THE ACADEMIC JOURNAL OF WINCHESTER COLLEGE

Sapientia

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Front Matter

Dear Reader,

In publishing the first issue of Sapientia, we would like to express gratitude for your support. We conceive the journal as an alternative medium for students to share independent insights and academic findings that go beyond the confines of the curriculum, where one can experience the inner workings of scholarship, and where one can distribute their thoughts with originality and without restriction. We believe that this will help fill a gap in the current activities of our school that have been offered at other schools and that if we take on this opportunity, we are confident that pupils will be able to produce work of a high academic calibre. We hope that such will ultimately strengthen the status of our college as a centre of academic excellence.

We are also aiming to maintain academic diversity. Though the popularity of empirical science is a testament to our advancing technological age, we firmly believe that the humanities and social scientific research are to take prominence in the near future. The rise of Artificial Intelligence has only re-ignited our growing attention to the "human." As a school with a clear emphasis from the start of its history on the education of a person, we must also take greater leadership and focus on this growing trend.

This first issue is an experiment for a project we hope will continue for the next generation of Wykehamists and is therefore under constant amendment, both in its editorial process and its submission format. The present issue contains articles generally covering politics, economics, philosophy, and history. Many articles were also put forward for submission in various other venues, most notably the John Locke Institute Global Essay Competition, where all have been shortlisted. Notes on where the article has been previously submitted to will be detailed.

Finally, we give thanks to the following:

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Do the Results of Elections Express the Will of the People?

Charlie Fan (K)
Submitted to the John Locke Institute Global Essay Competition

Every democratic administrative body's sovereignty and legitimacy lie with the people governed by that administrative body. The sovereignty of the people is handed over to an administrative body usually through an election or multiple elections in which the people grant legitimacy to the administrative body which wins that election.

However, the granting of sovereignty and legitimacy does not represent the will of the people. Therefore, what is the will of the people? The will of the people or general will is a term used by the 18th-century philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in Article Six of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen Rousseau writes: "The law is the expression of the general will. All citizens have the right to contribute personally, or through their representatives, to its formation. It must be the same for all, whether it protects or punishes. All citizens, being equal in its eyes, are equally admissible to all public dignities, positions, and employments, according to their capacities, and without any other distinction than that of their virtues and their talents." While Rousseau defines the law of a state as a representation of the will of the people in that state, Jack Balkin from Yale University argues that "the will of the people" is a legal and political fiction" used by politicians. However, since the will of the people is a type of 'will' then it must be both voluntary and actionable upon, therefore for this essay, I will define the will of the people as the voluntary actionable will of the majority of the people.

As an LSE article by Christian List illustrates through the example of the Brexit referendum. Suppose there are three potential types of reasons that people would vote for Brexit: compelling sovereignty reasons, compelling economic reasons, or a compelling immigration control reason. If there is at least one type of compelling reason that a person agrees with then that person would vote for Brexit. Then in a hypothetical situation where 1/5th of the voting population agrees with each of the three types of potential reasons to vote for Brexit, the Brexit vote would pass with a 60% majority, while every one of the three possible reasons for Brexit is rejected by a

A protest congregated for a People's Vote on the 2019 Brexit Deal. By Peter Summers/Getty.

significant majority. Therefore, this presents a problem with elections' ability to represent the will of the people where the people are only presented with two options, where the opinions of the majority and the result of the election are incoherent, and therefore misrepresenting the will of the people as the majority that wins the election is not constructed by a publicly supported reason but multiple mutually inconsistent individual considerations none of which reaches a level of majority acceptability.

The example of the Brexit referendum also presents another problem with elections representing the will of the people: the vague definition of the proposal of Brexit. The majority of the voting population did not have access to or were informed of a structure within which Brexit would take place if the pro-Brexit won the referendum. There was no outline of a deal with the EU if Brexit would happen, nor was there a timeline or cost evaluation for Brexit given at the time of the referendum. Therefore, the results of the election were not only incoherent but also potentially misinformed.

The will of the people can be seen as a negative reactive mechanism which is only triggered by extreme collective discontent shown in cases such as the French Revolution. The revolutionaries did not collectively agree on the principles of liberal freedom or the ideologies of republicanism. An expression of the will of the people was triggered due to an extremely wide-spread public discontent at the living quality under the French king. In regular elections, extreme circumstances have not been reached causing voters to choose from the available options the one which is the least in disagreement with the will of the people. The will of the people is not fully expressed due to the difficulty in determining the specifics of such will in one simple election. Furthermore, voters are limited by the available options to vote for. Taking the example of the general election, while the voter may disagree with the conservative, labour, and liberal democrat's policy, but due to there only being candidates representing these three parties in a particular constituency, that voter would have to vote for the candidate that they least dislike instead of the one they prefer. This problem is also present on a national scale since people are aware that only the conservatives and labour are realistically able to compete for government, people generally vote for the one they least dislike out of the two parties to 'make their voice heard'. This issue is particularly prevalent in the USA where the last president who was not affiliated with either the Democratic or Republican party was Millard Fillmore elected in 1850, and the last presidential candidate who was not affiliated with either the Democratic or Republican party and received a meaningful amount of electoral college votes was George Wallace in 1968 representing the American Independence party.

The Fall of Robespierre in the Convention on 27 July 1794, Max Adamo.

Ultimately, elections are not designed to represent the will of the people, rather elections are a compromise between the will of the people and the available voting options to the voters where the will of the people expresses the option which they are the least adverse to.

The Rise of China and its Implications

Felix Hall (K)
Submitted to the John Locke Institute Global Essay Competition

As the Manchu court prepared to enter their fatal final century of rule French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte would allude to what stability in China would mean for the world. China's doubted potential has allowed as Napoleon said China to "shake the world." Over a hundred years later China's nemesis neighbor Japan would also realize this potential of resources and manpower in China and attempt to harness this for Japan's own utilization. However, in between these two points in history, over a century apart, not much had changed in China's consciousness of her ability in global and domestic potential. Plaguing China's history has been the doing of warlords, corruption, and a severe lack of newer approaches to the constant problems and the management of power in the royal house. The Tongzhi Restoration, the Taiping Rebellion and the Boxer Rebellion all acted as constant catalysts to undermining the potential of China's spectacular potential wealth. However less than a century after Japan realised this potential China has realised her own immense destiny and now stands on the cusp of spectacular power and destiny, heading towards leadership in the race to become a global superpower. For too long the US has "Contained and suppressed us [...] [bringing] unprecedented sever challenges to our development," said the Chinese President Xi Jing Ping at the recent legislative meeting in March. However, what does China fulfilling the dangerous Napoleonic prophecy mean for her people and her international counterparts and their respective people? I would like to explore this by answering the following questions.

1. What allowed China to overcome 1000s of years of decentralized management of resources and hindered domestic development?
2. What has this meant now for China's people and the people and the world?
3. What could China's hyper acceleration into leading superpower ship mean for the people who live there and everyone else? (the main purpose of this investigation)

Deng Xiao Ping, seen as many as the architect of modern China, almost 45 years ago, would open the country to private companies and foreign investment. Four decades of stunning economic growth

Shanghai, after China's opening to companies and investment, have achieved astonishing growth in the past decades.
by dpc103 on Wallpapers.com

left the world in awe as the country was transformed from an underdeveloped backwater of Asia to become the world's second largest economy in 2010. At one point the Chinese military budget was a negligible $15 billion. In 25 years, the Chinese military budget has increased five-fold and has resulted in a military which not only leads the world in hypersonic rocketry but is close to undisputed control of neighbouring seas (once not thought of being possible for a competitor to the United States). This is more than a far cry from China just two centuries before. "Fear of war creates grounds for hope," said Henry Kissinger, the father of US-China relations post Mao in an interview with the Economist in May 2023. Fear of war or rather fear of those who had mongered war in China in the past has driven China's determination, arguably still today. To think China wants to rule the world is a strange notion. China only wishes to extend her sphere of influence enough so that China does not become victim to her prior pitfalls. However, this has brought with it the state we know today.

