

Abstracts

WE-turn and Its Implications

Yasuo Deguchi (Philosophy, Kyoto University)

This talk introduces a novel theory of value or axiology called "WE-turn" and derives its implications for relationships among human individuals, among human groups (such as modern nation-states) as well as the relationships between humans and artifacts or natural entities.

This talk has three sections. The first section primarily delves into the domain of action theory, by observing the fundamental incapability of all human individuals, i.e., the incapability of any single action, and then claiming the We-turn of the doer, that is, the shift or turn of the subject or the unit of any somatic action from an individual or 'I' to a multi-agent system or 'We', that includes the 'I'.

Based on the We-turn of the doer, the second section goes on to advocate the We-turn of the values, that is, the shift or turn of the subject or the unit of such pivotal value concepts as responsibility, rights, wellbeing, and freedom.

Finally, the third section proposes the fellowship model for the ideal relationship among all members of the We, which includes humans, non-human lives, and non-lives

(natural things and artifacts). This move amounts to endowing all those entities and agents the basic fellowship rights. The fellowship model is an alternative to, among others, the conventional model between humans on the one hand and non-human natural entities and artifacts on the other; i.e., the master-slave model.

Can we share a we-feeling with digital machines?

Eva-Maria Engelen (Universität Konstanz)

It will be discussed whether inanimate objects like digital machines can be part of a we. If this were the case we would have to share a we-feeling with them. This does add up to answer the questions (1) what a "we" is and (2) what bond or tie brings together a multitude of agents. It will be argued that we would have to acknowledge the other as an other in order to be able to share a we-feeling and that what is needed for such an acknowledgment is a second-person perspective which is not given in the case of a digital machine.

«Black Lives Muttered»: The Changing Discourse of Blackness in Contemporary Japan *Chikako Mori (Doshisha University)*

The last decade has seen an increasing number of studies on the racial question in Japan: most of them focus on what would form the great singularity of the Japanese situation compared to Western cases, i.e. the non-physiological dimension of the racial question in Japan, as in the case of the Burakumin or Koreans coming from postcolonial immigration, whose signs of physiological difference would be considered weak a priori. Without presuming the validity of these works, our paper aims at shedding light on another important aspect of the Japanese regime of racialization, by examining the case of another racialized group that has existed since the middle of the 20th century but remains marginalized in academic research: the Black Japanese. Based on a corpus composed of different data, we will try to describe the "black condition" in Japan from the 1940s to the present day, in order to further deepen comparative studies of regimes of racialization.

Short Biography

Chikako Mori is a Professor of Sociology at the Department of Sociology, and Director, Research Center for Multiculturalism and Intersectionality in Complex Cities (MICCS), Doshisha University, Kyoto. She holds a Ph.D. in Sociology from the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS). Her research interests span comparative urban sociology, residential segregation, migration, racism and gentrification. She is the author of *The Banished Suburb (Haijo to teiko no kogai)*, The University of Tokyo Press, 2016) and of *The Brooklynization of the World. Rethinking Gentrification* (The University of Tokyo Press, 2023). Her current research focuses on urban renewal policies and racism in the working-class immigrant neighborhoods of Paris, New York and Tokyo.

The State as socio-economical “We.” Hegel’s Alternative Concept of Democracy

Taiju Okochi (Kyoto University)

Insofar as democracy is the self-determination of the people, the contemporary debate over governance and democracy leads us to ask, who are that “we” who would be the subject of self-determination? Rousseau's Concept of General Will is still providing us with a “we” model in this political sense, in which democratic decision-making is achieved by people forming a single will. In this lecture I would like to argue that Hegel's theory of the State presents an alternative democratic “we” model to Rousseau’s and call the former a socio-economic model as opposed to the latter metaphysical one.

In my lecture, I will focus on the two infamous concepts that are constitutive to Hegel’s concept of the state, the “Stände” and the “Korporation.” In German, the “Stände” is also a word representing the status or class as part of the Estates General in the Ancien Régime, and “Korporation (corporation)” is generally understood as a privileged trade organization such as a guild. These are exactly what has led Hegel's theory of the state to be seen as an old system.

However, a careful reading of Hegel's Philosophy of Right will reveal that Hegel rather saw in these institutions the constituents of modern society. What lies in the background of his concept of state that consists of such institutions is Hegel's reflection on the terrorism regime

in the French Revolution. The French Republic, which arose by dismantling feudal society, resulted in individuals confronting state power directly without any buffers. Hegel has to invent an alternative “We” model, in which the intermediate groups would function as buffers for the individuals.

Hegel connects to this care about Rousseau's idea of the General Will his ideas about the political representation: In a modern society with advanced division of labor, interests differ depending on the occupations, and the idea is that these interests are not properly represented in a system of national representation. With these discussions I would like to argue the actuality of this socio-economic model of “we” in Hegel.

