaching in universities from a different perspective.

It is expected that it will be an important basis for proving the necessity and effectiveness of coaching if college students who have received coaching from universities enter society and continue to receive coaching after entering a company or public institution.

It will be meaningful if research is conducted to develop a coaching model that can be applied to actual universities.

If a student complaining of psychological instability or depression wishes during the coaching process, we propose a follow-up study to examine whether providing counseling in connection with a university counseling center can provide practical help to students and increase the effectiveness of coaching.

11

E3

Jae Mok Choi (Yeongnam University)

“Inherent counselling techniques based on Wang Yangming's 'Liangzhi' (良知)”

1. Wang Yangming as a 'Philosophical Counselor'

As a counselor, Wang Yangmyong(1472-1529)'s wisdom in listening to and resolving the troubles of his clients is evident. Wang Yangming helps his disciples resolve various personal, family, and social mental issues on their own. In other words, he first grasped the essence of the question, and then, tailored to the client's perspective, provided relevant examples from daily experiences or classics to help alleviate their concerns, facilitating a dialogue that encourages individuals to resolve their issues in light of their own innate understanding. This method, guided by the counselor's knowledge, attitudes, and values, can be termed an 'internalist' approach.

2. Trust in your own‘yangji (良知)’and follow that judgement

Wang Yangming's counselling technique relies on awakening the‘yangji (良知)’that each individual possesses, thereby allowing them to reach solutions autonomously and actively. Yangji is a newly created concept that combines‘yangji(良知)’, which Mencius referred to as the‘ability to know without thinking’, and‘yangnung(良能)’, the‘ability to act without being taught’. It describes the‘cognitive-practical ability’ that everyone is born with. Since yangji is the ability to discern and practice the rights and wrongs of the world, clients should trust their own yangji and act in accordance with the judgements it provides.

3.‘Inherent Approach in Counselling’Based on Specific Situations

Wang Yangming heals by capturing the‘core’of the issue within specific situations and accurately identifying it. In other words, it is an attitude of intuitively understanding the‘situation’presented to the student and seeking‘appropriate solutions’for it. This is guided by the counsellor's own diverse clinical experiences. This technique was the wisdom of philosophical counselling gained through Wang Yangming's tumultuous life journey. He states that his theory of‘yangzhi’was‘derived from numerous life-threatening situations and obstacles.’This implies that he underwent many clinical experiments in life to reach the position of a philosophical counsellor. It is like the saying in Chinese classics, “One becomes a good doctor only after breaking their arms three times”; it means that he gained the wisdom and

qualifications to diagnose and heal the emotional pains of others after enduring many painful experiences himself. Wang Yangming chooses to ‘devise treatment methods appropriate to the symptoms of the illness.’ For example, when a ‘problem’ arises in human relationships, it entails taking necessary actions based on its core. Rather than following a pre-existing manual, it involves activating the client’s yangzhi to self-diagnose and resolve the core of the already occurred issue. There is no pre-given theory or guideline involved.

4. Solving problems on your own and reaching a cheerful mind

Wang Yangming believed that a counsellor should guide clients to turn their attention to their own innate knowledge and resolve their issues independently. Thus, he stated, “The more knowledge one has, the more obscured the innate knowledge becomes. In such cases, it is more difficult than speaking with someone who has not read at all.” This indicates that the counsellor does not possess alternatives but helps the client to become aware of the core of their own issues, allowing them to diagnose and resolve it themselves. It is not about seeking external or transcendent answers outside the situation. It is a so-called 'intrinsic approach' that enters into the client's awareness of their problem. The client is guided to clearly recognise the essence of their issues and resolve them according to their own judgement of their innate knowledge. Therefore, once the client is led to a 'comfortable' state of mind, the role of the counsellor is complete.

왕양명의 자기 '양지(良知)'에 의한 내재론적 상담 기법

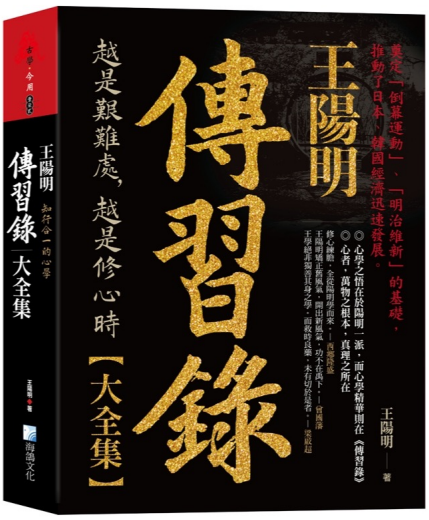
Inherent counselling techniques based on Wang Yangming's 'Liangzhi' (良知)

최재목(영남대 철학과)
Choi Jae-mok (Yeongnam University)

1. '철학상담자'로서 왕양명

- **양명(陽明) 왕수인(王守仁. 1472-1529)[이하 왕양명]의 사상을 이해할 수 있는 주요 텍스트는『전습록(傳習錄)』이다. 이것은 왕양명이 그의 '제자들'과 '친구'와의 대화, 그리고 그의 새로운 이론에 이의를 제기하는 '주자학자들'과 주고받은 편지를 모아, 제자들이 간행한 책이다. 여기에는 왕양명의 진솔한 인간적인 모습이 잘 드러나 있다. 상담자(Counselor)로서의 왕양명이 내담자(Client)의 고민을 들어주고 해소해주는 지혜가 잘 드러나 있다.**
- **왕양명은, 제자들이 겪는 개인 및 가정 그리고 사회적인 다양한 정신적 문제를 스스로 해소해갈 수 있도록 돕는다. 다시 말해서 왕양명은 먼저 질문의 핵심을 잘 파악하고, 이어서 내담자의 눈높이에 맞추어, 고민을 해소하는 데 도움이 되는 관련 예들을 일상 경험이나 고전 등에서 적절히 탄력 있게 인용, 제시하여, 각자의 양지(良知)에 비추어 자신의 문제를 스스로 해소하도록 대화하는 방식이다. 상담자가 가진 지식, 태도, 가치관 등에 근거하여 스스로 풀어가도록 안내하는 이러한 방식을 '내재론적' 방법이라 하겠다. 이 점에서 왕양명은 숙련된 '철학 상담자'였다.**




王陽明
傳習錄
越是艱難處，越是修心時
【大全集】
王陽明 著
海鴻文化




新建伯王文成公守仁

인간 - 왕양명의 면모

1) 병약(病弱): 폐, 소화기 질환

2) 공처가(恐妻家)

3) 가정적·인간적으로 불운
(처복·자녀복 없음)

4) 세심, 소심 → 게릴라 전에 능했음

폐병→민감·예민·섬세함→아픔·슬픔의 '공감철학' - '身心'의 철학

동굴[洞→陽明洞➔ 陽明先生] 선호
글쓰기보다 강의의 선호

주자학과 양명학의 차이

- 주자학: 도문학(道聞學) 전통 중시
  문자(읽기, 쓰기) 전통/非語錄/literacy, langue, logic 중시

- 양명학: 존덕성(尊德性) 전통 중시
  말씀(말하기) 전통/語錄/orality, parole, aporism 중시 * 육구연도 마찬가지 → 陸王學

양명 심학:
성선설=존덕성(尊德性)
내면주의의 절정

"진리/존재근거를 자기 내부=주체에다 둠"

"왕양명은 중국 고대 이래, 최후의 형이상학자"

37세시, 귀주성 龍場의 굴 속에서
한밤중에 잠을 자다가 天語(仙語)를 듣는 신비체험
格物致知의 뜻을 대오(=龍場大悟)

"始知聖人之道, 吾性自足, 向之求理於事物者誤也."