To best begin to understand the beginning of these impacts in China right now you must understand one thing first: If you were a rural resident of China, you would not be wrong in saying you're left behind. Left behind is the reality for many. China's economic expansion has many varying consequences. One of the most alarming and dramatic is marriage. According to Yicai global 60% of young Chinese require owning their own home before marriage whereas 80.9% call it a "desired scenario." Only 40% of women are willing to contribute towards this cost, however. This has left China's rural male population in a different age. China's society is thus becoming polarized. It doesn't help that China's living costs keep rising and the one child policy has left a large proportion of the young population with 6 dependents. China's economic expansion has increased Chinese life expectancy by decades, within decades, thus crippling young people with large amounts of dependents. Rural populations have not benefitted from this expansion either. Internal resource constraints have left China without a support system for these people. This end of China's population growth, leaving this relative disaster, could leave China having to rethink the future for the citizens at home and global ambitions.

China's current influence abroad as a consequence of this economic boom can best be measured by the perceived plan to "dominate global trade." The belt road initiative, a trillion-dollar plan to re orientate global trade, is a part of this plan. In a speech in 2013 in Kazakhstan Xi Jing Ping alluded to rebuilding the ancient "silk road." Months later in Indonesia, he would confirm his plans for a maritime silk road. This belt and road initiative is exemplified by Pakistan. The Gwadar port project which included railways and highways would give Pakistan it's highest GDP growth in 8 years (Reported by Vox Atlas in 2018). China has shown that they do not expect this money back, in return for Chinese Government ownership of their projects – specifically ports as proven by cases in Sri Lanka and Djibouti. As per the string of pearls theory, China is taking control of global trade and establishing enclave like footholds all over south Asia and even parts of Africa.

However, what does this mean for the future of the people of the world and the people of China as China's trajectory continues towards becoming the world's leading global superpower?

I would like to split this question in half. This would first be effects on China's neighbours, other nearby Asian states and then outside of that sphere of influence (the US and so on), along with the circumstances within China's borders.

Understanding a leading superpower can be difficult because the level of global influence is only seen once in history on the same scale, the United States. Whilst Britain and France's empires were comparable, they preceded a time where a mature enough international finance system had developed for them to become so relied upon globally. Indeed, even parts of these empires operated as somewhat disjointed micro economies. The rubber tycoons of the Straits Settlements operated right into the mid-20th Century exporting rubber all over the world with negligible influence of powers in London. So, what makes the United States so different? The IMF tells us that the US Dollar makes up 58.36% of international foreign reserve composition. This allows the United States to operate economic sanctions to a scale China cannot. It also allows the United States to import vast number of resources and consumer products for its people with very little export (also known as a high trade deficit), all with negligible risks. These two luxuries are something that China cannot enjoy, at least not yet. However, if China were to become the world's leading superpower, including but not exclusively the world reserve currency, China might then be able to enjoy these luxuries. This could bring an end to Western centric "world government" we see particularly at the moment with Russia. This would not only allow China to weather a financial storm brought on by sanctions following a potential invasion of Taiwan but economically isolate itself in an east Asian/Russian micro economy, like but not on the same organized level as the EU does today.

Of course, in the western world today we use, consume, and continue to purchase gargantuan amounts of Chinese products. According to the department of US commerce the United States alone imported $452.2 billion of goods from China. This makes China the largest provider of foreign goods to the US. Nevertheless, this doesn't give China unchallenged power over the domestic US economy because the United States is of course China's biggest customer, the next being Hong Kong and Japan. However, the EU also remains an important player again with vast amounts of automobiles traded. However, if we follow our scenario of replacing US dominance as opposed to being a cooperative global superpower then what does China growing to become the world's leading superpower mean? Economics is China's deadly enemy. To achieve China's advances, China has arguably, in many ways, traded its prior financial independence for a financially dependent situation. So, to conclude, outside of China's sphere of influence this doesn't mean much, unless soon we see a shift to Vietnamese, Cambodian, Thai, or Malaysian products. To what extent the Chinese economy would suffer depends on how China manages its own resources. However, as China develops and labour becomes more expensive, we have seen response from the US, particularly in the microchip projects which aim to shift to US made chips rather than Taiwanese. Although this arguably doesn't directly affect China, it is a sign the US wants to respond to changing economic winds. Nevertheless, not only economic powers are at play here. As I mentioned in the introduction, the Chinese millitary is "exploding," in size. Specifically, considering the US navy which for many decades has led the world with an unparalleled number of aircraft carriers, China has responded with its unparalleled hypersonic naval missile technology.

China is the largest provider of foreign goods to the US.

What this does is it changes warfare in the China's biggest battleground, the South China sea. This also means that the US is threatened in how it projects its sphere of influence because it must contend with a Chinese counterpart, or enemy.

The Forbidden City have been the capital of the last two dynasties of Imperial China, serving as a testament to the fluctuating history of the country. Waitforlight/Moment RF/Getty Images

In China's own borders on its own people the effects of current development have been immense or could continue to be immense. Fareed Zakaria writes in his book "From Wealth to Power," how America explodes into a superpower after 1945. Principally this was due to the world reserve currency system. Being able to operate this trade deficit brings a massive consumer lifestyle to the USA. If something similar happens to China, then could we see a ten-year increase of 30% of the population owning their own cars? Well, no because the world has changed and these old measurements are becoming more and more irrelevant measures, especially in this context. The truth is the Chinese population already enjoys a consumerism lifestyle. These changes have already occurred and of course there are those left in the past, something that didn't happen to the same extent in America. In fact, 90% of Chinese households own their home according to Forbes whilst the US is dwarfed at just below 70%. Quality of life in China is already transformed so what is the difference? Well, it could leave China free to move to a totalitarian model as opposed to the current supposed authoritarian to better extract China's resources and manage a "new world order." What this means for the Chinese people is even greater decreased freedom. However, although journalists, specifically Republican sympathetic American newspapers argue this, it would be nicer to think the opposite and that China would loosen its grasp. Allowing the Chinese people a greater freedom. This would make China the new USA in terms of immigration in my eyes, allowing a diversification of the current nation-state model China's population operates on. However, an advancement in technology could counteract this diversification for China. It is all unknown. China's political development is dynamic and changes direction constantly.

There is a virtue for analysing China with which I would like to conclude. The “Romance of the Three Kingdoms,” an ancient Chinese text about thew demi-mythical war of the Three Kingdoms highlights this perfectly: “An empire long divided must unite, long divided must unite, thus it has always been.” China has never had one direction, always oscillating between stability and crisis. It is a hyper diverse country in all manner of ways though I hope that beyond the limitations of my knowledge that I have been accurate.

Election: A Review

Wisdom Omolayo (D)
Submitted to the John Locke Institute Global Essay Competition

Introduction

It is a global consensus that election is a symbol of a country's democracy and national unity; it is an indication of agreement in a fair society. Especially in the Western world, we pride ourselves on the notion that our right to vote is a powerful sign of societal equality (Mochtak, 2021). Be that as it may, is the election perfect? Many would agree that the purpose of the election has been distorted. Instead of demonstrating the earnest proclivities and pleas of a population, it is seen often of people fixating on their political views, identifying themselves as an embodiment of these generalisations and abrading their own desires for inclusion to suit what their claimed party stands for. Furthermore, in many nations, we have observed a stagnancy in election procedure improvement, whilst a great number of individuals agree it is clear there is great imperfection in election fairness (Manchester, 2021). In this paper, we will evaluate the purpose of election; its successes and shortcomings in representing aggregated decisions concerning social choice; different forms of election and their qualities; what election truly represents; and finally, ponder upon the future of election and what hinders and promotes its improvement.

Election: A summary

Elections were once defined as "the principal instruments that compel or encourage the policymakers to pay attention to citizens" (Mesfin, 2008). In this way, we understand that through election, the people are given a weapon to wield, deciding their representatives – urging leaders to work in for their good, to maintain the capacity to exercise their power. In most states of government, a leader is elected on a termly basis, with an election each few years (i.e., 4 years in the US, 5 years in France (Euronews, 2022)) with exceptions for the unexpected end of an office-holder's term. Re-election is possible but often limited in many nations (22nd Amendment in the US made presidents only able to serve two terms). In the context of our question, election is an imperative pillar of a democratic nation, as it enlists the general public to decide on their leadership, as opposed to a hereditary claim to rule.

Presidential candidate for democrats Vice-President Kamala Harris speaking at a rally in Wisconsin, an example of how an election is the only time there is more or less direct contact between policy makers and the public. Jim Vondruska/Getty

The Criteria of Elections

Often, the necessity of election is overlooked; however, it holds an important role in society. People are given the decision between candidates based on their pasts, beliefs and promises. This is done through debates and the sharing of manifestos which allows for a transparent view of potential leaders, with their propositions evaluated by the people. A fair election is, therefore, critical to the erection of the aggregate preferred representative. Well, what makes an election fair? In response to this, many social scientists have created theoretical guidelines of what an election should be that must be met to make it fair (Centre for Election Science) a few of which will be covered within this essay.