The We in Democratic Experimentalism

Jan-Peter Voß (RWTH Aachen University)

My talk problematizes the “we” in conceptions of democratic experimentalism and several recent orientations building on this basic idea of continuously developing the realities we live in by collectively experimenting with them, e.g. with a view to explore pathways of sustainable development. As such recent orientations we may count, for example, living labs, real-world experiments, hybrid forums, polycentric and experimental modes of governance.

My key point is that the specific political (democratic?) qualities of the concrete practices that constitute the collective subject of experimentation are often overlooked. In pragmatist thought, especially Dewey, but also in Actor-Network Theory and other recent practice theories, “experimenting” (or “trials of strength” or “doings”) is, to my view naively imagined as a pluralistic, symmetric, open, somehow organic process in which collectives come together to problematize issues, articulate alternative orders, devise strategies to test them, evaluate consequences, and learn from experience. This conception does not include any safeguards against experimental world-shaping being dominated and captured by a few already powerful actors and discourses.

The question I raise is, therefore, how, in practice, the “we”, which is doing the experiment, becomes constituted. Often “the public”, “the people”, or “society” are envisaged and declared to do such experiments. In practice, however, it is very specific practices of “performatively representing” the public, the people, or society that constitute the collective subject of experimentation, the “we” that is doing the experiment.

Why should we start with We? On John Holloway's Critical Theory

Soichiro Sumida (Osaka University of Economics)

The Frankfurt School defined its own theory as critical for the very same reason that Marx criticized the political economy in *Capital*. Critical theory defined orthodox Marxism as traditional theory because of its economic determinism. However, the Frankfurt School did not abandon Marx's critique of the political economy itself, as has been noted in recent years in the English-speaking world.¹ By rescuing Marx's critique of political economy from Traditional Marxism, the Frankfurt School tried to restore its original critical potential for

society as a totality. In general, it has been said to have abandoned Marx's Capital and steered toward a trans-historical critique of instrumental reason. However, this is merely a narrative created by the later generation of the Frankfurt School, which has severed its ties with Marxism.² In fact, the postwar Frankfurt School was strongly influenced by the New Left movement, and especially in recent years, the depoliticized character of critical theory has been reconsidered and revised.³

Critical theory, with its emphasis on antagonism and class struggle, was embraced in the late 1960s in the United States by militant activists (e.g., Angela Davis) who opposed the neocolonialist war in Vietnam and discrimination against blacks at home. Furthermore, in the 1990s, a new critical theory after Frankfurt was more developed as Open Marxism by John Holloway and others. In response to the upsurge of the anti-globalization movement represented by the Zapatistas in Mexico, Open Marxism emphasized the emancipatory character of Marx's critique of the political economy. Whereas Marxism in general constructed a closed system of the communist worldview, for Open Marxism, critique of the capitalist system had to mean its destruction at the same time. Thus, the capitalist system is not to be explained deterministically in terms of its laws. Rather, it was conceived to necessarily entail unpredictable social antagonism. This presentation reexamines Holloway's critical theory in this genealogy, focusing on the text of his 2016 San Francisco Lecture, 'Who Are We?'⁴ The main point here is why the starting point for the categories of Marx's critical theory must be We, not capital and its bearers, i.e., They, nor labor and the (revolutionary) working class.

¹ Cf. Best, B., Bonefeld, B., O'Kane, C. (2018), *The SAGE Handbook of Frankfurt School Critical Theory*, SAGE Publications, London.

² Rose, G. (1978), *The Melancholy Science: An Introduction to the Thought of Theodor W. Adorno*, Macmillan, London.

³ As a precedent for this, see Demirović, A. (1999), *Der nonkonformistische Intellektuelle: Die Entwicklung der Kritischen Theorie zur Frankfurter Schule*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt/M.

⁴ Holloway, J. (2016), *In, Against, and Beyond Capitalism: The San Francisco Lectures*, PM Press, NY.

The “We” in Education: Learning to live together in schools

Kayo Fujii (Yokohama National University)

Contemporary, education faces a wide range of challenges. Global social issues related to racism and gender present one set of challenges, while education on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the UNESCO Associated Schools Network reflect concern about climate change among other global issues. In addition, Japan faces particular public educational challenges, such as the increasing demand for special-needs schools, growth in school absenteeism, and bullying. All of these educational issues relate to broader issues of social justice, such as achieving equality and respecting diversity in society.

Education in response to each of these issues has multiple dimensions, including the acquisition of knowledge, the development of democratic education, and the formation of citizens. According to G. Biesta, these can be understood as practices that align with various educational objectives: qualification, socialization, and subjectification. In other words,

education is not only about the acquisition of knowledge but also about practices intended to gain entry into society and the formation of subjects who can work from outside the order. Furthermore, the formation of subjects happens outside of intentional education.