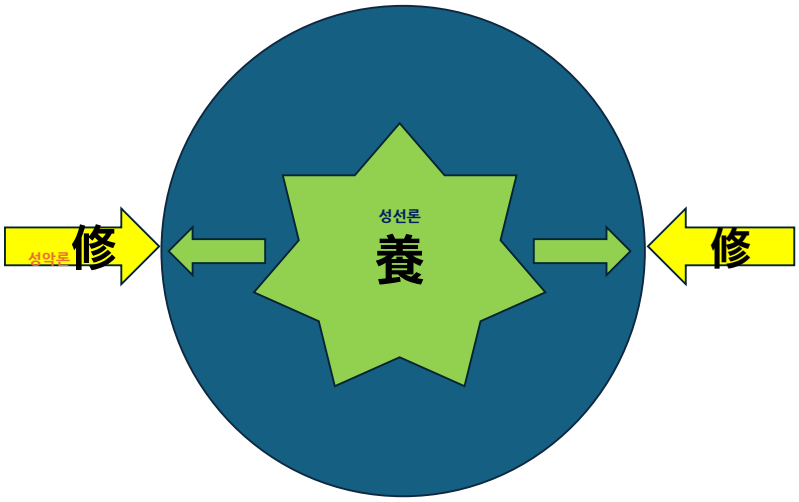
"비로소 알았다! 성인의 도리는 나의 본성만으로 자족하며, 이전에 (외부의) 사물에서 이치를 구하고자 한 것이 잘못이었음을!!"

양명학은 경(敬)과 같은 자기 단속이 아니라 인간 존재의 현재를 긍정하고 실현하라는 성(誠)을 주장한다.

수양학(修養學)의 전통에서 본다면, '외부에서 내부를 다스리는' 수(修) 대신에, '내부를 외부로 길러내는' 양(養)의 입장을 고수하고 있다.

남방계 『상한론(傷寒論)』의 의학적 비유를 들자면 약물 요법(=湯液)으로 몸의 건강을 찾듯, 맹자적 성선설은 내면성의 확충이라는 자율적, 능동적 방법에 착안한다. 양육(養育) 보양(保養) 등의 용례에서 보듯, '양(養)'은 생명이나 신체를 '기르다/키우다/살리다/지키다'는 뜻을 담고 있다.
반면 중국의 북방계(黃河 유역) 『내경(內經)』의학에서는, 침과 뜸[鍼灸] 요법이라는 외부적 물리적 자극으로 몸을 지키고자 하였다. 순자적 성악설의 방식은 타율적, 수동적 규제를 통한 방식이다. 이것은 수신(修身) 수행(修行: 훈련), 수선(修繕) 등에서 쓰는 '수(修)'적인 것이다. 닦다/씻다'는 뜻으로 외부를 가지고 내부를 바로잡는(교정하는) 방식이라 할 수 있다.

양명학: '외부에서 내부를 다스리는' 수(修)가 아닌 '내부를 외부로 길러내는' 양(養)의 입장



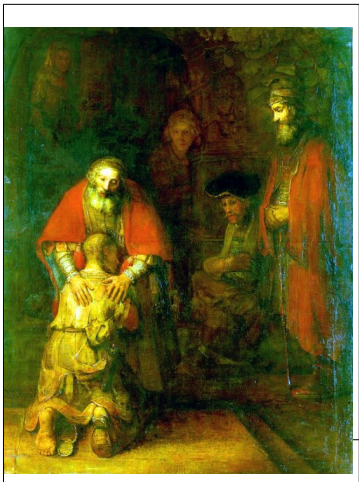
2. 스스로의 '양지(良知)'를 믿고 그 판단에 따르기

- 왕양명의 상담 기법은 개개인이 가진 '양지(良知)'를 일깨워서 스스로 해결에 이르도록 하는 자율적, 능동적인 자각에 맡기는 방식이다. 양지란, 맹자가 말한, '생각하지 않아도 아는 능력'인 '양지(良知)'와 '배우지 않아도 할 수 있는 능력'인 '양능(良能)'을 합하여 새로 만든 개념이다. 누구나 태어날 때부터 가진 '인지-실천 능력'을 말한다. 양지는 '인공지능'이 아닌 '자연지능'을 말한다.
- 왕양명은 양지를 '하늘의 신비스런 힘에 힘입어' 얻어낸 것임을 밝히고 있다. 아울러 그는 "양지는 하늘이 심어준 신령한 뿌리"라고까지 표현하였다. 나아가 왕양명은 양지를 '도(道)', '조화(造化)의 정령(精靈)', '자기 준칙', '지남침(指南針)' 등으로 표현하기도 한다.
- 양지는 세상만사의 시비, 선악을 알고 실천하는 능력이니만큼, 내담자들은 각자 스스로의 양지를 믿고, 그것이 내리는 판단에 따라 실천해가면 된다.

맹자			양명
良知	생각하지 않아도 아는 능력 不慮而知者 * 소피아(이론적 지혜)	⇨	양지 자연지능(NI: natural intelligence)
良能	배우지 않아도 할 수 있는 능력 不學而能者 * 프로네시스(실천적 지혜)		

良知 (孟子의 良知+良能)	誠愛(眞誠)惻怛之心	仁	구원/ ➔ 구제-자비
	是非之心	智 (知)	➔ 지혜-이성

맹자			양명
良知	생각하지 않아도 아는 능력 不慮而知者 * 소피아(이론적 지혜)	→	양지
良能	배우지 않아도 할 수 있는 능력 不學而能者 * 프로네시스(실천적 지혜)		



렘브란트, '탕자(蕩子)의 귀향(歸鄕)'. 1669년
캔버스에 유채, 262×206㎝, 러시아
상트페테르부르크(Sankt-Peterburg) 헤르미타주
미술관(State Hermitage Museum) 소장



<손가락 부분 확대>
왼손은 억센-강한 남자의 손이고, 오른손은 여린-부드러운 여자의 손이다.

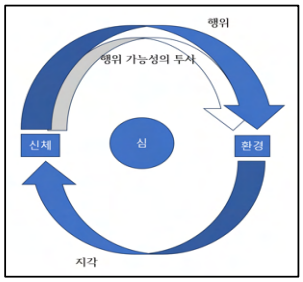
<양지>에 대한 현대적 연구 상황

왕양명은 동양철학자 가운데 '몸화=체화된(embodied) 마음'의 문제를 제기하고 심화시킨 이른바 '체화인지의 선두적 인물'로서 부각!

1. 존 듀이의 '질성적 사고(Qualitative Thought)'와 연관성
2. 오스트레일리아의 인지과학자 데이비드 존 차머스(David John Chalmers)가 말하는 퀄리아(qualia. 감각질)과 연관

3. 메를로 퐁티의 '지향궁'[지각-행위 순환과 행위가능성의 투사]과 연관성

메를로 퐁티는 말하는 '지향궁'(志向弓, intentional arc/arc intentionnel)을 발동시켜 과거의 학습경험을 총동원해가면서 환경 속에서 즉각적으로 행위가능성을 투사하고 있다. 어쩌면 양지는 이 '지향궁'을 총괄하며 인지를 즉각적으로 구성해가는 능력이라 볼 수도 있다.



3. 구체적인 사태에 근거한 '내재론적 상담'

왕양명은 구체적인 사태 내에서 문제의 '핵심'을 포착하여, 정확하게 그것을 짚어주는 방식으로 치유한다. 다시 말해서, 제자에게 야기된 '사태'를 직관하고 '그에 합당한 치유책을 모색'하는 자세이다. 이것은 상담자 자신의 다양한 임상 경험에 기초하여 안내해 가는 것이다.

이러한 기법은 왕양명 자신의 파란만장한 인생역정을 통해서 얻어낸 철학 상담의 지혜였다. 그는 자신의 '양지' 이론을 **"수많은 죽을 고비와 난관에서 얻었음[百死千難]"**을 술회한다. 그가 철학 상담사의 위치에 이르기까지 삶 속에서 많은 임상실험을 거쳤다는 의미이다. 마치 "세 번 팔뚝을 분지르고 나서야 좋은 의사가 된다"는 중국 고전의 말처럼, 그 스스로 많은 고통스런 경험을 거치고 나서 사람들의 마음의 병을 진단, 치유할 지혜와 자격을 얻었다는 의미이다.

