Abstracts

Conceptions of Personhood
and Their Limits -
Inter-/Transcultural Explorations

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Volker Beeh:

Emptiness and Morality

§1 Within the framework of *samsâra - karman - moksa,* the concept of 'person' is different from the modern Western notion. Firstly, living beings transmigrate between humans, animals, gods, and devils and human beings do not occupy a privileged position between animals and gods. Secondly, Buddhists and other Indian thinkers take a negative attitude towards Self, Ego and, in general, reflexivity.

§2 *Svabhâva* is a generalization of *âtman*. The latter applies to sentient beings and the former to all things in general. Both have the same meaning 'the same as *x*' with two variants. There are three possibilities: (a) Based on atemporal (non-temporal, logical) identity, the two concepts amount to the identity mapping 'the same as x' and to 'the same as (given by the subject)'. The former refers to all things, the latter has a reflexive function, and both are total and trivial. (b) Ancient thinking had only temporal identity (or persistence). In this case, the two concepts amount to 'the same as the former x' and 'the same as the former (given by the subject)'. The first denotes only persistent things and the latter allows reflexivity in case of persistent things. Certain things are said to be permanent or persist, and certain things change. In particular, *âtman* of sentient beings is their soul and *svabhâva* of things is their essence. (c) The Buddhists emphatically reject temporal identity or persistence and make both notions empty. There are, accordingly, no things with *âtman* or *svabhâva*, i.e. persistent things, in particular, no essences or souls and there is no 'reflexivisation' of predicates etc.

§3 How does a world without persistence or permanence look like? Persistence is the opposite of change. Without persistence, there is no change. According to Nâgârjuna two things at different moments are not even comparable with respect to identity and difference. Such a world is flowing reality (fluxus, *samsâra*, *pratîtya-samutpâda*) and existence is momentary. Objects do not pass through time, they cannot await the next moment. At every moment they perish and are reborn. Without persistence and change there is no reflexivity in general, no privileged Self or Ego, no egoism, no altruism.

§4 In this flow of momentary existences we are born empty, i.e. without any signs and completely selfless. Based on imagination and conceit, the notions of 'persistence' and 'change' arise and reside in convention, linguistic tradition, or culture. During childhood we concur with conventions and by socialization we develop the conceit that words correspond to reality and are primary. In death we must discard all these and fall into difficulties. Speech does not create reality, but pure superstition (in Germ. *Aberglaube*).

§5 Academic literature discusses these ideas, but often fails to mention moral implications. There are two directions: Ascetic practice, training, or meditation, e.g. in Zen-Buddhism, is the approach to *anâtman* and *śûnyatâ*. Sometimes this is called 'way up': return from culture and conventions to the mere flow of existences, i.e. to basic reality, without the conceit of a Self. Ascetic practice approaches the state we had before birth, will have after death and we sometimes happen to meet in exceptional events between birth and death: a pure state or state in purity.

§6 But according to traditional Buddhism there is a way down, a return to the world with culture and conventions - without abandoning purity. The world without egoism and altruism is the world of good; removal of both is the source of morality and aesthetics.

Claudia Bickmann:

Immanuel Kant's Theory of a Person: Mediating between the Empirical and the Noumenal self

Kant's critical concept of a person faced a double challenge: similar to the idea of Atman and Brahman within the Hindu Advaita-Vedanta philosophy, Kant presupposed the idea of a stable unity within us; but similar to Buddhist and Taoist critiques of this miraculous, 'transcendent entity' that serves as a substantial ground within us, Kant shared the skepticism of Hume and Locke by refusing the idea of a stable substantial identity over time.

Reconciling the extremes? How should this be possible?

Viktoria Burkert:

The Ethical Dimension of Personhood in the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas

In my presentation, I will focus on two questions: How does Emmanuel Levinas define 'personhood'? Further, what is the significance of this definition within his attempt to deepen traditional humanism by establishing an 'ethic of the radical other'?