One criterion, known as mutual majority, dictates that if one candidate is preferred by the majority, they must win the election. This is important as if one candidate is favoured by most of the voters, no other candidate can be more suitable in representing the people's will. A differing criterion is monotonicity (Centre for Election Science) which states that ranking a candidate higher should in no circumstance cause that candidate to lose and likewise with ranking a candidate lower. An elective system's failure to meet this is a serious issue in the aim of establishing an agreed preference between voters, as each individual should have the intended impact on the general preference. Amongst other criterion, participation stands out, especially in the climate of United States' politics, because if voting systems are to create a crystal image of the people's wishes, it should surely encourage people to vote to help their preferred candidate rather than needing to resort to a tactical voting method (Moulin, 1986 – no show paradox, Politics.co.uk). To clarify, for an election to completely represent public choice, it must fulfil several criteria which continue to be debated to this day.

The issues and advantages of election systems

Alongside other factors, voting systems can also be used to improve our election results while conforming to the above criteria. The renowned "Plurality Voting" (also known as single-choice voting and first past the post) is commonly used in many countries such as the UK to decide the prime minister and has a basic format, consisting of a single round, where all choose a single candidate (party), and the majority wins. This simple election system satisfies many criteria (monotonicity, mutual majority), but fails the Independence of Irrelevant Alternatives criterion as it is affected largely by the spoiler effect. This occurs when greater than 2 candidates run and vote

splitting occurs between candidates with similar ideologies, causing a different party to win. Through this, the ideas of the people are expressed incorrectly, as in a race between only 2 differing parties, the candidate of the most shared ideology would have won.

Another popular election type is approval voting, where candidates are either approved or rejected by each person, and the candidate with the most approvals wins. This means that voters can express preference for more than one candidate, thus having more freedom to share their will. However, voting for all candidates has the same effect as voting for none in this voting system, so voters are incentivised to disapprove candidates they would approve, to create less competition for their most preferred candidate (bullet voting - Obermaier, 2011), thus falling prey to strategic voting. Finally, we will refer to instant run-off voting in which rounds of voting take place, and in each one, least favoured parties are removed, until it is only a vote between the two that remain, or one party has over 50% of the vote. An issue with this is known as the centre-squeeze phenomenon, where the larger moderate parties cannot get 50% of votes on their own, causing votes of eliminated parties to be accumulated in smaller more extreme parties to reach the number of votes needed to end the election. (Marron, 2010 speaks on Burlington, Vermont 2009). This is damaging as these minor candidates' success (albeit awe-inspiring) are not accurate representations of the general public's preferred candidate and assumes a preference that was few people's first.

Prime Minister's Questions in the House of Commons, with Sir Keir Stammer showing humorously the direct conflict between Tories and Labour. By Jessica Taylor/AFP via Getty Images.

The painting election truly paints

In reality, the functions of specific electoral systems are often less ideal than one would expect it to be. It could be said to present the lesser evil between political candidates. A survey of the British state of government suggests that with both major candidates, both Rishi Sunak and Keir Starmer have disapproval percentages of 59% and 49% respectively (Ipsos, 2023). This is a similar case in many countries, where people possess great disdain for the major candidates so are obliged to vote in favour of the other, to prevent their hated candidate rising to power. This dystopian reality of election is emblematic of more dire moments in history, such as many Germans in the 1920-30s voting for the National Socialist Party to prevent the rise of Communism in Germany – which eventually catalysed catastrophic international occurrences. Alternatively, elections are often compared to a game, in which the candidates compete to gain approval from the public, through taunting, and exposing inconsistencies in the past of their opponents (Little, 2016). In this way, whilst the focus of election should be on the public, it becomes a popularity contest of continual mudslinging, like that of the supporters of rival football teams after an unfavourable season. The aim of expression of the people is a solemn afterthought.

Furthermore, although unseen, biases and heuristics are always present in elections, hindering individual choices and causing one to vote in a way that does not reflect their own true feelings, in unconscious acts of cognitive

dissonance. In the book Noise: A Flaw in Human Judgement psychological biases are said to “always create error” (p.162). In the terms of election, bias can be harmful when we take the results of an election to be understanding the points of view of the people, when many people are sworn to a particular party, no matter the candidate or the propositions suggested before an election. This is harmful especially as candidates take note of this and know that without a doubt, no matter what they put forward, there are many votes that cannot be lost, which diminishes the importance of elections as a whole.

Likewise, with heuristics (a process of intuitive judgement, operating under conditions of uncertainty, that rapidly produces a generally adequate, though not ideal or optimal, decision, McDonough) many voters are led astray by elaborate media stunts and the most recent captivating news headlines, to the point that their true intentions are disparaged. Within this lens, we are greeted with the harsh reality - deciding who to vote is a serious decision that is overlooked by many for convenience. Our clouded minds are relieved by the simplicity of the ballot, that we neglect it by voting on a whim, objectively undervaluing its importance in society.

Elections now are more about choosing the least bad candidate instead of a preferential one.

Improving election to match the will of the people

We see many of the popular election systems are flawed as they fail to meet essential criteria, accompanied by flaws prevalent in all electoral systems. No single result of an election is capable of representing each and every individual person's preference (Monboit, 2019). However, we can work towards creating improvements to election systems to find optimum election practices that maximise social choice.

For example, the stigmas associated with parties due to the rigid two-party systems we observe in many nations, such as the Republican-Democrat and Conservative-Labour, is a barrier to well-thought-out voting. The early exposure and indoctrination of educational institutions, religious groups and even parental figures, prevents many from making an educated and well-informed choice each election. I do not advocate for complete abandonment of parties all together, but rather to introduce greater choice and fluidity between parties to introduce more varied opinions and values, to later be united in government. In addition, two party systems are also infamous for causing the chosen leader of government (president or prime minister) to be unable to perform their role, as disagreements lead to no action taking place (Aratani, 2023 - debt ceiling).

Another way to improve elections is to prevent election “gaming”. Any election system that makes tactical voting attractive or advantageous is ineffective in representing the will of the people, as it deprives legitimacy from every counted vote. In this way, an end to approval voting is paramount, as despite the great choice it gives voters, it remains flawed in the sense that it encourages strategic voting to the point that election cannot be said to represent legitimate belief.

Conclusion

Looking onwards, the future of elections is bleak. There is no obvious sign of electoral reform or any inkling of changing the process of primary election (greater than the local level). One leading cause of this is the conservative nature of election in and of itself. The elected are compelled to take action on their own promises and national issues as opposed to changing the system of voting that caused their rise to power. Similarly, the issues of voting systems are latent: the outrage of a seemingly unjust election result is attributed to displeasure of a personally unfavourable result rather than flawed voting systems. In the United States, the Electoral College system has been in place for over 200 years, and in very few instances (2016 most recently) has it been criticised as being unruly. Rigorous analysis concerning election practices, methods and fraud must take place to benefit the future of elections for the people.

To summarise, elections rarely represent the will of a population, falling prey to election flaws, and are inherently flawed as many members of the public are unaware of the candidates they subscribe to. Nonetheless, modern elections still hold useful qualities in identifying popular candidates and making it in their best interest to fulfil their promises and do everything to benefit their people.

Does the Expanding Gig Economy Contribute Positively to Sustainable Economic Growth?

Jason Ma (C)

A gig economy is an economy that operates flexibly, involving the exchange of labour and resources through digital platforms that actively facilitate the matching of buyers and sellers. The labour market in the gig economy relies heavily on temporary or part time positions filled by independent contractors or freelancers rather than full-time permanent employees.

Gig economy workers for the food delivery company 'Grab'. Source: unsplash

The gig economy has expanded substantially in the past decade, in particular, post COVID. However, does the rise of the gig economy contribute positively to a sustainable economic growth? Increased productivity creates economic growth and sustainable economic growth is key to support long-term economic growth without negatively impacting social and environmental aspects. I would like to explore the answers to this question from the following perspectives:

1. Whether the gig economy would increase labour productivity; and
2. Whether the gig economy would create any environmental issues to society.