왕양명은 "병의 증세에 따라 그에 맞는 치료 방법을 강구하는 방법[]"을 택한다. 예컨대, 인간관계에서 '문제점'이 발생한 경우, 그 핵심에 따른 필요한 조치를 하는 것이다. 이미 주어진 매뉴얼에 따르는 것이 아니라, 내담자의 양지를 작동시켜서 이미 발생한 문제의 핵심을 스스로 진단, 해소해가도록 하는 것이다. 여기에는 이미 주어진 어떤 이론이나 지침이 없다.

한 친구[=전덕홍]가 정좌하다가 깨우친 것이 있어서 달려가 선생님께 여쭈었다.

선생님께서 말씀하시기를, "내가 예전에 저주(滁州)에 머물고 있을 때 학생들이 대부분 지적인 이해에 힘쓰고, 귀로 듣고 입으로 말하는 것이 같고 다름만을 논쟁하여 아무런 보탬도 없는 것을 보고는 잠시 그들에게 정좌를 가르쳤었다. 한때 그들은 광경을 얼핏 보고 자못 근접한 효험을 거두는 듯했다. 시간이 지나자 점차 고요함을 좋아하고 움직임을 싫어하여 마치 마른 나무처럼 생기를 잃어 어떤 감응도 일으키지 않는 병폐에 흘러 들어가거나, 혹은 현묘한 깨달음에 힘써서 듣는 사람을 놀라게 하였다. 그래서 **요즘에는 다만 치양지를 말할 뿐이다. 양지만 명백하다면 그대가 고요한 곳을 따라 체득해도 좋고, 구체적인 일에서 연마해도 좋다.** 양지 본체는 원래 움직임도 없고 고요함도 없다. 이것이 바로 학문의 핵심이다. **나의 이 화두는 저주에서부터 지금까지 몇 번 비교해 보았지만, 오직 '치양지' 세 글자만 병통이 없었다. 이것은 의사가 세 차례나 자기 팔뚝을 분지르는 쓰라린 경험을 거쳐고서야 비로소 사람들의 병리를 살필 수 있는 것과 같다.**"

『傳習錄』卷下;

"友靜坐有見, 馳問先生. **答曰**, "吾昔居滁時, 見諸生多務知解, 口耳異同, 無益於得, 姑教之靜坐. 一時竅見光景, 頗收近效. 久之, 漸有喜靜厭動, 流入枯槁之病. 或務爲玄解妙覺, 動人聽聞. 故邇來只說致良知. 良知明白, 隨你去靜處體悟也好, 隨你去事上磨鍊也好, 良知本體原是無動無靜的. 此便是學問頭腦. 我這個話頭自滁州到今, 亦較過幾番, **只是致良知三字無病. 醫經折肱, 方能察人病理.**""

이런 방법을 왕양명의 제자 서애(徐愛)는 "병의 증세에 따라 그에 맞는 치료 방법을 강구하는 것[因病立方]"이라 하였다.
이 방법은 실제로 왕양명이 인간관계에서 '문제점'[病]이 발생한 경우, 그 문제의 핵심에 따라 필요한 조치[藥]를 해야한다는 지침을 재확인한 것이다. 이른바 "그 병에 따라 약을 처방하는 것[因其病藥之]"이다. 이 말은 이미 주어진 매뉴얼이 있는 것이 아니고, 발생한 문제에 따른 적절한 처방을 하여 내담자의 양지를 작동하도록 하는 것이다. 이것은 이미 주어진 무언가에 "얽매인 상태로 원리를 찾는 것[拘泥認理]"과 다르다.
따라서 왕양명은, 상담은 내담자가 갖추고 있는 자신의 양지(良知)에 눈을 돌려서 스스로 문제를 해결하도록 인도하는 것뿐이라 생각했다. 따라서 "양지는 견문이 많을수록 그 가리워짐이 두터워져서, 오히려 독서하지 않은 사람과 말하는 것보다 더 어려워진다."고 고백한다.
일찍이 공자는 어느 촌부가 와서 물으면 미리 갖고 있었던 지식으로 그에게 답한 적이 없고, "내가 아는 것이 있겠는가? 아는 것이 없다. 어리석은 자가 있어 나에게 묻는 일이 있다면, 텅텅 비어있듯이 모르더라도 나는 이 끝에서 저 끝까지 다 두드려주며[叩] 할 수 있는 일을 다할 것이다."고 하였다.

선생께서 말씀하시기를, "공자께서는 어리석고 천한 사람이 와서 물어도 먼저 어떤 지식을 가지고 그에 응답한 적이 없으셨다. 공자의 마음은 다만 텅 비어있을 따름이었다. **단지 그 사람 스스로 알고 있는 옳고 그름의 양단(兩端)을 두드려주면서 그에게 하나의 분명한 판단을 내려주자, 어리석고 천한 사람의 마음이 곧 분명해졌던 것이다. 어리석고 천한 사람이 스스로 알고 있는 옳고 잘못됨이 바로 그가 본래 지니고 있는 천연의 준칙이다. 비록 총명한 성인일지라도 어떻게 한 터럭이라도 보태거나 덜어줄 수 있겠느냐? 다만 그가 스스로 (자신의 양지를) 믿을 수 없었을 뿐이다.** 공자께서 그에게 하나의 판단을 내려주시자 남김없이 실현되었던 것이다. **만약 공자가 어리석고 천한 사람과 말할 때 약간의 지식이라도 남겨 두었다면 (사적인 의도가 개입되어) 그의 양지를 다할 수 없었을 것이며, 도(道)의 본체가 둘이 되었을 것이다.**"

『傳習錄』卷下;

先生曰, "孔子有鄙夫來問, 未嘗先有知識以應之, **其心只空空而已. 但叩他自知的是非兩端, 與之一剖決, 鄙夫之心, 便已了然. 鄙夫自知的是非, 便是他本來天則**, 雖聖人聰明, 如何可與增減得一毫? 他只不能自信, 夫子與之一剖決, 便已竭盡無餘了. 若夫子與鄙夫言時, 留得些子知識在, 便是不能竭他的良知, 道體卽有二了."

ⓐ 오닉(五溺) *친구 담약수의 평가

왕양명의 학문적 친구 담약수(湛若水, 호는 甘泉, 1466-1560, 왕수인 보다 6년 연상)가 쓴 「양명선생묘지명(陽明先生墓誌銘)」에는 '오닉(五溺)'이라는 개념으로 왕양명의 생애를 총괄.

* '오닉': 다섯 가지 영역에 몰두(올인), 다섯 단계의 정신적·지적편력·여정.

①임협(任俠)→②기사(騎射)→③사장(辭章=문학)→④신선(=도교)→⑤불씨(=불교)

유교로 돌아오기 전 다섯 가지에 몰두: ① '약자를 도와 불의한 강자를 물리치는 의협심', ② '승마와 활쏘기' ③'시문을 짓는 등의 사장학(literature)', ④ '도가·도교(=신선·불로장생)', ⑤ '불교 (=禪)'.

ⓑ 교삼변(教三變)+학삼변(學三變)

* 제자 전덕홍의 평가

제자 전덕홍(錢德洪)이 스승의 학문을 정리 ➔

■'교삼변'(教三變): 心卽理(37세)→知行合一(38세)→致良知(49세)

■'학삼변'(學三變): 辭章(문학)→二氏」(도·불)→聖賢(유학)

도불(道佛)의 '허·무(虛·無)'에서
유교의 '실·유(實·有)'로의 평면적 변천이 아닌,
도불의 '유·무' 경계의 흡수에서 얻은
〈새로운 심학(新心學)〉의 탄생.



4. 스스로 문제를 해결하고 쾌활한 마음에 이르기

왕양명은, 내담자가 자신의 양지(良知)에 눈을 돌려서, 스스로 자신의 문제를 해결하도록 인도하는 것뿐이라 생각했다. 따라서 그는, "양지는 견문이 많을수록 가려진다. 이런 경우 오히려 독서를 하지 않은 사람과 말하는 것보다 어렵다"고 했다. 이것은 상담자가 어떤 대안을 가지고 있는 것이 아니라, 주어진 상황에 맞춰, 내담자 스스로 자각하고 있는 문제의 핵심을, 스스로 진단, 해소하도록 유도해 가는 것이다.