In his book *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence* Levinas points out that the subject, being involved in the ethical relation of responsibility, is both alienated in the depth of its interiority and, due to this alienation, forced to be an ethical personal identity. Being a person, as understood by Levinas, means to be irreplaceable in a strict ethical sense: In its

relation with the other, one's uniqueness is achieved by withdrawing from the other; yet, this uniqueness unfolds its significance precisely in the responsibility for another human being. By going into the various dimensions of this definition, the presentation tries to show that the concept of identity or person is crucial in the philosophy of Levinas and is inseparably linked with his interpretation of human liberty: the responsibility in which the subject is initially involved is at once the exposure or the freeing of the unique responsible person, freed both from any system or any totality, and from itself.

Bina Gupta:

Freedom and Self in Advaita Vedānta

The paper explores two senses of freedom in the context of Advaita Vedānta. 'Freedom' may either be taken to mean what is generally called 'the freedom of the will' or *moksa*, i.e., the 'freedom from the constraints and limitations' of mundane existence, from the chain of *karma* and rebirth (*samsāra*). These two senses of freedom belong to two different levels of discourse, and in order to come to grips with the concept of 'freedom' in Advaita Vedānta, one must have an understanding of both the senses.

Examining the issue of the freedom of the will in Advaita Vedānta is wrought with great difficulties primarily due to the vocabulary of Indian psychology in which it is not immediately apparent that a concept of 'will' is available. We do not know which of the Sanskrit terms stands for, or designates, what is called 'will' in Western philosophy and psychology. Some of the terms available at our disposal are: *manas* (mind), *antahkarana* (the inner sense), *buddhi* (intellect), and *sankalpa* (resolve). However, from the fact that there is no Sanskrit word that translates into Western will, can one conclude that the concept of will is also not available in Advaita Vedānta?

The paper is divided into two parts: the first part will discuss the question whether the concept of the 'freedom of the will' is available in Advaita Vedānta, and the second *moksa*, i.e., freedom from the chain of *karma* and rebirth (*samsāra*). The entire Advaita Vedānta philosophy is an inquiry into the nature of the self.

The Advaitins accept the doctrines of *prakrti*, three *gunas*, and *karma*, and hold that an individual self, Bina Gupta for example, is conditioned and determined by his/her actions. This acceptance creates the misleading impression that there is no room for the freedom of the will in the Advaitin scheme of things. Hence, the discussion in the first part will revolve around the following questions: Is it really the case that one cannot meaningfully talk about the freedom of the will in Advaita Vedānta? What do we mean when we say that our actions

are free? Does the denial of determinism imply that we have unrestricted license to do whatever we please? Alternatively, is it the case that determinism is not incompatible with the freedom of the will?

The second part of the paper discusses *mok*sa as freedom. To call *mok*sa 'freedom' might mislead the readers if not correctly understood; one can call it 'freedom' only in relation to what precedes it, viz., *samsāra*; thus, it is not clear why in itself and by itself *mok*sa is freedom. If the mundane world is false (*mithyā*), and *mok*sa is freedom from the world, then the locution 'freedom from' is relational insofar as it describes *mok*sa by relating it to the process that leads up to it. In this part of the paper, I will discuss such questions as: In what sense is *mok*sa freedom? Why must *mok*sa as an experience stand outside time?

Shubhada Joshi:

Lokāyata's Two-fold Model of Purusārtha and their Conception of the Self

In my presentation, I will first reconstruct main features of the *Lokāyata's* (also known as *Cārvāka* and *Barahaspatya*), concept of personhood by sketching its epistemological framework, its thorough rejection of metaphysics and its hedonistic ethic. I will then use this reconstruction to bring to the fore epistemological, ethical and spiritual concerns which are not adequately accounted for by the modern empiricist approach. Finally, I will suggest ways of overcoming these tensions in the context of our present society.

Since most of their original treatises have been lost, one can reconstruct the *Lokāyata* worldview by referring to secondary sources: In his *Arthaśāstra,* Kautilya (4th. CE), e.g., mentions *Lokāyata ā, nvíksikí,* i.e. critical-logical thinking, as one of the important subjects to be studied by the prince. A systematic presentation of its philosophy is found in Mādhava's famous work '*Sarva-Darśana-Samgraha'* (14th. CE).