Productivity

Flexibility is an important element in supporting long-term economic growth. A flexible economy adjusts to prices and returns to its production potential as quickly, and with as little cost, as possible. This will translate into an increase in the productivity of an economy. The gig economy offers flexibility to the labour market as it offers efficient matching between labour demand and supply, and as a result, raises social productivity and expands the Production Possibility Frontier (PPF). This will ultimately deliver sustainable growth by fully capturing the potential of human capital. For it to be flexible, the gig economy also allows workers to develop new skills and competencies constantly. The rise of the gig economy has been primarily attributed to its flexibility – one research showed that 63% of 70 million gig workers in the United States valued their flexible lifestyle above nearly everything else (Wilson, 2023). Rapidly evolving technologies (including the rise in automation and artificial intelligence) and shifting industry trends are leaving many traditional and inflexible jobs at risk. With greater flexibility, workers could develop new expertise through changes in job roles and technology trends – also known as upskilling. As a result, this would lead to sustainable growth, as individuals and firms are able to respond quickly, for example, to technological developments that alter the way business is conducted. Firms can redeploy workers from one type of job to another if a market becomes uncompetitive.

However, despite the benefits of heightened flexibility, the concerns arising from a lack of job security and social benefits for gig workers would mean that productivity gains may not be sustainable in the long run. Goal 8 of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has described how it should 'promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all' – this implies 'equal pay for work of equal value' and 'workers being protected by basic labour rights' (United Nations, 2024). However, large enterprises in the gig economy have argued that their workers are 'self-employed' and accordingly, they should not be eligible for basic employment protections (including pension, paid holidays, and sick pay benefits) (IEMA, 2023). For example, drivers hired by Uber are not eligible to earn the guaranteed minimum wage because they are classified as independent contractors (Levin, 2018). The statistics from the UK Government indicate that the level of annual earnings from the gig economy was relatively low – approximately 41% of the gig workers in the UK have reported that they typically earn less than £250 per week. Of these gig workers, 87% reported that they earned less than £10,000 in the last 12 months (Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, 2018).

The recent increase in inflation has further increased the financial burden of gig workers. World inflation remains at a high level - 6.6% compared to the pre-pandemic levels of 3.5% (International Monetary Fund, 2023). The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs has also reported that the average domestic food prices in June 2023 were 38.3% higher than in January 2019 (United Nations, 2023). According to a report published by the London School of Economics, one-third of self-employed workers struggle with their daily finances (Robert & Maria, 2022). This implies that gig workers may sometimes need to use their savings to pay for daily expenses. The gig model is more vulnerable to price shocks and inflation because their costs are absorbed at the individual level - the lower wages and the lack of adequate benefits for gig workers will result in a high employee turnover rate. The impact of this includes decreased productivity, increased recruitment costs and time spent on training new employees. Businesses with high employee turnover rates typically experience low employee morale and as a result lower productivity rates.

However, governments of various jurisdictions have introduced protective regulatory frameworks this decade, which would safeguard the well-being of gig workers. The rise of the gig economy during the pandemic has contributed to the upturn in the world economy and has given employment opportunities to those who are disadvantaged or unable to secure jobs. Because of the rise in popularity, new rules have been proposed to bring stronger protection for workers in the gig economy. For example, in June 2023, gig workers in the European Union are

proposed to be eligible to receive social security and other benefits similar to traditional permanent workers (Council of the EU, 2023). A similar rule has also been proposed in the US in October 2022 (Wiessner et al., 2022). This would mean that gig workers are entitled to minimum wages and other benefits such as health insurance and paid holidays. These new protection frameworks will narrow down the imbalance of the social benefit entitlements between gig workers and traditional workers. These will no doubt mitigate the negative impact on productivity rates as the employee turnover rates in the gig economy will likely be reduced.

Environmental

Approximately 91% of gig workers in the UK are engaged in the transport or delivery services sectors. Providing courier services remains the most common type of gig economy activity, accounting for 42% of the total gig economy workforce in the UK, whilst the provision of transport services and food delivery services accounted for 28% and 21% respectively (Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, 2018). A study estimates that the environmental impact of ride-hailing services is 69% worse than the transportation modes they replace (Bliss, 2020). On-demand rides would also generate 47% more carbon emissions. Furthermore, as many as 40% of all miles driven by Uber and Lyft drivers across 6 major US cities were without passengers. Accordingly, people would argue that the gig economy is exacerbating the effects of climate change. As discussed above, sustainable economic growth should not have a negative impact on the environment. On this basis, it appears that the gig economy does not contribute positively to sustainable economic growth because of its reliance on transport and delivery services, thus, creating negative externalities (such as pollution) to society.

However, the ongoing technology revolution facilitates the transition into a low-carbon economy. This is also applicable in the gig economy despite the high prevalence of delivery and transportation gigs. This has been evident in the growth in remote and hybrid work catalysed by the pandemic which reduced the carbon footprint by up to 58% compared to working onsite as a result of the lower consumption of energy and fewer commutes for workers (Tao et al., 2023).

Furthermore, enterprises are encouraged to take greater initiatives to accelerate decarbonisation with an aim to facilitate the transition into a low-carbon society and thus, promote sustainability in the future. For example, DHL has set a target of net-zero emissions by 2050 (DHL, 2015), and Uber is currently striving to be a zero-emission and low-packaging waste platform by 2040 (Uber, 2024). These initiatives coupled with the ongoing technology should assist with environmental protection in the future.

Besides, a statistic indicates that the demand for global online gig workers has increased by 41% to 435 million between 2016 and the first quarter of 2023 (Hussein, 2023). While location-based gigs such as Uber, Lyft, and TaskRabbit require labour for transportation and delivery, online gig assignments, such as website design and software development, could be completed at home. Coupled with the gig economy, which is promoting the shift towards self-employment and greater remote job opportunities, this will help drive down global carbon emissions by promoting workers to work from home and hence, making the gig economy a suitable alternative to traditional jobs in the future by lowering carbon emissions.

'Didi', a Chinese ride-hailing service provider that relies mostly on EVs. Source: thepaper.cn

Based on the above, the gradual rise in the gig economy should contribute positively to sustainable economic growth and such contribution will likely increase substantially in the long run. The productivity of the labour force in the gig economy can be enhanced through the flexible nature of the gig economy and the introduction of regulatory frameworks which would safeguard the well-being of workers. At the same time, a sustainable environment can be maintained through an increased reliance on technological advancements and new, carbon-neutral initiatives from enterprises.

Are Financial Crises Inherent to Modern Economic Growth?

Sampanna Raut (H)
Submitted to the Caius Economics Prize

Economic growth has defined our life following the Industrial Revolution. As a means of achieving this, modern global financial systems were established in order to supplement an exponentially-growing population's need for resources and order; however, the extent to which global interconnectedness and any subsequent consequences would occur was foreseen by few. In this essay, I argue that, while the modern financial system serves its purpose well, supporting economic growth, in the forms of assets, loans, and opportunity, its detrimental side-effect, namely, the financial crisis, is not a necessary component of such growth, instead being due to negligence, frenzy, or unsustainably changing market conditions. Several examples elucidate my point, including the global crisis, Asian crisis, and the existence of bubbles.

Firstly, it is essential to define a financial crisis. Claessens and Kose, of the International Monetary Fund, suggest that 'financial crises can take various shapes and forms', including: currency crises, wherein a speculative attack on a currency results in a devaluation or sharp depreciation; sudden stops, where a large fall in international capital inflows often results in a loss of investor faith and trade deficit; a foreign debt crisis, where a country does not service its foreign debt; domestic public debt crises, when a country does not honour its domestic fiscal obligations, by defaulting or devaluing its currency; and systemic banking crises, the most well-known, where potential or actual bank runs induce governments to support banks, creating moral hazard (Claessens & Kose, 2013). Reinhart and Rogoff distinguish between the former two being quantitative and thus easily measurable and the latter few lending themselves towards qualitative methodologies of classification (Reinhart & Rogoff, 2008). This is a relatively important distinction, as it allows for the realisation that financial crises are, inherently, complicated and multifaceted; they are not restricted to a certain set of occurrences, although some instances tend to characterise them. The ultimate conclusion is, however, that there exist conditions to which we would ascribe the term 'financial crisis'; Kenton describes it as a situation in which 'asset prices see a steep decline in value, businesses and consumers are unable to pay their debts, and financial institutions experience liquidity shortages' (Kenton, 2023).