상황 그 밖으로 나가서 외재적, 초월론적인 답을 찾는 것이 아니다. 내담자의 문제의식 내로 스스로 찾아 들어가는 이른바 '내재적인 접근'이다. 내담자는 스스로 자신의 문제가 무엇인지 그 본질을 명료하게 자각하고, 자신의 양지의 판단에 따라 해소해가도록 안내해 줄 뿐이다. 그래서 각자 자신의 고민에서 벗어나 '쾌적한' 마음 상태에 이르도록 해주면, 상담자의 역할은 끝난다.

① 마음을 밝게 비워두기
선생께서 일찍이 배우는 사람들에게 말씀하시기를, "마음의 본체에 한 생각이라도 머물러 막힌 채로 붙어있어서는 안 된다. 마치 눈에 조그마한 먼지나 모래가 붙어있으면 안 되는 것과 같다. 조그마한 것이 많아야 얼마나 많을 수 있겠느냐? 그러나 눈 전체가 캄캄해져 버린다."
또 말씀하시기를, **"이 한 생각은 비단 사사로운 생각만이 아니라, 좋은 생각도 마찬가지로 조금이라도 붙어 있으면 안 된다. 마치 눈 속에 금이나 옥가루를 조금이라도 넣으면 역시 눈을 뜰 수 없는 것과 같다."**

『傳習錄』卷下;

先生嘗語學者曰, "心體上著不得一念留滯, 就如眼著不得些子塵沙. 些子能得幾多? 滿眼便昏天黑地了." **又曰**, "這一念不但是私念, 便好的念頭, 亦著不得些子. **如眼中放些金玉屑, 眼亦開不得了**."

② 울고 싶을 때는 울어라
여쭈었다. "즐거움이 마음의 본체라고 하셨는데 부모의 상을 만나 슬퍼 통곡할 때도 그 즐거움이 여전히 있습니까?"
선생님께서 말씀하시기를, **"반드시 크게 한번 통곡해야만 비로소 즐거우며, 통곡하지 않으면 즐겁지 않다. 비록 통곡할지라도 이 마음이 편안한 곳이 바로 즐거움이다. 본체는 움직인 적이 없다."**

『傳習錄』卷下;

問, "樂是心之本體. 不知遇大故於哀哭時, 此樂還在否?" 先生曰, "須是大哭一番了方樂, 不哭便不樂矣. 雖哭, 此心安處, 卽是樂也, 本體未嘗有動."

③ '**마음의 상쾌함'의 중요성**

한 친구가 선생님을 모시고 앉았는데, 미간(眉間)에 우수가 서려 있는 듯하였다. 선생께서 그것을 알아채시고는 그 친구를 돌아보며 말씀하시길,
"사람의 일신이 상쾌하지 않으면, 수많은 일은 시도할 필요조차 없어진다. 단지 머리카락 한 개가 낚싯줄에 걸려도 온몸이 상쾌(爽快)하지 않다."
그 친구는 선생의 말을 듣고는 확연히 깨달아 삼가 반성하였다.

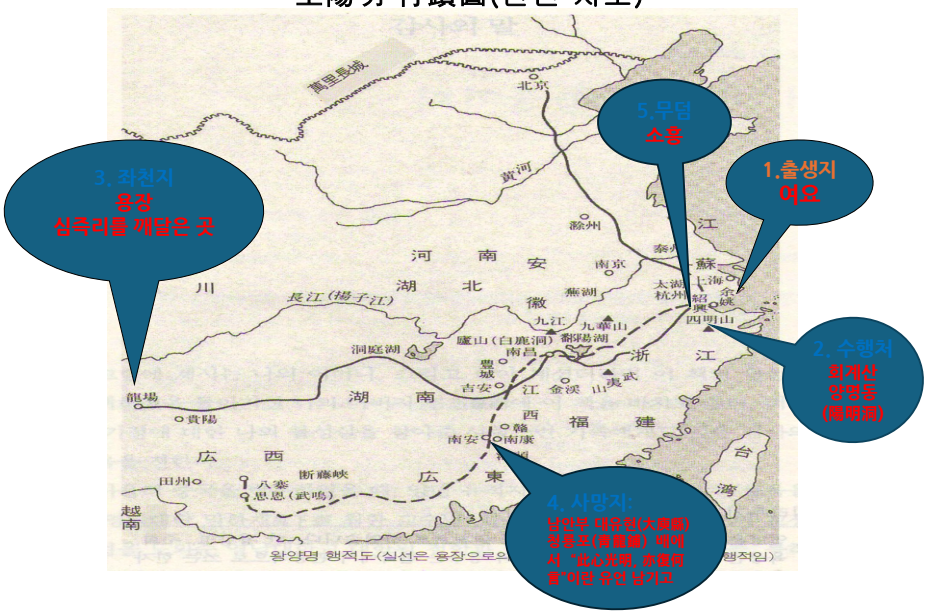
一友侍坐, 眉間若有憂思, 先生覺之, 顧語他友曰, "人一身不得爽快, 不消多大事, 只頭上一根頭髮釣着, 滿身便不快活了." 是友聞之矍然省惕.
[정지욱 역해, 『陽明先生遺言錄』卷下, (소나무, 2009), 180쪽.]

양명학은 중국사상사에서 진행되어온 성선설의 존덕성 전통을 완성한 것. 말하자면 인간 자신의 존재근거를 자기 내부=주체에다 두는 내면주의.
따라서 리(理)라는 인간과 세계의 규율은 선험적으로 확립된 것이 아니라, 주체에 의해 구성되는 것. 진리의 근거는 인간 자신에게 있고, 거기로부터 창출한다.

마치 생텍쥐페리가 『인간의 대지』에서 다음과 같이 언급한 것처럼…

"진리란 결코 증명되어지는 것이 아니다. 만약 다른 곳이 아닌 이 땅에서만 오렌지 나무가 견고한 뿌리를 내리고 열매를 맺을 수 있다면, 이 땅이 바로 오렌지 나무의 진리이다. 만약 다른 것이 아닌 어떤 특정 종교, 문화, 가치 체계, 행동 양식으로 인해 인간이 충만감을 느끼고, 자신의 마음속에서 이제껏 알지 못했던 귀인이 해방되어 나온다면, 이는 바로 그것들이 그의 진리이기 때문이다."

王陽明 行蹟圖(관련 지도)





4. 사망지:
남안부(南安府) 대유현(大庾縣) 청룡포(青龍鋪) 배(舟中)에서 사망.
"此心光明, 亦復何言"이란 유언 남기고



Gap Yim Jung (Semyung University)
"Symbiosis and Healing"

Symbiosis and Healing

Gap-Yim Jung

Table of Contents

1. Introduction
2. The Polyvagal Theory
3. The Unity of All Things (萬物一體) and Symbiosis (共生)
4. The Harmonious Order of Symbiosis: Ren (仁)
5. Conclusion

1. Introduction

- This study seeks to highlight the overlooked value of symbiosis (共生) and its healing potential in our society, which is riddled with signs of isolation—a hallmark of what can be called a "disease society." To this end, it explores the concept of wanwu yiti zhi ren (萬物一體之仁), or "coherence that sees all things in the universe as one body," as proposed by the Ming dynasty Confucian scholar Wang Yang-Ming (1472 1528), under the theme of symbiosis.
- In this context, the study will examine the intersection between this notion and the Polyvagal Theory, a contemporary neurophysiological model developed by Stephen W. Porges, in order to explore their shared therapeutic potential rooted in the principle of symbiosis.

- Although Wang Yang-Ming's Confucianism and modern neurophysiology differ greatly in background, history, and research methods, this comparative approach is adopted to demonstrate that the philosophy of symbiosis, emphasized by Wang through his phrase "wanwu yiti zhi ren," is not a mystical or abstract ideal, but rather a universally applicable methodology for philosophical healing. The Polyvagal Theory underscores the role of the social engagement system in fostering connection and co-regulation. It particularly emphasizes that when the ventral vagus nerve functions optimally, the autonomic nervous system fulfills its roles in health, growth, and recovery.