Lokāyata's empirical position is stated clearly in the *sūtra* (formula) that perception alone is the source of knowledge. Whatever is not established by perception cannot be accepted as knowledge. Unlike the other spiritual schools, *Lokāyata* also reject 'testimony' as a valid source of knowledge. Moreover, all those inferences which are not based on perception are dismissed; inasmuch as general or universal propositions state something which goes beyond perception, their validity is also questioned.

In consequence, this empirical standpoint leads thinkers of this school to reject everything which purports to go beyond perception, thus rejecting any kind of metaphysical entity. God, the law of karma, rebirth, liberation, a self apart from the living body are all considered to be

illusory. As for the latter, it is simply equated with the living body (*Deha eva Ātmā:* the body alone is the self).

This understanding of personhood, which is solely based on the living body, shows remarkable parallels with later physicalist, behaviorist or reductionist positions which firmly reject the existence of a separate entity called consciousness. Since all the other spiritualist schools in the Indian tradition hold that the essence of personhood lies in 'consciousness' and, thus, is to be located beyond the living body, the *Lokāyata* position was strongly critiqued for rejecting the ethico-spiritual content of personhood.

Finally, *Lokāyata's* hedonistic understanding of ethics (*sukhavāda*) is tacked onto their acceptance of only two goals of human life (*purusārtha*). Accordingly, one should pursue pleasure (*kāma*) till one is alive and try to find sources (*artha*) which can be utilized for this purpose. This blatant refusal to accept duties, values, virtues (*dharma*) and liberation (*moksa*) was vehemently criticized by the other Indian schools. The *Lokāyata* account of personhood was said to be merely superficial insofar as it concentrated on the senses, emphasized sensual pleasure and disregarded inner contentment. Its individualistic, materialist pleasure-seeking was called the philosophy of the 'demons' (*asura*).

Meenal Katarnikar:

Concept of Pramāna and the Buddhist Theory of a Person

Is a person independent of her psycho-physiological complex because she, as a soul, is apart from her body? This is a very old question, frequently asked across the cultures, probably since the beginning of philosophy.

The Buddhist position of denying the permanent soul or a substantial personhood is well-known and highly-criticized on moral, metaphysical and spiritual grounds. Entangled with the ideal path of life, with the idea of breaking from the cycle of bondage and with the possibility of emancipation, the Buddhist perspective about consciousness has, however, paved the way for a multidimensional growth in philosophy. It is, therefore, very illuminating to observe the development in the concept of consciousness in this tradition.

Initially, consciousness was associated in this tradition with morality and spirituality; its metaphysical aspects were not dealt with. With the introduction of Vasubandhu's ālaya-vijñāna, however, the Buddhist understanding of consciousness acquired a 'metaphysical dimension', thus clearly marking a radical shift. Yet, it would be a blatant misunderstanding if this metaphysical association of consciousness were simply taken to be an ascription of

substantiality. Consciousness was theorized without considering it to be a separate substance.

Still later, the notion of consciousness was used to deal with epistemological issues. In Dignāga's theory of knowledge, the influence of the earlier two phases is tangible. The distinctive features of Buddhist epistemology, such as precedence of pramāna before prameya, the pramāna-prameya relationship, the notion of pramāna-viplava and the development of two pramāna, are developed on the foil of consciousness.

This paper attempts to throw light on the reciprocity of pramāna and consciousness in the Buddhist tradition.

Evrim Kutlu:

Hegel: Self-Consciousness and Inter-subjectivity

The subject of this presentation is Hegel's understanding of inter-subjectivity in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. For this purpose, I will focus on his concept of recognition. This approach has two advantages: The concept of recognition, firstly, reveals crucial dimensions in the meaning of inter-subjectivity. Furthermore, only through the prism of recognition can the concept of inter-subjectivity obtain an action-oriented dimension, a dimension which is of crucial significance in the intercultural context.