Economic growth, on the other hand, is not so easy to define. If one considers GDP (perhaps PPP, or per capita) to be an accurate indicator of a country's economic potential, this may seem a concept surprisingly simple to quantify; however, Raworth's argument of this being merely a 'cuckoo' goal , obscuring the true conditions of economic growth wherein standards of living are actually increased, cannot be ignored (Raworth, 2017). For the purposes of this essay, however, GDP percentage increase is a satisfactory definition of economic growth. Globalisation and economic liberalisation must also be considered when discussing economic growth, for trade is the largest contributor to GDP increase, according to Were, ignoring the fringe cases of LDCs (Were, 2015).

Now that both terms have been clarified, the relationship between them can be analysed. Upon first glance, it would seem that crises are inevitable results of economic growth; as a country develops, its capital inflows increase, bolstering investor confidence, leading to exaggerated growth, resulting in a crash. Additionally, the unpredictable nature of external shocks, leading to contagion, suggests that financial crises cannot be prevented. However, I argue that this is not true – financial crises arise from irrationality. In the case of bubbles, times of inflated asset value (which are followed by large crashes, as in the case of the dotcom bubble bursting in 2000, or the housing bubble, the latter of which crashing causing the global financial crisis of 2007-9, as a result of subprime mortgages and complicated financial instruments), the crisis arises from investor frenzy to make profits, whilst ignoring the potential, inflated risks caused by the bubble. The existence of bubbles, and subsequent crises, is not a result of economic growth or the financial system – it is due to investor negligence and irrationality. The free flow of capital provided by the financial system does not cause the bubble; it merely provides some conditions necessary – the real issue comes from market frenzy. Janeway argues that bubbles are actually beneficial, as they help to generate the scale of investment required for strong innovation (Janeway, 2018). He quotes DeLong: "Investors lost their money. We will now get to use their stuff" (J. Bradford DeLong, 2003). He gives the examples of British canals (and, later, railways) and American railways. Investors created large bubbles within each area, thus providing the capital necessary for large expansions of each, and, while investments later lost their value, the physical benefits remained. This is a perfect example of the link between a crisis and economic growth, without suggesting causality: economic growth occurred as a result of the bubble, as well as a financial crisis. Economic growth did not spark the bubble.

'Lehman Brothers', an investment bank whose bankruptcy is often cited as a contributing factor to the 2008 financial crisis. Source: the Guardian

Kindleberger holds a different, more Keynesian view. He blames bubbles and currency crises for creating huge crises, citing examples of Japan in the 1900s, the mid-1997 Asian financial crisis, where most banks in South Korea, Malaysia, and Thailand went into solvency following a contagion caused by the collapse of the Thai Baht, as well as writing of the Mexican and Scandinavian crises (Kindleberger & Aliber, 2005). He sees no economic growth stemming from such occurrences, but, crucially, does not blame economic growth as leading to financial crises – 'every mania is associated with a robust economic expansion, but only a few economic expansions are associated with a mania.' The economic expansion caused by mania is only Reeting. Eichengreen analyses the Asian crisis, concluding that international capital Rows support make international trade possible, but also create financial instability (Eichengreen, 2019). Once again, the financial system and subsequent economic growth are not the culprit, but, rather, human action is the root cause of the financial crisis.

Tokyo during Japan's 'lost decade', a period of lengthy economic stagnation. Source: Jean-Marc Celinan

To conclude the financial system offers easily-accessible, and controllable, economic growth. The financial crisis has often been tied to economic growth, but I argue that the latter is not a cause of the former; while the financial system provides the circumstances in which a crisis can occur, the crisis itself is caused by the gradual, cumulative actions of investors, which lead towards dangerous bubbles and defaults. It may even be considered that investor irrationality is the root cause of all financial complication, for, ultimately, the system was constructed by humans, for humans, and at no point do I believe the system has, or will, ever grow to a level at which human fallacy is irrelevant to a crisis.

Is History in the UK Taught too Euro-Centric?

Jonas Bhattacharya (I), Victor Sim (I)

Students need to gain a holistic picture of history. Therefore, this picture must include the influences and contributions of European countries and non-European countries. I believe that history is presented as overtly euro-centric in the UK. This is done in the form of disregarding the history of other countries or oversimplifying the historical significance of non-western countries. This Eurocentric history is deeply rooted within the education system, with critical negative impacts that we must avoid.

The Eurocentric perspective presented to students is usually resultant of the propagation of outdated or biassed content by teachers or textbooks. As Matthew Wilkinson wrote in his Guardian article on Michael Gove's history curriculum: "Reading this draft curriculum one would have thought that the history of the world was almost entirely enacted by white, English, Protestants. Other people play a marginal role. Muslims and Islam, the second-largest religious grouping in the UK and the world's second-largest faith, whose history forms a vital part of the history of humankind, simply don't exist." (Wilkinson, 2013). For example, it is easy to find the contributions of Pythagoras and Euclid in everyday life history textbooks, but it is rare to find the contributions of Islamic scholars on optics, algorithms, and algebra. From this, we can tell that our Eurocentric perspective causes the omission of significant figures from our history while over-glorifying those that have contributed less. The lack of representation of non-European figures leads to damaging impacts.

The impacts of Eurocentric representation of History are significant, especially in the context of impressionable young students. Namely, it will lead to the establishment of incorrect conclusions and a lack of a sense of identity.

Without a holistic perspective on history, uninformed and inaccurate conclusions can be drawn. These conclusions would lead to a society that is less empathetic towards non-European countries and even developing a dichotomous "us" and "them" mentality towards non-European people. These conclusions are particularly dangerous when presented to young impressionable students in a globalised environment. It could lead to discrimination and a lack of empathy towards non-European countries, damaging both the individual and society as a whole.

A Eurocentric history could lead to the establishment of more organisations like the English Defence League. The English Défense League is an Islamophobic, fair-right organisation that opposes the integration of Muslims into England and Europe as a whole. It continues to propagate anti-muslim beliefs, falsely justified by fraudulent historical representations of Islam and the west. They have commonly characterised Western society as progressive and tolerant while characterising Islamic society as intolerant and backward. This proves the harmful false dichotomy presented by a Eurocentric history that leads to the conclusion that non-European countries are inherently worse than European countries.

An EDL march in February 2011. Source: PA Media

A fundamental problem with a Eurocentric history is that students will not learn about the histories of foreign countries, therefore limiting the knowledge that they can gain. Additionally, those not native to England might feel that they are misrepresented or excluded when their culture and history is not taught in schools. As a result, their sense of identity could be affected. This would be particularly impactful on impressionable young students and lead to confidence problems in later life.

If students are just learning about Europe, then they will have a less rounded experience of the subject. They will just be learning about the history of one certain area, however, if they learn more about history, they have a better knowledge of the rest of the world and are likely to be less culturally ignorant. If students get a better understanding of other countries, their cultures and their history then people might for example find their culture normal, instead of finding it foreign. If our students have a better fundamental understanding of the history of other countries then we might have made a small advance in increasing cultural understanding, as well as giving students studying history a more well-rounded experience of the subject.

As historical knowledge is partly propagated through information from family and friends, the impacts of a Eurocentric education will bleed through the population intergenerationally. The negative impacts that we have outlined will therefore be exacerbated as they will be widespread within the population.

A potential solution is to make sure that a more holistic view of history is taught to everyone, for example, the GCSE course is mainly focused on Nazi Germany. This is important to learn but in addition to Nazi Germany covering history from different continents like for example exploring the Cuban revolution and also studying leaders like Genghis khan. In turn, if people learn about people who are historical figures like Fidel Castro and Che Guevara it will give students more perspective of how leaders solve different problems. From Genghis Khan and the Mughal empire, we can learn how powerful empires take control. Not only will it present lessons for us to learn, but it will also help the students to understand the culture of non-European and they can gain fundamental information about these areas. Potentially the GCSE syllabus could contain history from each continent for young historians to have a well-rounded perspective of history.

Section of a wall mural commemorating the victory of Zhang Yichao- the founder of the Guiyi Circuit over the Tibetan Empire, Mogao Cave 156, Late Tang Dynasty (9th century).

Part of the solution involves making sure that the role of non-European countries is not underplayed. For example, the presentation of WWII in the GCSE syllabus. Several countries outside Europe, including the British colonies, played significant roles in WWII. Our presentation of history is overly Eurocentric and presents European countries as overshadowing non-European countries. We must not disregard the efforts of non-European countries for the end of the war. This could also help diffuse tension in the relationship between Britain and its colonies. This would also show that non-European countries, small and big alike, should be credited and remembered for their contributions to the war.