- Wang Yang-Ming's Learning of the Mind (心學) emphasizes the significance of intentionality and focused attention. He values the act of incorporating that which lies outside the domain of volition into conscious awareness through deliberate attention—transforming the unknown into the known, and the unpracticed into lived experience. This is remarkably aligned with the Polyvagal Theory's emphasis on mindfulness toward one's autonomic state—encouraging inquiries such as "Where am I now?" or "Where do I usually reside?"—and recognizing that one's physiological state exerts a decisive influence on emotions, thoughts, beliefs, cognition, and sensation.

- Wang Yang-Ming's philosophy emerges from a profound concern for the conditions of his time and a commitment to human salvation. He perceived the growing entrenchment in individual consciousness among the people of his era as a crisis akin to being on the verge of death. His own experiences of anxiety and confusion led him to understand such suffering as stemming from a rupture in the connection to the entirety of the universe (heaven, earth, and all things, 天地萬物). In his view, the fragmentation of consciousness into isolated individuals reflected an existential crisis—a severance from the vital unity of the living cosmos.

- To address this crisis, Wang prescribed the recovery of one's inherent nature through the notion of wanwu yiti zhi ren. In today's world, where the social and psychological symptoms that Wang diagnosed have only intensified, his prescription deserves renewed consideration. This concept—"coherence that unites heaven, earth, and all things as one body"—is Wang's philosophical reinterpretation of Confucian ren (仁). He asserted that a fulfilling life, encompassing health, psychological comfort, happiness, and joy, can be achieved through the realization of one's innate nature via smooth and harmonious communication and circulation with all beings.

2. The Polyvagal Theory

1) Regulation of the Autonomic Nervous System
2) Co-regulation through the Ventral Vagal System
3) Co-regulation and Healing

1) Regulation of the Autonomic Nervous System

- In the Polyvagal Theory proposed by Stephen Porges, the concept of regulation—particularly co regulation with others, communities, and nature—is emphasized as a key factor influencing not only individual health but also the well-being of communities.

- Deb Dana, a leading clinical practitioner applying the Polyvagal Theory, refers to this model as "the science of connection." She provides a map of the nervous system that guides individuals toward connection.

- By understanding the function of the autonomic nervous system, we can learn to cooperate with our nervous system and bring about more regulation and connection in everyday life. A regulated nervous system is essential for exploring and engaging with the world with a sense of safety and ease. Healing occurs as we enhance our capacity for regulation.

- Conversely, when we remain unaware of the internal biological processes at work, we feel at the mercy of unexplained and unpredictable experiences, which often results in anxiety and distress.

- However, by understanding how the nervous system operates, we can collaborate with it to navigate our way out of dysregulation and return to a state of safety and calm.

The Polyvagal Theory identifies three platforms of the autonomic nervous system:

- Ventral vagal state: Associated with feelings of connection, calmness, and capability. In this state, one feels safe and socially engaged.
- Sympathetic nervous system: Associated with activation in the face of threat—anxiety, hypervigilance, and the urge to fight or flee.
- Dorsal vagal state: Associated with shutdown, helplessness, and isolation. This state reflects a deep perception of threat, leading to immobilization

- According to the Polyvagal Theory, the narratives we live out in each of these states are not the result of cognitive choices but biological reactions. Porges explains that the ventral vagus, the most recent evolutionary development in mammals, forms the physiological basis for the human social engagement system and plays a crucial role in co-regulation. Humans, born in a state of dependency, form the foundation of self-regulation through these co-regulatory experiences.

- The ventral vagus anchors the nervous system in safety, enabling both self-regulation and co-regulation. This stable ventral vagal state—termed the "Autonomic Home"—is the foundation for health, growth, and resilience.

2) Co-regulation through the Ventral Vagal System

- The ventral vagus is the most evolutionarily advanced component of the autonomic nervous system and becomes active when we feel safe and connected. It can therefore be described as the "nervous system of symbiosis" or the "nervous system of co-regulation." This system is deeply involved in our capacity to heal. When the ventral vagus is activated, we naturally connect, cooperate, and feel a sense of stability within community.
- Moments of mutual gaze with someone we trust, conversations with friends, or bonding with companion animals can all support our return to a ventral state. In such moments, survival is transcended by co existence and interdependence. Regulation, in this context, is not sustained by the individual alone but is co-created in relational dynamics. This is why it is termed co-regulation.

- When the ventral vagal system is regulated, humans can maintain or quickly recover autonomic balance even in the face of stress. Dana conceptualizes this process of returning to stability as co-regulation—a dynamic, reciprocal process in which physiological stability is restored through social connection and interaction.
- Autonomic regulation, therefore, is not an isolated, internal physiological process but a relational one, dependent on how well the nervous system is co-regulated through connection with others. Hence, the ventral vagus functions not merely as a system of physiological regulation but as a neurological foundation for social connection and emotional resilience.

3) Co-regulation and Healing

- Humans experience suffering and fear when they feel trapped in a dysregulated state or believe they cannot return to regulation. In such states, we shift from flexibility to rigidity, becoming stuck in either excessive sympathetic activation or dorsal vagal shutdown. In the language of the nervous system, this is a state of dysregulation. Whether temporary or chronic, dysregulation constitutes a core source of suffering for human beings as living organisms.

- In Confucian cultivation (xiushen, 修身), addressing such pain is not about denial or avoidance through negative projection or addiction, but about choosing a direction of regulation. To make such a choice, one must become aware of which autonomic platform they occupy—consciously or unconsciously, temporarily or habitually.
- Understanding how our biological activity underpins our lived experience—and how our autonomic state sets the stage for our narrative—enables us to notice suffering as it arises and redirect ourselves toward regulation, rather than further spiraling into dysregulation.

- The Confucian value of ren (仁), as embodied in the principle of symbiosis, gains physiological clarity through the concept of co-regulation in the Polyvagal Theory. However, ren is not merely an ideal but a deeply practical value developed over centuries in Confucian culture as a survival and flourishing strategy.

- It is essential, therefore, to recognize ren as both a philosophical ideal and a pragmatic approach to human life.

3. The Unity of All Things (萬物一體) and Symbiosis (共生)

1) The Proposal of Wanwu Yiti Zhi Ren (萬物一體之仁)
2) The Monism of Qi (氣一元論) and Intrinsic Relatednes
3) Unity and Symbiosis

1) The Proposal of Wanwu Yiti Zhi Ren (萬物一體之仁)

- "At the beginning, people's hearts are no different from those of sages. Yet they are estranged by selfishness and obstructed by material desires, which diminish what is great and obstruct what ought to f low freely. Thus, each person develops selfish thoughts, and some come to regard even their parents and siblings as enemies."

- "The great person (da ren) considers heaven, earth, and all things as one body—viewing the world as a single household and China as a single person. Those who create distinctions based on physical form— drawing a line between 'you' and 'me'—are small-minded (xiao ren). The reason why the great person can treat all under heaven as one body is not by design, but because their heart of ren is innately so. Their connection with the myriad things is spontaneous and inherent. This is not exclusive to sages; even those deemed small-minded possess the same potential—they have merely diminished themselves."

2) The Monism of Qi (氣一元論) and Intrinsic Relatedness

- "Wind and rain, dew and thunder, sun, moon, stars, animals and plants, mountains and rivers, earth and stone—all are originally one with humankind. Thus, grains and livestock nourish us; medicines and acupuncture heal us. Because all share the same qi, they resonate and interact."
- Wang Yang-Ming adheres to a one-source theory of qi (qi yi yuan lun), holding that all things, including humans, are composed of a singular qi (氣). Zhang Zai described qi as extremely subtle and formless— Wang adopts this view, accepting that qi is greatly empty (taixu) and without form (wuxing). In a world based on this principle, all distinct appearances coexist and interact harmoniously without obstruction.

- For Wang, all things exist in immanent relation within the organic vitality of the natural cosmos. Such coexistence is not merely coexistence but interdependent symbiosis.
- Terms like “the unity of all things” (萬物一體), “the unity of mind, intention, and things” (心意知物一件), and “the unity of knowledge and action” (知行合一) express this interdependence. These concepts reflect a philosophical structure in which no concept stands independently—each is mutually constituted.

