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Chapter 1
The Philosopher's Path to San Jose: Nondualism, Distributed Cognition, and Imagination

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The title of this lecture, "The Philosopher's Path to San Jose, nondualism, distributed cognition, and imagination" is designed to invite readers to explore the fruitful fusion of embodied cognitive science, linguistics, and modern Japanese philosophy. The goal of this project is to tackle how we think about our world, both philosophically and in our everyday experiences. Importantly, I am not only talking about how human beings think about their world, but also what "world" in "world philosophy" refers to. A key problem of interest is how Western philosophy of mind and cognitive science focus almost exclusively on an abstract conceptualization of reason, which stands over and above our bodies and the natural world. This focus, as I will argue below, fundamentally distorts our understanding of both the mind-environment relationships in cognitive science and the history and philosophies of our shared world. Thus, in order to correct our misunderstandings of the world, we should view projects that challenge dogmatic views of the mind and the history of Western philosophy together.

The barriers we face are often referred to as dualisms, which construct and maintain boundaries between the mind and body, the mind/other minds, the human/nature, as well as between countries and philosophical traditions from different cultures. In cognitive science, the computational mind is taken as the control center of the body and the

primary means for our perception, knowledge, and capacity for action. In philosophy, this manifests in the borders between Western and non-Western traditions that we reify in the abstract. In order to imagine the East-West dualism differently, I will begin by developing ways that we think about ourselves and our world, and draw connections with how we think of the myriad philosophical traditions throughout history.

My project focuses on two paths that converge, or fuse, forming a strategy for engaging in productive cross-cultural research in cognitive science. I will begin with a jovial example from John Haugeland titled "The Road to San Jose," where he predicts and rejects the extended mind hypothesis made famous by Clark and Chalmers (Haugeland 1993/1998; Clark and Chalmers 1998). In doing so, I hope to recover Haugeland's worldview that has been often overlooked. The second is the approach to world philosophy developed by Nishida Kitarō, which I refer to as the "Philosopher's Path" in reference to the famous *Tetsugaku-no-michi* in Kyoto. It symbolizes his broad engagement with the world in cross-cultural philosophy and his non-dualistic approach that resonates with contemporary scientific worldviews. This lecture will focus primarily on ideas in embodied cognitive science and linguistics and will conclude with a reflection on Nishida's work.

What is Fusion Philosophy?

This work is only a part of a larger project that involves a method known as fusion philosophy, which is a form of cross-cultural philosophy that goes beyond mere comparison in order to meaningfully contribute to each side of the project. Fusion philosophy is widely debated and has been developed most recently in Chakrabarti and Weber's book *Comparative Philosophy Without Borders*. Unlike East-West comparative projects, fusion philosophy aims to create

something new that goes beyond dialogue or a bridge-building between traditions. This deals with both problems of symmetry where common generalizations of two traditions are taken equally, and asymmetry where one tradition is taken to be superior to the other. It is considered without borders, because it challenges the myths of supremacy and continuity of each cultural tradition without erasing them. Chakrabarti and Weber provide a quote from Jay Garfield (2002) to elucidate this.

> Philosophy is, however, a live enterprise, both in the West and in the East, and if cross-cultural philosophy is to mean anything and to contribute anything to philosophical progress, it must do so with a view towards ideas and their development…. The task is to provide a common horizon that can be a background for genuine collaboration and conversation in a joint philosophical venture. The possibilities for such a venture are enormous. The enlargement of the world's scholarly community and the range of texts and resources on which it can draw portends a greater philosophical depth and rate of progress (Garfield 2002; Chakrabarti and Weber 2015: 1–29).

Using this method, I explore how imagining the world differently impacts both our understanding of the mind-world relationship in cognitive science and our understanding of the history of world philosophies. In order to engage in philosophy and cognitive science responsibly, we must reimagine traditional notions of our world. Failing to do so risks creating and perpetuating misleading biases in philosophy, science, and society. The convergence of these two paths is motivated by the radical hypothesis that our mind is not contained "in the head," but is distributed throughout our world. Reimagining our mind and world in this way has major implications for our understanding of the

interconnectedness of human beings now and throughout history.

Path 1: The Extended Mind vs. The Embedded Mind

Let's begin with a pair of opposing ideas in contemporary Western philosophy of mind and cognitive science. To best understand the debate, we should view them side-by-side. The first comes from Haugeland (1993/1998) with his paper "Mind Embodied and Embedded" and the second comes from the famous Clark and Chalmers (1998) paper titled "The Extended Mind Hypothesis." I would like to demonstrate that Haugeland's argument predicts Clark and Chalmers' conclusions in a profound way and its importance extends beyond mere debates about the mind.

Haugeland writes,

> I have postponed till last the most obvious externalization of human intelligence — texts, images, maps, diagrams, programs, and the like — not because I underestimate their importance, but because they are so similar to what is traditionally supposed to be in the mind. That poses two dangers. First, it distracts attention from the radicalness of the claim that intelligence abides in the meaningful world: not just books and records, but roads and plows, offices, laboratories, and communities. Second, it makes it too easy for a traditionalist to think: "External representations are not really integral to intelligence, but are merely devices for conveying or restoring to intelligence proper — the inner mind — contents which it might otherwise lack" (Haugeland 1993/1998: 236).