In this regard, I will elaborate on the chapter on self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology* and on the concept of person developed there. At the end of my presentation, I will discuss whether this understanding of recognition can be meaningfully applied to challenges presented by interculturality.

Ram Adhar Mall:

How to Save Personhood between the Two Extremes of Substantialism and Flux?

In my paper, the central question I ask and try to answer in a spirit of an intercultural or cross-cultural orientation is: How much change and permanence must go together in order to be compatible with non-substantiality and momentariness? In other words, what would, in such a case, give us a sense of identity after all? Human thinking is always attracted by

identity and difference, permanence and change. This continues to be true in spite of all metaphysical tendencies to hypostatize identity at the cost of difference.

The central thesis proposed, discussed and defended here is the following: Personhood (person) consists of different layers belonging to different areas of human thought, action and other relations with the world of things and beings. Its identity is not that of an unchanging, eternal substance. It is also not simply a product of memory and associations. Its identity is rather constituted by the ever-present intentional consciousness accompanying all events in the ever-changing stream of human nature. No essentialistic or mere synthetic definition of personhood is possible. We need a descriptive phenomenology of the primary given experience of belongingness when we talk of personhood.

Ulrike Niklas:

Kotikkavi: Paśu in Context of Pati und Paśa

Kotikkavi, the eleventh text of the Meykantacattiram – the systematic canon of Tamil Caivacittanta (Śaivasiddhanta) – is the shortest work in this Śaiva canon. It contains only four stanzas with 4 lines each. The author of this poem, Umāpati Civaccariyar (14th. CE), composed eight out of the altogether fourteen texts of this canon, besides several non-canonical works. Hence, he is amongst the most important and influential teachers of this school of Śaiva philosophy.

Although Kotikkavi is an extremely short poem, it nevertheless deals with all those elements that are essential for Caivacittanta; it could hence be called a description of Caivacittanta *in nuce*. The trilogy of the basic elements, viz. pati, paśu and paśa finds its place there, as well as all possible variations of connections between them, viz., pati-paśam, pati-paśu, and paśu –pacam. Moreover, śakti is clearly depicted as the active energy which leads the individual paśu to liberation, while civa himself remains rather inactive. Paśu as the human individual, or the individual soul, is the main focus of interest.

On another level, the symbols used also point out to the importance of the guru, the teacher, without whose instruction the student cannot attain civananam, the 'knowledge concerning Civa'.

The poem uses a highly symbolical and pictorial language, so that it cannot be understood in its details without the help of a commentary.

Ryosuke Ohashi:

Die Person als die Leere.
Eine buddhistische Sicht, dargestellt in den ‚Zehn Ochsenbildern'

Die zweite Formel des kategorischen Imperativs in der Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten bei Kant: „Handle so, dass du die Menschheit, sowohl in deiner Person als in der Person eines jeden anderen, jederzeit zugleich als Zweck, niemals bloß als Mittel brauchst", kann auch in meinem Vortrag, wie in manchen philosophischen Diskussionen über den Begriff der ‚Person', zum Ausgangspunkt gemacht werden. Allerdings geht es hier nicht um eine neue Kant-Interpretation, sondern um eine vergleichende Betrachtung dieses Imperativs zum buddhistischen Gedanken der ‚Person' als der ‚Leere'. Dieser Gedanke wäre schon für sich ein ausreichend großes Thema, um innerhalb der beschränkten Zeit in seinen Grundzügen dargestellt zu werden. Eine vergleichende Perspektive wird dazu dienen, ihn in seinen wesentlichen Zügen darzustellen. Aber auch um diese Perspektive zu ermöglichen, bedarf es der Kenntnis des buddhistischen Gedankens zur ‚Person', weswegen ich diese auf eine bestimmte Art und Weise anschaulich machen möchte. So ist der zweite Ausgangspunkt des Vortrags die Darstellung der ‚Zehn Ochsenbilder', die im Zen-Buddhismus als ein fundamentaler Text überliefert werden. Mit der Kantischen Formel des kategorischen Imperativs hängt Kants Idee der ‚Menschenwürde' und des ‚Reichs der Zwecke aller gesetzgebenden Wesen' zusammen. In den ‚Ochsen-Bildern' werden diese Begriffe, wenn man sie in Betracht ziehen will, in völlig anderer Weise aufgefasst als bei Kant sowie in der westlichen Philosophie überhaupt. Die komparatistische Betrachtung der ‚Ochsen-Bilder' im Lichte bzw. mit Hilfe des Kantischen Gedankens wird einen Horizont eröffnen, vor dem eine interkulturelle Überlegung zum Problem der ‚Person' unternommen werden kann.