- Wang repeatedly warns against mistaking conceptual distinctions for ontological separations. All beings in the universe exist in interdependent relationships, inseparably reflecting one another. The source of this interdependence lies in the metaphysical unity of qi.

3) Unity and Symbiosis

- Wang illustrates this worldview with a metaphor:

- "It is like a human body: the eyes see, the ears hear, the hands grasp, and the feet walk—all aiding the functioning of the whole. The eyes do not resent the ears for not seeing, nor do the feet resent the hands for not grasping. Because the vital qi circulates and connects all, the body functions as a unified whole, responding intuitively and harmoniously."

- He describes qi as lively and dynamic (huopo huo)—never ceasing in its harmonizing activity. While things may appear as distinct individuals, they all arise from the same qi and are interlinked. In this one f lowing qi (yiqi liutong) world, no individual can sustain life alone; rather, all life emerges through interconnected organic relations.

- Wang's emphasis on he—harmonious coexistence—requires that individuals be free from selfish desires that obstruct the flowing qi of life. In his later years, he passionately pursued the ideal of a "Great Unity society" (Datong shihui), in which unity (tong) refers to oneness rather than sameness. Wang cautions that anything that obstructs the essential mind—whether desires for external things, selfish ego-consciousness, or even the pursuit of goodness or principle—constitutes selfish desire (siyu).

4. The Harmonious Order of Symbiosis: Ren (仁)

1) Wanwu Yiti Zhi Ren (萬物一體之仁)
2) The Harmonious Order of Life: Ren (仁)
3) Voluntary Order of Symbiosis

1) Wanwu Yiti Zhi Ren (萬物一體之仁)

- This is the view that goes beyond physical forms and categories to recognize others as fellow beings, all emerging from the same qi. Wang's ren emphasizes coexistence and symbiosis over individual dissolution. Ren arises from being deeply attuned to the life-force (shengyi) shared with all existence. When qi flows unhindered among all beings—unblocked by form or selfish desire—Wang describes this state as hunran yiti (渾然一體), meaning "completely and naturally one body." In this state, both self regulation and co-regulation arise spontaneously.

- Rather than focusing on emptiness (kong) or nothingness (wu), Wang focuses on the qi that flows through all beings. He moves beyond object-centered awareness to an attunement with the flowing life force (yiqi liutong) itself. By dismantling one's identification with form (zhuwu), one can return to the authentic vitality of wanwu yiti zhi ren. 2) The Harmonious Order of Life: Ren (仁).

2) The Harmonious Order of Life: Ren (仁)

- "Your heart is not just a lump of flesh. If it were, then even a dead body would still have one, yet it cannot see, hear, speak, or act. The heart, being the seat of perception and action, is your nature (xing), the principle of heaven (tianli). Ren is the life-principle (shengli) that animates this nature." As Wang's thought matured, he increasingly emphasized the universe as a living organism animated by a ceaseless life-intent (shengyi). The uninterrupted communication among all things was, to him, ren—the life-principle shared by nature and humanity alike.

- Though individuality is part of our existence, excessive identification with it leads to isolation, alienation, and despair. Xiushen, or self-cultivation, means aligning oneself with the greater flow of life rather than clinging to ego. Identifying with one's physical shell (quke de ji) results in a sense of separation and conflict with the world. Wang saw ren as a mode of relationality grounded in life and communication. In his view, ethical relationships in society should realize ren—the principle of symbiotic life. This is a distinctive Confucian wisdom, originating from the biological imperative to preserve and flourish as a family unit.

3) Voluntary Order of Symbiosis

- The spontaneity of life (shengyi) cannot be reduced to fixed principles. Wang opposed external norms such as li (ritual) or abstract li (principle) when imposed without regard to actual life conditions. Such rigid moralization, he believed, stifles the inherent vitality and autonomy of the heart.
- Principles codified as fixed truths (dingli) were for Wang merely "imitations of form and trace," lacking the generative force of true spontaneity. Genuine ethics arises not from conformity to external rules, but from an embodied realization of life's dynamic and co-creative flow.

5. Conclusion

- Wang Yangming's wanwu yiti zhi ren is a reinterpretation of ren grounded in embodied experience and insight. For those of us living in a modern world shaped by atomism, the isolated self seems inescapable, giving rise to suffering. Wang's therapeutic insight is that this is only one way of seeing—and that another mode of seeing and being is possible. His concept of liangzhi (良知), or innate knowing, is the luminous dimension of intention, capable of actualizing the relational principle of ren in lived interdependence.

- For Wang, ren is not a retreat into nature but a realization of life's principles within human relationships. While Porges and Dana focus on internal and interpersonal co-regulation, Wang Yangming expands this into cosmic co-regulation—harmonizing with tianli, the great flow of life. In doing so, he emphasizes not the things themselves, but the field of interaction, the empty-yet-full taixu (太虛), where life's interconnection unfolds. Wang's taixu is not metaphysical void, but the integrative field of shared life—the ever-dynamic arena of symbiosis and healing.

Yongmi Jo(Yeungnam University)

“Self-healing methods found in T'oegye's 'Hwalinsimbang(活人心方)'”

The *'Hwalinsimbang'*(活人心方) is a work compiled by Toegye Leehwang(退溪 李滉, 1501-1570) based on the original text '*Guseon Hwalinsimbeob*'(臞僊活人心法) written by ZhuQuan(朱權, 1378-1448) during the Ming Dynasty. Throughout his life, Toegye suffered from health issues and could not afford to be negligent in caring for his body, making health a significant aspect when discussing him. In the writings he presented upon resigning from his central bureaucratic position, as well as in those declining promotions, the reason cited was always that he could not carry out his duties due to health reasons.

Toegye's work *'Hwalinsimbang'* is a health(nurturing) book that copies and annotates the *'Hwalinsim'* written by Ju Gwon. Its content mainly revolves around the subject of *'Hwalinsim'*, but *'Hwalinsimbang'* is a health(nurturing) manual created from Ju Gwon's Daoist perspective, which Toegye, a Confucian scholar, studied and annotated throughout his life, adding illustrations and reassembling it. Just as Toegye is described as a 'Confucian scholar who surpasses Zhu Xi', it can be said that he reinterpreted Ju Gwon's *'Hwalinsim'* in a more accessible way and incorporated his own research to give birth to *'Hwalinsimbang'*.

The content of *'Hwalinsimbang'* teaches how to prevent and treat diseases by controlling the mind, including the Zhonghuatang for harmonising emotions, the Hwagihwan for practising patience when energy rises to control illness, daily applicable health-preserving methods, mind treatment, guiding methods, the sound-based healing method called Gyeobyungyeonsuyukjagyeol, the Four Seasons Health Preservation Song(Sagyeyangsaengga), spirit preservation, and health-preserving foods. Among these, methods for promoting mental health include Zhonghuatang, Hwagihwan, mind treatment, and spirit preservation, while physical health methods incorporate health preservation techniques, guiding methods, Gyeobyung Yeonsuyuk Jagyeol, organ exercises for the five organs' health, and food preservation to treat the mind and body. The distinction in the methods of mind and body health preservation is based on the belief that by training both body and mind together, one can maintain complete health.

Methods for promoting dual mental and physical health include Zhonghuatang, Huagihwan, Chisim, and Boyangjeongsin etc.. Physical health methods encompass Yangsheng techniques, Daoist practices, Gyeobyungyeonsuyukjagyel, and internal organ exercises, along with dietary therapies to treat the body and mind. The distinction made in these mental and physical health methods reflects the belief that maintaining complete health is achievable through the combined training of both body and mind.

‘Hwalinsimbang’ concretely presents practical methods for governing the mind, offering a training method that can prevent falling ill. Toegye's methods for preserving

life are not merely about maintaining health but aim at improving the quality of life through harmony of mind and body as well as moral cultivation. This can serve as a useful guideline for pursuing mental stability and a healthy life in modern society, where moderation, a regular lifestyle, harmony with nature, and moral cultivation are valued aspects.