In conclusion, a Eurocentric history is prevalent in the UK. This has the impact of discrediting important historical figures, causing cultural ignorance as well as having a reductive impact on the learning and experience of students. Although changing the GCSE course is a potential solution, there are significant barriers and hurdles against this. The change of the history syllabus would receive backlash, but the benefits of implementing a holistic perspective of history outweigh these drawbacks.

A Comparative Study of the Cartesian Self and Neo-Confucian Philosophy

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Completed for the Pioneer Research Program. Supervised by Prof. Yitzhak Melamed.

(Citation through 'AT' refers to the Adam-Tannery edition of Descartes' work)

I. Introduction

The Self is a significant premise of Descartes' work, both in the sense of its importance in the Cartesian Doubt as its prerequisite and its result, and also throughout the whole of his Meditations for which he both extends this concept and uses it to determine the rest of his reasonings concerning that of God and the Body.

It is, however, bizarre that even considering its importance, many ambiguities surround the boundaries and definitions of this "I", for which we may note that there exists a multitude of responses, some proposed by Descartes explicitly, some to be implied by him. It is also prone to doubt the specific properties of the pure subject behind the activity of the mind. Henceforth, we shall proceed with the following questions as a guideline in our exposition: (1) Is each degree of the Self sound in its construction? (2) What exactly is the Cartesian Self (3) To what extent are the current conceptions of the Cartesian Self compatible with each other?

In order to formulate a response towards the above issues, it may be helpful to consider conceptions of the self and the world in East Asian philosophies, which have seen significant debate surrounding the concept of the self both in its own context and by influence from other cultures, including Indian philosophy through Buddhism. In particular, we are to consider Wang Yang-ming (王陽明), more officially known as Wang Shouren (王守仁) (1472-1529), a philosopher of the Neo-Confucian tradition, a tradition which, though has its basis on Confucianism at large, adopts elements from a variety of other philosophical schools including Taoism and Buddhism, and have developed one of the most complete Metaphysical systems in the history of Chinese Philosophy. The

specific choice of Wang Yangming also considers his emphasis on the mind (心) which he differentiates himself from other notable predecessors of the same tradition (Zhu Xi, the Two Chengs etc.).

The paper will be structured through the following sections. We shall first delineate the Cartesian Self and alight its issues, then outline Wang's Neo-Confucian system of metaphysics and its method of correlation with ethics at large while finally considering implications between the two and how Wang's system could be used to facilitate and resolve issues with the Cartesian conception of the self.

We shall conclude that the (three) degrees of the self shall be compatible with each other, and that although there exist seemingly unsound systematic errors in Descartes' system, by adoption of an interpretation inspired by Wang's philosophy such an issue may be resolved. The question of what specifically the Cartesian self is, however, still remains unanswered.

II. Outline of the Cartesian Self

As we have proposed, there exist different degrees to the problem of what the Cartesian Self is, of which we shall select three to focus on predominantly in this exposition. There exists (1) a degree of the Self solely as "a thing that thinks" (AT VII 27), (2) a degree that consists of a unified mind-body composite (AT VII 81), and (3) even to the extent of whether a Cartesian person, which results in an involvement with society and politics (AT IV 293). Even so, we may later observe that all those degrees build upon the first degree, for which the system of the mind of this very first degree remains prone to error.

The first and second degrees are most explicitly elucidated in the system that Descartes proposed. The first degree could be summarized in the following quote, which we shall dissect in detail:

> I am, I exist – that is certain. But for how long? For as long as I am thinking. For it could be that were I totally to cease from thinking, I should totally cease to exist. At present I am not admitting anything except what is necessarily true. I am, then, in the strict sense only a thing that thinks; that is, I am a mind, or intelligence, or intellect, or reason – words whose meaning I have been ignorant of until now. (AT VII 27)

It is important to note a caveat that when Descartes develops further his system, there shall exist a difference between the intellect and the mind, which he seems to equate in this occasion, as intellect will then be conceived as part of the mind instead of identical with the mind. The reason that Descartes developed this statement on the "I" is mostly due to his argument from doubt. It is then that Descartes attempts to reduce the "I" to a state of which one cannot doubt its properties, with which he eliminates any bodily mechanism (including sense-perception etc.), as what we know for certain is only limited to the self and not any external things, and finally arriving at the conclusion of thought still able to persist (AT VII 27).

There are manifold properties of this equivalence between self and the mind, though mainly regarding the structure of the mind which presents significance in expositions both in the specific context of Descartes and in relation to Neo-Confucian philosophy.

Portrait of René Descartes, Frans Hals.

The structure of the mind is expanded to a great extent in the Fourth Meditation, in which Descartes details that the processes of the mind is operated through the interactions and cooperation of the intellect and the will (AT VII 56). There also exists a rather noteworthy entity of a "Natural Light" which persists throughout the operations of the mind in both faculties. Conventional understanding by the definitions of each alone will result in the following. The intellect "enables me to perceive the ideas which are subjects for possible judgement." It is also mentioned that it contains "no errors", and that perhaps one may confuse error with simply an inherent limit imposed on the intellect, or that it is finite (ibid.). The will, on the other hand, is considered a "faculty of choice." This faculty primarily executes the "acts of judging" due not by "the perception of the intellect" but by the "determination of the will" (AT VIIIB 363). Such definitions seem to pleasantly fits Descartes' previous categorizations of knowledge in the Third Meditation. The ideas, which the intellect is in charge of, are compared to "images of things", which may entail that it is non-propositional and so they contain no inherent truth or falsity (such as God when in form of a concept implies no truth or falsity, but could be true or false if it is put in relation to another concept, like the proposition God exists), which does not need, while the judgements are thoughts which contains affirmations and the act of assenting to things that are more than just the idea itself but extend to others, and so should be either true or false (AT VII 37, AT VIIIB 363). The natural light plays a role in both faculties. In the intellect, it provides for its ideas or thoughts that we clearly and distinctively perceive (AT VII 59). In the will, the natural light allows for the inherent tendency or inclination to judge a clear and distinct proposition or judgement as true (AT VII 59). The natural light is also framed as similar to a power of understanding (AT VII 60). This power of understanding may then be involved both in the intellect, as comprehension and organization into conceivable and comprehensible ideas, and as a sort of logical intuition which allows for comprehension in the perspective of logical validity and relation.

The relation between the mind, body, and the world have been a problem for most of the history of Western philosophy.

Note that this line of reasoning seems not to be consistent. Specifically, there seems to be a contradiction in the scope of perception for which the intellect provides. In the Third Meditation, ideas are interpreted as concepts or singular non-propositional ideas clear of any truth or falsity. However, the role of the natural light in the intellect seems to be geared with great propensity towards a propositional conception on the subjects of the intellect, as what is clear and distinct is most definitely true, which seems to not be possible in a non-propositional form. One form of compromise is the separation of error and falsity, in which one claims that ideas can actually be true, and what is error in judgement is simply assenting a false idea, while the criterion of the idea is to correspond with its object (Larmore, 2016). This, however, reaffirms a particular issue as correspondence with an object is itself a proposition or a relation, instead of the definition proposed in the Third Meditation which maintains an idea to be non-propositional.

The second degree of the self may be generalized as concerning the relation between the mind and the body. This is evident in later conceptions of the self, though initially presented in the following passage:

> But what am I? A thing that thinks. What is that? A thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, is willing, is unwilling, and also imagines and has sensory perceptions. (AT VII 28)

This is clearly not the pure conception of the mind as presented before, but one which includes matters of imaginations and "sensory perceptions", which are clearly information not purely provided by what seems to be the natural light in clear and distinct form, but also involves perceptions that requires the input of the body, which involves the realm of extension.

However, it is not only that there exists a difference in information input, but the grander problem lies in how such information is transferred. Descartes strongly affirms that there exists a dualism between the body and mind, as

proposed in two arguments. The first being that the mind is indivisible while the body is divisible, and so if one divides the composite, it is only the body that will be divided, but the mind still persists, implying that they are ontologically distinct (AT VII 86). The other is delineated in the Principles which argues that each substance can only have one principal attribute, and since the principal attribute of the mind is thinking, and the body is extension, they are ontologically distinct (AT VIIIA 23).

This then casts doubt on (1) whether the mind-body interaction is ontological, and (2) whether a mind-body composite can really be counted as the self if the body is not necessary for the mind to exist. If we cannot answer such questions, investigations on the third degree may be up to doubt, since although the argument of personhood does not necessarily require metaphysical expositions of the mind-body composite, it does rely on the "human being", which is practically this mind-body composite.