Radhakrishnan Pillai:

Concept of Statesman as a Person in 'Arthaśāstra'

The concept of personhood is commonly thought of beginning at birth. In my paper, I will focus on a Kautilyan interpretation of personhood as found in his book Arthaśāstra (3 CE). Kautilya brings out various dimensions of personhood. These can be classified into four broad categories: individual, social, political and spiritual. At an *individual* level, a person has to discover his *Swa-dharma* (individual talent and natural abilities) in order to choose his career and make a contribution in that particular field. At the *social* level, a human being is always bound by certain rules and governing laws. "Every person may not be a politician but politics influences everybody". Therefore the *political* sphere also shapes up the person and his thinking. Lastly, even for Kautilya, man is a *spiritual* being first, who takes up the human body. The paper will throw light on these four dimensions of personhood and their relations. Also it will look into the ideas of human rights and its impact on this understanding of personhood.

Hermann-Josef Scheidgen:

Freiheit und Selbst bei Sartre

Für Sartre ist das menschliche Bewusstsein immer das bewusste Sein. Ein Vor- oder Unterbewusstsein, wie Freud dies konstatiert, schließt er hiermit aus. Indem das menschliche Selbst stets über sich hinausweist, das Ich immer im Begriff ist, sich zu transzendieren, könnte man hier von einer ‚philosophischen Unschärferelation' sprechen.

Da für Sartre kein Gott existiert, ist der Mensch das höchste Wesen und damit vollkommen für sich selbst verantwortlich, ja zur Freiheit verdammt. Hier unterscheidet sich Sartre von Dostojewski, für den aus der Annahme, es existiere kein Gott, das menschliche Handeln vollkommen willkürlich wäre und eine Anarchie zur Folge hätte.

Der Mensch ist in seinem Für-sich-Sein stets dazu herausgefordert, sich neu zu entwerfen und sich zu engagieren. Dabei ist er immer dem An-sich-Sein, das der Tod mit sich bringen wird, ausgesetzt. Trotz dieser permanenten Herausforderung konstatiert Sartre den fast metaphysisch anmutenden Begriff eines Urentwurfs jedes Menschen. In seinem Spätwerk versucht er mittels seiner existentiellen Analyse, diesen Urentwurf zu ergründen. Dies mutet fast anachronistisch an, da er nunmehr Teile der Psychoanalyse übernehmen muss. Dabei geht es ihm darum darzustellen, dass der Mensch stets in der Gefahr ist, dem Selbstbetrug zu verfallen. Der Betrogene ist hier mit dem Betrogenen identisch.

Für Sartre, der häufig als der ‚letzte Intellektuelle' und als letzter großer französischer Philosoph vor der Postmoderne angesehen wird, hängen Denken und politisches Handeln unabdingbar zusammen. Wie für Kierkegaard ist auch für ihn seine Philosophie keine Lehre, sondern eine Form der Existenz.