퇴계의『활인심방』에 나타난 자기치유방법

Self-healing methods found in Toegye's 'Hwalinsimbang(活人心方)'

조용미(영남대)

Jo Yong-mi (Yeungnam University)

<목 차>

1. 『활인심방(活人心方) 』이란?

2. 퇴계에게『활인심방』이 필요했던 이유

3.도교의 양생서인『활인심(活人心)』

4. 퇴계의 得病 원인

5.『활인심방』의 구성과 내용

6.『활인심방』수행의 의의

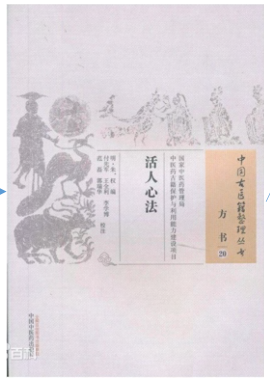


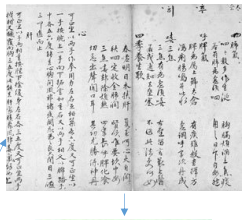


1.『활인심방(活人心方) 』이란?

중국 명나라 주권(朱權, 1378-1448)이 쓴『구선활인심법(臞僊活人心法)』을 원본으로 퇴계 이황(退溪 李滉, 1501-1570)이 필사하여 재탄생시킨 유묵집(遺墨集)









2.『활인심방』이 필요했던 이유

- 평생을 건강문제로 고생을 하였고, 몸을 돌보는 일에 게으를 수가 없었던 퇴계를 논함에 있어서 건강문제는 상당히 중요한 부분.
- 중앙관료에서 물러날 때 올린 글이나, 승진의 부름을 사양할 때 올린 글에서도, 모두 '건강상 임무를 완수할 수 없다'는 것이 이유.

3. 도교의 양생서『활인심(活人心)』

- 유학자인 퇴계가 도교의 양생서인『활인심』을 필사했다는 것은 상당히 이례적이고 흥미로운 일
- 하지만, 오늘날처럼 전문화된 의술이나 약이 발달하지 않았던 당시에 학문하는 선비들이 의서를 갖추고, 약재를 모아 제약을 하거나, 약을 처방해 자신과 주변, 가족을 치료하는 것은 학자의 일상사에서 별로 이례적인 일이 아니었음

4. 퇴계의 得病 원인

① 유년기부터 이루어진 지나친 학문연구

② 다습한 주거환경

③ 노년(신유. 61세의 겨울. 정월 17일)에 형수의 사망으로 인한 지나친 놀라움과 슬픔 때문에 발생한 낙마사고로 인해 입은 오른팔 부상이 원인이 되어 전신에 한기(寒氣)가 생기게 되었음

④ 반복된 상경과 귀향길에서 얻은 여러 질병 – 부증(浮症 : 몸이 붓는 병), 습증(濕症 :습기로 생긴 병). 이질(痢疾), 위장병[腹病] 등

5.『활인심방』의 구성과 내용

- 『활인심방』은 서문과 본문으로 구성
- 서문인 '활인심서(活人心序)'에서는 양생은 병을 예방하는 것이고, 의학은 병을 치료하는 것에 중점을 두고 있다는 점과 마음의 중요성, 그리고 책을 쓰게 된 유래를 밝히고 있음
- 본문에서는 병의 종류와 병의 근원이 마음에 있다는 것을 강조하면서 '심신양생법(心身養生法)'을 둘로 나누어 두고 있음
- 심신양생의 방법을 나누어 둔 것은 몸과 마음을 함께 단련함으로써 완전한 건강을 유지할 수 있다고 보았기 때문

(1) '심신양생법'의 내용

- 심(心) 위주의 양생법
  중화탕(中和湯), 화기환(和氣丸), 치심(治心),
  보양정신(保養精神)

- 신체 위주의 양생법
  양생지법(養生之法),), 도인법(導引法), 거병연수육자결(去病延壽六字訣), 사계양생가(四季養生歌), 보양음식(保養飮食)

심(心) 위주의 양생법: (1) '중화탕'

- 마음을 안정시키기 위한 정신적인 '약'으로, 30가지 마음의 자세를 통해 원기를 보존하고 병을 예방하는 데 도움을 준다는 인문학적 상상력에 의한치료법이다.

- 상상의 약제 30가지
  ①思無邪 : 악한 일을 생각하지 않음. ②行好事 : 좋은 일만 행함. ③莫欺心 : 스스로 마음을 속이지 않음. ④行方便 : 편안히 행동함. ⑤守本分 : 본분을 지킴. ⑥莫嫉妬 : 시기하지 않음. ⑦除狡詐 : 간사하거나 교만한 마음을 비움. ⑧務誠實 : 매사 성실함. ⑨順天道 : 하늘의 뜻을 따름. ⑩知命限 : 수명을 암. ⑪淸心 : 마음을 정결히 함. ⑫寡慾 : 욕심을 내지 않음. ⑬忍耐 : 참고 견딤. ⑭柔順 : 유순하게 처신함. ⑮謙和 : 겸손하고 화목함. ⑯知足 : 만족할 줄 암. ⑰廉謹 : 몸가짐에 삼가함. ⑱存仁 : 어짐이 있게 함. ⑲節儉 : 검소함. ⑳處中 : 중용을 지킴. ㉑戒殺 : 살생을 경계함. ㉒戒怒 : 성냄을 경계함. ㉓戒暴 : 거친 행동을 경계함. ㉔戒貪 : 탐욕을 경계함. ㉕愼篤 : 항상 조심히 행함. ㉖知機 : 기미를 이해함. ㉗保愛 : 사랑을 지킴. ㉘活退 : 담대하게 물러섬. ㉙守靜 : 고요함을 지킴. ㉚陰騭 : 덕을 쌓음

심(心) 위주의 양생법: (2) '화기환'

- 화기환 은 '참을 인(忍)' 자의 덕을 강조하며 기분을 정화시키는 심리치유의 환약(丸藥)
- 상황에 따라 적절히 응용하여 마음의 기운을 조절하는 것을 의미
- 마음의 비상약이라 할 수 있는 화기환을 복용하면 넘치거나 모자란 氣를 정상적으로 조절할 수 있으며, 현대 의학에 비유하면 진정제 역할로써 상상의 환약에 해당됨

심(心) 위주의 양생법: (3) '치심'

- 퇴계는 마음을 다스리는 것이 건강의 근본이라 강조
- '치심'을 통해 마음의 안정을 추구
- 즉, 마음을 다스려 감정을 조절하면 병이 없다는 원칙을 따르며, 마음의 정수를 유지하는 것이 중요함을 강조

심(心) 위주의 양생법: (4) '보양정신'

- 인간은 육체와 정신으로 구성되어 있는데, 정신은 혼(魂)과 백(魄)이 합하여 이루어져 있으며, 이 셋이 모여 사람이 되지만 죽으면 다시 흩어져 자연으로 돌아감 (⇒도교적인 이해방식)
- 『활인심방』에서는 육체[形]와 혼(魂), 백[魄]이 인간을 구성하고 있으며, 마음이란 주로 기(氣)적인 차원에서 설명(⇒도가서의 일반적인 관점과 일치)

> "精은 神의 근본이고 氣는 神의 원천이며 형체(形)는 신이 살고있는 집과 같은 것이다. 무릇 神明이란 삶과 변화의 근본이고, 정·기는 만물의 바탕이니 그 형체를 온전하게 살고 그 정·기를 기르면 본성과 생명이 오래 보존된다." (『활인심방』)

신체 위주의 양생법: (1) '양생지법'

- 건강한 삶의 추구를 위한 일상생활방식에 대한 지침을 설명
- 자연에 순응하고 무욕을 실천하며, 호흡과 생활 방식을 통해 건강한 삶을 유지할 것을 강조
- 음식섭취에 있어서 소화기관과 관련한 내용, 술과 차(茶)에 대한 예법. 신체와 관련한 바람과 온도에 대한 설명,五味의 섭취에 대한 설명, 운동에 대한 것과 여가 시간의 활용, 수면과 두피관리, 목욕법 등을 통해 일상생활에서의 생활습관을 강조
- 특히 침(타액)과 단전호흡에 대하여 중요하게 다루고 있으며 계절에 따른 건강법을 소개