III. Outline of the Conception of the Self of Wang Yangming

The concept of the self serves to be rather blurred in the philosophy of Wang Yangming; there exists no direct description or definition of the very concept of the self, but instead allows for his theory to revolve around the supposition of subjectivity, though not denying the importance of the self in Wang's theory.

Before delineating the mechanics and operations of the self, one must first discuss what consists specifically of the self. That is, it is definitive that the mind (心) is constituently existent within the self, but whether it is equivalent to the self is still a question to be answered. It seems that, however, the optimal state of being for the self is in fact to not outline the boundaries of the self, or rather, "to exist in an all-pervading unity with Heaven, Earth, and all things [以天地萬物為一體者也]," as this is what virtuous and great men (大人) perceives of their being (Questions on the Great Learning [大學問], Wang). Thus, the self in the technical sense seems only to be a subjective categorization, but even if so, this concept requires a conceiver, as which we shall further elaborate in the cognitive theory of Wang. For now, since it requires a conceiver, we may suppose that the objective self really is equivalent with the mind, even if the concept of the self differs.

From this supposition we may look more specifically at the constituents of the mind. By generalizations, the mind is ultimately a combination of passivity (靜) and activity (動), of which we may divide generally into two corresponding sections, in which one may use the same framework to divide into two further subsections. The first degree includes the division of inherent substance (體) as passive and functioning or applying (用) as active (答倫彥式, 全集 5.2) . Inherent substance may be interpreted as the heavenly principle and its internal manifestations, such as liangzhi (良知) or translated by Bodde as intuitive knowledge, since it is the principle which remains constant (傳習錄上卷, 陸澄錄24). Functioning or applying may refer to the activity and extensions regarding the principle, which originates from the subjectivity of man. This further subjectivity can also be divided into two attitudes categorized through activity and passivity (or perhaps quiescence). The section of passivity mainly concerns the following of principle, while the section of activity relates to excess intent such as desires (欲) and mental calculation [故循理之謂靜，從欲之謂動] (答倫彥式, 全書 5.2).

Portrait of Wang Yangming, Anon.

The passive section of the first degree may be further delineated as follows. There are two main components, namely the manifestation of illustrious virtue (明明德), and resting in supreme good (止至善) (Great Learning [大學], Zengzi). This illustrious virtue is seen in the concept of ren (仁), or rather universal love, which according to Wang is inherent in both virtuous and unvirtuous men and is present despite seemingly not being manifested in one's actions (Questions on the Great Learning [大學問], Wang). This

lack of presentation of ren in unvirtuous men is not in fact a fault of ren itself, but in fact is the blockage and confusion caused by the unvirtuous themselves, which is regulated via the more active section; ren is always innately present and good. One must also note that ren is the origin of the unity of the self with the world, and not the process of it. Henceforth, ren is very much a static concept or idea (ibid.).

Travelers Among Mountains and Streams, Fan Kuan. The main point of Neo-Confucian dispute is the relationship between the heart-mind and objects of the external world.

Behind ren, there exists the supreme good. The supreme good acts as a standard for the manifestation of illustrious virtue and the loving of people (an action) and is conferred to us by heaven in the most purely good manner [至善者，明德、親民之極也。天命之性，猝然至善。] (ibid.). The manifestation and exhibition of this highest good is then known as intuitive knowledge or liangzhi. Intuitive knowledge allows for the spontaneous elucidation of what is correct and what is incorrect following the guidance of the supreme good. By this elucidation, there also consists of an element of immediate comprehension. However, this judgement of correctness most definitely involves the extension towards things or rather affairs, internal or external, which we may in fact include the concept of ren itself – though it may appear that there exist two spontaneous intuitive faculties, but ren, unlike liangzhi is a purely static idea, while liangzhi may serve both in a passive sense of itself but may also be viewed actively in the judgement and scrutiny of affairs. Furthermore, it is also demonstrated that ren is by order of precedence a consequent of intuitive knowledge as being its original state (ibid.).

It shall also be emphasized that intuitive knowledge is purely good since it is a direct manifestation of the supreme good. Furthermore, the intuitive knowledge, and implicitly the supreme good themselves are equivalent to heavenly principle [吾心之良知即所謂天理] (傳習錄中卷，答顧東橋書6). By this argument, heavenly principle exists in its highest form innately within the self or mind, which may resemble the argument of the School of Principle as in how both the supreme good and the particular principle exists within the same object at the same time, though the key difference is that it is not only wholly present as both schools suggest, but is wholly internally manifest, which the School of Principle denies. This would be important in the completion of Wang's conception of the self with consideration in activity.

The active section of the first degree consists itself of activity and passivity in the second degree. Activity of the second degree is that which results in desires and mental calculation, which obscures and limits the manifestation of intuitive knowledge in actions or in extensions of intuitive knowledge (Questions on the Great Learning [大學問], Wang). This also explains the origin of evil, since the coexistence of evil and supreme good in the same entity seems to be rather contradictory.

Passivity of the second degree is characterized by the correct and rightful conformity to the spontaneous intuitions by the intuitive knowledge by the supreme good. Such conformity entails the thesis that all particular principles of objects exist wholly in the mind, instead of particular principles within specific objects. This is explained by the following reasoning.

All states of affairs in our mind requires for the composition of intent or thought (意) and its corresponding object (物) in which the thought lies. Such objects could be both physical (such as drinking from a bottle of water or

repairing a lamp) or non-physical (such as evaluating the correctness of an idea), and is composite as an affair (事) or more abstractly a proposition (傳習錄上卷, 徐愛錄6). What we ought to do by such intent or thought is to see them as investigation of things (格物), in which this "investigation" is represented as thought but is extended by correcting it (正). This correction requires for the application of a standard, for which intuitive knowledge provides itself as a means in rightful correction of affairs. From this, a first conclusion could be made regarding the status of the self. Since intuitive knowledge is used in correction (in form of an extension) for all states of affairs in action, the intuitive knowledge, which is equivalent to heavenly principle, takes parts in all objects of intent. The heavenly principle in our mind therefore is essentially part of every object and affair we have encountered, and so naturally it is us who provides principle to all things, instead of presupposing that there exists a particular eternal principle in every single thing. Moreover, since it is the culmination of the whole of the mind in both its active and passive faculties which allows for the provision and incorporation of principle to other objects, one may henceforth argue that it is ultimately the mind that is the same as the principle itself (傳習錄中卷, 答顧東橋書6).

The above, therefore, presents Wang's conception of the self as the mind, and from which it contains the whole of the principle, and by which the existence of principle is dependent on the existence of the mind, and while the mind in its original state necessarily requires the presence of principle. The precise metaphysical status of Wang's mind is rather unclear; one may adopt the view that he follows from his predecessors of the School of Mind in supporting the mind as a purely physical thing, but that may be doubted due to the complexity of the theory, while we must also acknowledge that this does not follow an idealistic metaphysic, since there does exist a cosmological view of the world and its relation to the self. There also exists points of doubt relating to what correctness really means; there is an apparent correlation between metaphysics and ethics, since the whole ontology of the mind is based on the supreme good which is a seemingly ethical principle following ren, though ren is only a derivative concept of intuitive knowledge and the later theory of the extension of intuitive knowledge seems not to be limited to a purely ethical scope. That is, the incorporation of principle into general things seems not to be purely ethical, but more broadly epistemological.

IV. Comparison of Both Philosophies in Light of Issues of the Cartesian Self

There exist several issues to be resolved in the Cartesian conception of the self. This includes: (1) the question of contradiction due to the natural light in the concept of ideas within the intellect by clarity and distinctness, (2) the question of interaction between the mind and the body, and (3) the linkage of personhood with the concept of the self. Such are proposed in the first section, from which through the first issue we shall derive entailments to resolutions of the other issues.