What kind of education is education that fosters an actor's perspective on how children conceive of a society in which they live with others? Such education can be described as education aimed at the shaping we, intended to construct a democratic and public world, as education that bridges socialization and subjectification. Such education encourages not only knowledge acquisition but also reflection on how to make use of that knowledge for the interest of both society and the planet.

In this presentation, I will discuss how children learn through experience to live with other people and things with a focus on Japanese schools. Japanese schools were developed during the Meiji period (1868–1912), taking their cue from Western educational theory, but Japanese education has developed a unique blended culture influenced by local communities and Confucianism in East Asia. From the perspective of the shaping we, collaborative and exploratory activities that create a shared experience of working together are especially noteworthy. I would also like to consider the possibilities and problems inherent in education by focusing on our relationship with space and objects, as well as engaging in discussions, using the word *Minna*, which is often heard in Japanese schools, as a theme.

Why should we care? An explanation from the concept of person and solidarity

Shingo Segawa (University Medical Center Göttingen)

Public health insurance system is a compulsory insurance scheme for all citizens of a country that covers all or a percentage of the medical costs incurred by its members. Public health insurance is funded by premiums paid through taxes, which are finite. It may therefore become unsustainable as healthcare costs rise. Indeed, in countries with ageing populations, the number of people suffering from illnesses, such as chronic diseases, is increasing, putting pressure on healthcare costs. Therefore, various restrictions have been introduced to help control the cost of caring for the sick. In addition, it can and does happen that medical interventions that could have been carried out are no longer carried out due to lack of human resources, or are exposed to such risks. Thus, the public health insurance system is under threat for a number of reasons including scarcity of resources. In recent years, solidarity actions have been called for to prevent the weakening of healthcare systems. A recent example of this is the “stay at home” campaign or corona vaccination to prevent coronavirus transmission. The basic premise is that the maintenance of the public health insurance system is desirable. The problem, however, is that acts of solidarity and autonomy might be in conflict with each other. This was very problematic in the case of Covid-19. Against this background, in this presentation I will argue that if one does not want to give up autonomy, one may rather have to prioritize solidarity acts to maintain public health insurance. To this end, I will focus in particular on the concept of personality, which is a component of the person.

Personality is understood as the bundle of qualities that are unique to a person and that distinguish him or her from others. A person's personality is the result of interactions with others and the influence of genetic and environmental factors. However, not all interactions influence personality. So, a person consciously or unconsciously chooses which interactions

to incorporate into his or her own personality. This means that it is not the other in general, but the specific other that is constitutive of one's personality. Personality also requires a certain degree of consistency. To understand personality, one does not rely on qualities that are not consistent. This consistency of personality is crucial to understand autonomy. Although various theories have been developed on the concept of autonomy, a necessary condition for a decision to be autonomous is that the decision is consistent with the decision-maker's belief system. Autonomy presupposes personality. If the existence of others, who are constitutive of one's personality, is threatened by the weakening or collapse of the public health insurance system, autonomy is also threatened. It may be necessary to prioritize the acts of solidarity needed to maintain public health insurance if we do not want to give up our autonomy.

The “We” in the Anthropocene. A Critical Perspective

Sighard Neckel (Universität Hamburg)

The view that we live in the Anthropocene is increasingly gaining currency across scientific disciplines. Especially in sociology this is said to require a paradigm shift in analysis and theory formation. This paper argues that such a conclusion is premature. Owing to a scholastic fallacy – the uncritical transposition of the concept from the natural to the social sciences – “Anthropocene” lacks analytic clarity and explanatory power evidenced by: a normative overreach that erroneously imagines an idealised world citizenry with collective action capacities; an obfuscation of the unequal distribution of ecological pathologies caused by capitalism; a normative indeterminacy concerning modes of redress; and an abstract ecological universalism offered as moral panacea.

The notion of a world citizenry with action capacities allowing it to govern the planet on behalf of all of humanity originates in an actor idealism that does not correspond to societal reality. It ignores the profound economic, cultural, religious and political fragmentation that characterises world society. The image of a global political subject amounts to a normative overreach of an ideal that infers from the diagnosis of global threats the constitution of a global actor without considering – as is known to sociology – that the formation of collective actors is not simply a function of their necessity. It is the task of sociology to scrutinise such a normative overreach instead of letting itself be guided by it.

Therefore, the paper suggests that sociology needs to address the Anthropocene's heterogeneity marked by contradictory regional interests and inequalities that neither appeals to social justice or ‘one humanity’ nor an escape into a dissolution of ontological differences between actors and artefacts can redeem. To that end, sociologists are asked to undertake a critical reconstruction of the concept.