신체 위주의 양생법: (2) '도인법'

- 기혈을 조절하는 일종의 실내체조
- 퇴계는 이를 통해 몸과 마음의 조화를 이루려 했음(현대의 요가와 유사)
- 퇴계는 그림과 함께 각 동작의 운동방법과 운동 횟수까지 상세하게 설명
- 퇴계는 평상시에 이 도인법을 생활 속에서 즐겨하였던 것 판단됨



<출처:주동진·김한철, 「「活人心方」에서 살펴본 퇴계의 건강(養生)론」, 『퇴계학논집』13호, p.266.>

신체 위주의 양생법: (3) '거병연수육자결'

- 병을 치유하고 수명을 연장하는 6글자의 음성 호흡법으로, 여섯 가지 소리로 기를 조절하고 병을 예방
- 입으로 숨을 들어 마시고 코로 숨을 내쉬는 방법으로 들숨과 날숨 시에 내장기관과 관련하여 六字訣로 숨을 쉬는 것
- 이때 내는 6가지의 소리가 각기 다르다. 六字는 휴(噓), 훠(呵), 쓰(呬), '취(吹), 히히(嘻)', 후(呼)이다. 신(腎), 심(心), 간(肝), 폐(肺), 비장(脾臟)의 기능을 건강하게 유지하는 비결로, 호흡시에 소리가 외부로 들리지 않게 해야 효과가 크다고 하였음

신체 위주의 양생법: (4) '사계양생가'

• 4계절에 맞는 호흡으로 장기를 다스리는 양생법

- 봄에 휴(噓) 하면 눈이 밝아지고 간기능을 도움
- 여름에 훠(呵) 하면 마음속에 있는 화기를 가라앉힘
- 가을에 쓰(呬) 하면 기운을 안정시켜 폐기능을 윤택하게 함
- 겨울에 취(吹)하면 신장에 기를 불어넣어 추위에서 편안해짐
- 삼초에 히히(嘻) 하면 열이 내리고, 사계절 동안 길게 후(呼)하면 비장의 기능이 좋아져 소화기능이 좋아짐

신체 위주의 양생법: (5) '보양음식'

• 다음의 보양음식 제조 방법과 설명을 기술

① 측백나무잎탕(백탕, 栢湯)
② 마술(서여주, 薯蕷酒)
③ 지황술(지황주, 地黃酒)
④ 개술(무술주, 戊戌酒)
⑤ 우유죽(유갱, 乳粥)
⑥ 녹각죽(녹각갱, 鹿角粥)
⑦ 마죽(산서갱, 山薯粥)
⑧ 마국수(산서면, 山薯麪)

·『활인심』 판본에는 녹갱(鹿羹: 사슴국)·우갱(牛羹)·호견(糊犬: 개고기 동아 요리) 등도 실려 있지만 퇴계는 이를 생략

5.『활인심방』수행의 의의

- 퇴계는 만병의 근원은 마음으로 인식→ 마음을 치유→ 병의 근원적인 문제해결→ 마음 치유를 위한 수양론은 마음 다스리기→ 마음의 다스림은 몸의 치유로 이어짐
- 이러한 사상을 수양과 마음 치유의 방법으로 활용한 것이『활인심방』
- 『활인심방』에서는 '중화탕'과 '화기환'으로 마음 수양을 약에 비유하여 마음을 다스림으로써 만병을 치료하는 방법을 추구
- 이처럼『활인심』은 마음을 다스리는 실천방법을 형상화시켜, 구체적으로 제시해 줌으로써 병에 걸리지 않고 예방할 수 있는 수련법을 제시
- 퇴계의 양생법은 단순한 건강 유지법이 아니라, 심신의 조화와 도덕적 수양을 통한 삶의 질 향상을 목표로 하고 있음
- 이는 현대 사회에서도 정신적 안정과 건강한 삶을 추구하는 데 유용한 지침이 될 수 있으며 절제되고 규칙적인 생활, 자연과의 조화, 도덕적 수양 등의 요소는 현대인의 삶에서도 중요한 가치임

감사합니다!

Participants

1. Alex Fong, Hong Kong University, A3
2. Alex Gooch, Durham University, A3
3. Amy Lee, Kyungpook National University, D3
4. Bernard Li, Fu Jen Catholic University, Keynotes 1
5. Chang Yang, Chinese University of Hong Kong, C3
6. Chien-Chi Lu, Taiwan Philosophical Counseling Association, Keynotes 2
7. Dong-Suk Oh, Korea University, D2
8. Fengyuan Wang, Nanjing University, B4
9. Gap im Jung, Semyung University, E3
10. Ge Lei (Online), University College London, B3
11. Hae Duk Kim, Dongguk University, E2
12. Heeja Sung, Kyungpook National University, D1
13. Horie Tsuyoshi, Osaka University, Keynotes 2
14. Huiyi Xu, Univ of Chinese Academy of Sciences, B3
15. Jea Mok Choi, Yeungnam University, E3
16. Jia Qin, Tianjin Foreign Studies University, C3
17. Jialin Xu, Renmin University, E1
18. Jiayi Xin, Xi'an Jiaotong University, B3
19. Jie Wen, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, A4
20. Jin Xin, Nanjing University, B1
21. Jingyi Zhang, Jiaotong University, B1
22. Jiwon Shim, Dongguk University, E2
23. Jung Wan Kim, Daegu University, D2, D3
24. Liu Li, Xi'an Jiaotong University, B4
25. Lizeng Zhang, Shandong Normal University, C1
26. Lou Marinoff, City Univ of New York, Keynotes 1
27. Manyu Lee, Kyungpook National University, D3
28. Miaomiao Du, Xian Jiaotong University, C2
29. MingYu Cao, Zhejiang University, B2
30. MinJu Kim, Daegu University, D2
31. Minqiang Xu, Xi'an Jiaotong University, A4
32. Moon Hee Yoo, Dongguk University, E2
33. Ning Zhao, Shanghai University, C1
34. Qi Tan, Nanjing Agricultural University, A1
35. Qiman Liu, Peking University, B1
36. Qun Wei, Keimyung University, D2
37. Rui Cao, Nanjing University, B2
38. SangWook Park, Daegu University, D3
39. Seon Yeong Shim, Kyungpook National University, D1

40. Seung Hwa Jeon, Kyungpook National University, Keynotes 1, D2
41. Seung-Ah Seo, Kyungpook National University, D1
42. Shaojia Song, Nanchang University, B2
43. Shengyi Jia, Xi'an Jiaotong University, A3
44. Sirui Fu, Xi'an Jiaotong University, C3
45. Sunhye Kim, Kangwon National University, Keynotes 2
46. Tianlinzi Sun, Nanjing University, B1
47. Tianqun Pan, Nanjing University, Keynotes 1
48. Xianrui Meng, Anhui University, C2
49. Xiaojun Ding, Xian Jiaotong University, C1, C2, A4
50. Xingyu Chen, Xian Jiaotong University, B1
51. Xuan Fang, Nanjing University, E1
52. Yang Chen, Xian Jiaotong University, E1
53. Yaokai Jin, Zhejiang University, C2
54. Yeonhee Lee, Gyeongsang National University, E2
55. Yifei Hu, Sichuan University, A1
56. Ying-Fen SU, Fu Jen Catholic University, A2
57. Yongmi Jo, Yeungnam University, E3
58. Young E. Rhee, Dongguk University, D1
59. Yu Gao, Nanjing University, E1
60. Yu-chang Yang, Sun Yet-sen University, A1
61. Yuna Hur, Korea University, D2
62. Zehai Sun, Xian Jiaotong University, A2
63. Zhonghe Liang, Sichuan University, A1
64. Zihan Tang, Yangzhou University, A2
65. Zijie Lin, Beijing Normal University, E1