The first issue may be solved with a more thorough investigation on clarity and distinctness. Descartes defines clarity in the Principles as when something is present and accessible to the attentive mind, and distinctness as being sharply separated from all other perceptions that it contains within itself what is clear (AT VIII 22). If we consider such definitions, it seems that clarity and distinctness could in fact be prescribed to non-propositional "ideas" after all. Clarity seems to be an easier concept to grasp, since the "bringing to attention" is really just that the idea is organized into an object of thought. Distinctness, however, requires more explication. In the Principles, Descartes uses pain as an example of something clear but not distinct. We know that it is clear since it is clearly perceivable, but it is not distinct as we often confuse of it as a physical occurrence even if it is mental, since it is considered as sensation (ibid.). Thus, it is then ideas which avoid such a fault that fulfills the criterion of distinctness. What we shall eventually arrive is the total elimination of sensory experiences from this class, since sensory ideas or perceptions does not solely rely on definition, but presents itself through rough manifestations, which allows for erroneous conceptions of such an idea, since ambiguities exist within what consists of such an idea; another way to formulate it is that its essential form is in fact unclear, since when we conceive of it, we cannot directly rest on its complete and perfect form e.g. when we think of blue, we can only conceive of it as a color, but there exists no definite shade that seems to embody it, or when conceiving of pain, we can only think of manifestations, while the core of it is unreachable. This causes non-distinctness since what it consists of is not specific but is in fact variational. However, clear and distinct ideas, such as God, geometric shapes (extension), have clear essential forms, as in there exists no ambiguity within its concept since when we conceive of it, we can clearly conceive of its precise definition and form. As a caveat, however, this explication is very much an attempt of analytic dissection, even if the clarity of essence could be very much intuitive, as Descartes have demonstrated in the fifth meditation (AT VII 67-68). Therefore, if we follow the definitions as delineated by Descartes in the Principles, non-propositional ideas could be clear and distinct.

The question now rests in how clarity and distinctness correlate with truth and falsity, since it is evident that ideas still cannot be true or false. Indeed, Descartes did, in his third meditation declare that "whatever I perceive very

clearly and distinctly is true" (AT VII 35). What I shall here propose is that this statement in fact could be valid in a sense, for which it is not the idea itself that is judged to be true, but more precisely that it embodies truth itself, by which we may reference Wang's theory of self to elucidate this. There exist multiple parallels between Wang's theory of the self and that of Descartes', of which we may list below. (1) Both the natural light and intuitive knowledge provides spontaneously an inclination of rightful judgement, and (2) both admit that it is not the fault of the natural light itself that obscures and perverts the original inclination, but the fault of the subject; in Descartes, it is the thinking self which, without sufficient information as provided by the intellect, attempts to use the will to reach towards judgement that involves suppositions that may not be confirmed clearly and distinctly by the natural light (AT VII 58), while in Wang it is selfish desires and excessive mental calculation that results in error; in both cases, the spontaneous faculty is perfect and completely good. (3) Furthermore, there also exists certain innate ideas or knowledge; in Descartes, what we have just delineated as clear and distinct, and in Wang in form of ren, which is a derivative concept from intuitive knowledge as entailed through the supreme good or the heavenly principle. (4) Correspondingly, we also have the matter of propositions which arise from the process of the investigation of things (格物), of which the things are seen and framed as affairs or alternatively propositions.

By this, clear and distinct ideas are derivatives of the natural light, though they are also subject to the judgement of the natural light themselves (since ren is judged in its magnitude by intuitive knowledge though it is also derivative). The natural light is also present in the active faculty (the will), in which there exists things (物) presented as propositions or relations of ideas (事), in which the rule of the natural light is to correct the relation (正) by standard of clarity and distinctness. Though this approximation is definitely roughwork, it does reveal a possibility of resolution. What this reveal is that although clear and distinct ideas are subject of judgement to the natural light, they themselves could be part of the standard that is generalized as clarity and distinctness (does the proposition follow logically the rule of extension? Does the proposition comply with the orders of precedence in objective and formal reality by means of perfection as derived from God?); manifestations of it are later used for judgement of propositions. This then accounts for why they could technically be "true", though they themselves are not judged to be true or false per se, they take part in the judgement of propositions as frameworks that may determine the truth of propositions; they are part of the standard of truth, and so since the source of this truth are ideas, they may be interpreted as true themselves.

Indeed, one may argue that there does not exist a necessity to complicate the theory of cognition as offered by Descartes, and that there is no basis that clear and distinct ideas are derivative of the natural light. One must, however, acknowledge that there exist deep ambiguities concerning the Cartesian cognitive system, which we may summarize in the following argument. We know that there exist ideas that is provided by the intellect, from which ideas are then arranged in relation and is judged by the will, and by which such are propositions that are judged to be incorrect due to confusion and ambiguities of the ideas which itself is a manifestation of attempting knowledge outside of the bounds of the intellect. The will is supplied by a propensity of truth by the natural light, but since it is the ideas in relation to other ideas that are judged, there must then be a reference of truthfulness that is in the form of an idea so that the relation is judged to be true. The natural light itself cannot be a source of this since it is an intuitional force and not an idea itself. Therefore, since clear and distinct ideas themselves are the only pure affiliates of the natural light, they must be ideas of reference in the judgement of truth. If we shall adopt this subtle distinction, the first issue is resolved.

The Cartesian theory of the mind if resolved and its inconsistency issues could serve as a building block for other conceptions of self.

We are now left with the issue of whether the "human being" and the "person" is part of the self, the former consisting of a mind-body composite, and the latter consisting of an ethical dimension. Since we have developed an interpretation of the operations of the Cartesian mind, we may suggest further utilizing its concepts. There exists a corresponding clear and distinct idea for each view of the self, with the former being extension and the latter being God. For the human being, it seems that reaching for a specific description of an ontological interaction between the two would be difficult. However, reaching the conclusion that there does exist an ontological connection is much clearer, since it is in fact unnecessary to prove a specific system of connection as the self we currently define restricts itself towards the mind. The ontological connection between the mind and the body is evidentially entailed due to the fact that it is only perceptions originating (either

directly or indirectly) from the brain through the body that can be comprehended by the intellect and judged by the will as part of thought, instead of any other extensional knowledge outside of the bodily scope. Thus, since there exists such a connection, the body, causally or directly, is part of the process of thought, since it determines and restricts the ideas received by the intellect, which is then unified with the will through extension as a clear and distinct knowledge. For personhood, since there exists God as a clear and distinct idea, and that the numerous qualities that Descartes attributes to God – infinite, independent, supremely intelligent, supremely powerful (AT VII 45) – involves a certain measure in accordance with perfection of God, it may suggest since clear and distinct idea are references of truths, that such also includes a measure of values in accordance with the conception of God, which may include ethical values of common theology; since personhood is built upon the basis of a human being, it may also encompass that.

V. Conclusion

If we take the above into account, what we arrive at is the conception that considering the degree of the self as a solely thinking thing, both personhood and the mind-body composite could be compatible with such a self since they are both innate within the mind as necessary components of thought – that is, in neo-Confucian terms, the incorporation of things into principle by extension of intuitive knowledge through the supreme good. Since one may argue that extension does not necessarily imply the incorporation of the body, the ontological connection in form of the limitation and specification of the intellect by the body serves as a support for further involvement of the body within the process of the mind and is then unified with the will by extension as a clear and distinct idea. This answers the question of compatibility.

As a basis of this solution to compatibility, we have also adopted an interpretation of the Cartesian mind so to resolve inconsistencies within the system concerning the natural light by comparison to Wang's theory of the mind through the self. However, the question of what exactly the Cartesian self is still remains rather elusive, since the argument of compatibility is highly dependent on the self as strictly being the mind and by that building upon such with each degree of the self; it is a question of categorization and semantics mostly between personhood and the mind, since personhood does encompass thought and human being as its basis added with moral connotations, though personhood itself is now contained within the mind. Descartes does not give clear indications on this issue, since the very concept of the self is rarely mentioned, or when mentioned, may not be consistent throughout his works.
specific choice of Wang Yangming also considers his emphasis on the mind (心) which he differentiates himself from other notable predecessors of the same tradition (Zhu Xi, the Two Chengs etc.).

Picture of Paeonia lactiflora from Xian'e Changchun Album, Giuseppe Castiglione. This Italian painter worked as a member of the Qing Imperial Court, resulting in a distinctive mixed style. Cross-cultural research deserves much attention.

The paper will be structured through the following sections. We shall first delineate the Cartesian Self and alight its issues, then outline Wang's Neo-Confucian system of metaphysics and its method of correlation with ethics at large while finally considering implications between the two and how Wang's system could be used to facilitate and resolve issues with the Cartesian conception of the self.

We shall conclude that the (three) degrees of the self shall be compatible with each other, and that although there exist seemingly unsound systematic errors in Descartes' system, by adoption of an interpretation inspired by Wang's philosophy such an issue may be resolved. The question of what specifically the Cartesian self is, however, still remains unanswered.

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"The good life is one inspired by love and guided by knowledge."

— Bertrand Russell, *What I Believe* (1925)