Jayandra Soni:

The Jaina Concept of the Self

If the conception of person-hood essentially entails aspects of what constitutes the *intrinsic* nature of a person, then in Indian thought this concept would have to be translated as the concept of the self, the concept of what it is that constitutes the innate nature of a person, of his or her self. In Indian thought the physical *appearance* of a person hardly forms the content of what constitutes a person's intrinsic nature, namely of the *essence* of the person which allows us to speak of a *living* human being. This intrinsic nature of a person is the subject matter of many schools of Indian thought, like Vedānta, Sānkhya and Yoga, where the essence of a person, namely what constitutes person-hood, is referred to as the *ātman* or *purusa;* in Jainism it is called *jīva* (literally, e.g., 'living, alive, a living being, life and existence'). When these schools of Indian philosophy refer to the essence of a human being or a person, they refer to the principle which allows us to speak of a *living* being, in the absence of which we have a mere corpse. In my presentation I shall be concentrating on the Jaina concept of what it is that makes up the intrinsic nature of the self, that is the Jaina concept of *jīva*. This will be done in three sections deemed to be relevant to the conception of person-hood: the human situation according to Jainism, the Jaina concept of the soul (*jīva*) and the Jaina theory of manifoldness as epistemologically relevant to the concept of person-hood.

Guo Yi:

Searching for the Physical and the Transcendental Self. Theories of Mind and Nature in Early China

Chinese philosophy searches for the self by investigating into the human mind and human nature. The Neo-Confucians in Song dynasty (960-1279 CE) divided human nature into two kinds: the nature of matter, physical nature (the so-called *qizhi zhi xing*, 气质之性) and the

nature of reason (*yili zhi xing*, 义理之性). The former is the way to search the physical self; the transcendental self can be sought through the latter.

Even though in the history of Chinese philosophy the nature of reason and the nature of matter were not put forward as concepts until the Song Dynasty, they existed as philosophical problems right from the very beginning. Broadly, the theories dealing with human nature in the Pre-Qin period center on concepts such as *Tian* (天), *ming* (命) or impartment, *xin* (心) or mind, *xing* (性) or nature, *qing* (情) or emotion, *yu* (欲) or desire, *Dao* (道), *de* (德) or virtue and their interrelations. Among them, virtue represents the human essence and desire represents the human instinct. They refer to the nature of reason and the nature of matter respectively. Their relationship is the key issue in the theory of human nature right from the Pre-Qin period; it is also the main thread which runs throughout the entire history of this concept in China. In their theories of human nature, Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism all take the correlation between virtue and desire as their starting point and destination. Of course, they differ on the concrete contents of 'virtue'.

It is my belief that it was through the interaction of these two kinds of nature that the theory of human nature in China germinated and developed. Many problems can be resolved if we follow this train of thought to explore the theory of human nature in China.

The understanding of human nature had experienced a process from desire to virtue or from human instinct to human essence. Before Confucius' time, *xing* or nature is desire and instinct, namely the nature of matter. Then, the key problem was, how does one manage, control and enrich nature by virtue? Later, a lot of progress was made in this theory by explaining nature by *qi* (气). Laozi (老子) begins to take *de* (德) or virtue as the internal essence of human being. Confucius further takes *de* or virtue as *xing* or nature, thus deeply transforming the traditional theory of human nature. In fact, this is the source of the nature of reason and the origin of the theory that human nature is good. To define human nature by virtue, i.e. the human essence indicates how the theory of human nature in China becomes mature.

Since then, the mighty current of the theory of human nature in Pre-Qin period is divided into two branches: one takes virtue as nature, as in the internal moral apriorism created later by Confucius. This new tradition was succeeded by the idea of Zisi (子思) that 'what *Tian* imparts is called nature' (*Tianming zhiwei xing* 天命之谓性), and was developed by the theory of Mencius that men are born good. Another branch is the development of the old tradition which takes *yu* or desire as nature. It is interesting that Zisi expels *yu* or desire from *xing* or nature, thus taking up the new tradition. On the other hand, he takes desire as *zhong* (中) or the inner, thus incorporating the old tradition. The bamboo text *Xing Zi Ming Chu* (性自命出) not only developed Zisi's idea on *zhong*, furthermore it resumed it as nature, and constructed a unique system of external moral apriorism which enhanced the old tradition.

This means both theories of human nature, those of Mencius and Xing Zi Ming Chu, take Zisi's theory as their starting point.