So, to contrast that with Clark and Chalmers in the paper that follows Haugeland they say that it is possible to "extend" the mind on

rare occasions. They argue that;

> While some mental states, such as experiences, may be determined internally, there are other cases in which external factors make a significant contribution. In particular, we will argue that beliefs can be constituted partly by features of the environment, when those features play the right sort of role in driving cognitive processes. If so, the mind extends into the world (Clark and Chalmers 1998: 12).

Then, they move to introduce the famous Inga and Otto example, where Otto has Alzheimer's or has some sort of mental deficiency, but he can rely on his notebook that is ready to hand which helps him to store his memories externally. In direct contrast with the incidental extension proposed by Clark and Chalmers, Haugeland introduces his famous example of how he travels to San Jose, "[l]et me tell you how I get to San Jose, I pick the right road, Interstate 80 South, I stay on it, and I get off at the end." You can almost hear the jovial tone in his writing. He continues;

> Can we say that the road knows the way to San Jose, or perhaps that the road and I collaborate? I don't think this is as crazy as it may sound at first. The complexity of the road, its shape, is comparable to that of the task, and highly specific thereto; moreover, staying on the road requires constant high-bandwidth interaction with its very complexity. In other words, the internal guidance systems of the road itself must be closely coupled, in part because much of that information upon which the ability depends is encoded in the road (Haugeland 1993/1998: 237).

He argues, therefore, that the mind is not incidentally, but intimately

embodied and intimately embedded in its world. This is in contrast to the Clark and Chalmers case where they say that Otto can extend his mind to the notebook, because he is especially familiar with using it. In their view, it just so happens that the information lies beyond the skin. It's just incidental. Haugeland predicts the many shortcomings of the incidentally extended mind and presents a case that fits with our embodied experiences of the world. This has many far-reaching consequences, because it details a disagreement about the human's place in relation to the world. For Haugeland, even though he's just talking about thinking in particular situations like juggling or going to work, he is explaining that the world itself is filled to the brim with meaning. Importantly, our environment is something that our bodies and our brains are suited to interact with. Taking this a step further, because the coupling of the mind and environmental information is distributed, rather than centralized in the head, things like values and meaning can be seen as distributed.

Although Haugeland's critique has been overlooked by some, there is a parallel project in Ecolinguistics, which takes aim at the incidentally extended mind and its place within the broad 4E (embodied, embedded, extended, and enacted) Cognition movement.[1] Ecolinguists like Sune Vork Steffensen accept that the mind is not "in the head" but argue that there are problems with the idea that the mind is merely extended from the head to things like notebooks on occasion. Steffensen (2011) issues five challenges to the extended mind hypothesis and I will focus on two of them. He argues that language "... functions metaphorically as airborne synapses in distributed cognitive systems," and "... provides an extended ecology within which human cognizers engage in languaging."

1 However, Miki would criticize Bergson in the following moment for failing to dialectically unite intellect and instinct and instinct and collective habits. See MKZ 8, 109–110.

These moves are central to the idea that cognition and language are distributed through the environment and the world around us. Importantly, both human agents and the world are active parts of a mutual process of shaping and being shaped by each other. Steffensen articulates this with a profound series of comparisons (Steffensen 2011: 205).

> Language gives us some of the same advantages that spiders, beavers and monkeys get from their webs, dams and calls: it has ensured that each of us is equipped with an extended phenotype. However, as argued above, language is not organism-centered. Rather, the language-induced extension of the human mind and phenotype depends on a cultural meshwork that is constantly renewed by the interaction and co-action of human beings. Like the beavers' dam, languaging has a history that is influenced by situation-transcending third parties, just as what is left of our voices will silently contribute to the interactions of our descendants. Being the domain of third parties, our dam of language is heritable, variable and amenable to selection. The historically grounded, situation-transcending dimension of human cognition scatters its distribution in time.

It's difficult to grasp the implications of the distributed approach to language and cognition. For our purposes, this move helps explain how the peculiarity of language impacts how we think and imagine. If we think of the development of ideas over time, given the idea that some ideas linger and reshape our environment like a spider's web, the history of ideas and perspectives begins to take shape. While we are capable of engaging in conversations, human linguistic activities that change history go far beyond the abstract concepts in a song or lecture because

they are materialized or preserved in our world. In a sense, the world acts as Otto's notebook for all of us. What's especially interesting is that we can then begin to discuss how misunderstandings can be understood as forms of misinterpretations or mistranslations.

One result of this view is that the history of world philosophy has been a collaborative world-involving project, where our view of history has been painted by the narratives we spin over time. This is in contrast with the views of science and philosophy in many history books, which tell a monolithic story of Western ideas that begin in Greece, travel through Europe, and end in America without any mention of the myriad points of contact and influences from so-called non-Western traditions. It makes sense why contemporary science and philosophy discard non-Western ideas as non-scientific and non-philosophical because we have deliberately spun narrative webs about the greatness of Western civilization. One consequence of accepting the interconnected nature of the mind and world is accepting the interconnected nature of cultures and histories.

In their most recent work, Steffensen and Cowley (2021) develop an approach called Radical Embodied Ecolinguistics which aims to refocus language and human living in terms of interconnectedness and our world. They argue that "radical embodied ecolinguistics connects small-scale actions, the extended ecology and bio-ecological transformations based on social activity." This demonstrates how one can construct complex and highly abstract ideas through our connection to our shared world. This includes the fact that human civilizations are defined by their interactions and connections with each other.

> Instead of centering on individual persons, *languaging* is seen as sustaining human living. For ecolinguists, special weight falls on how its scientific extensions extend understanding beyond the

human domain (Steffensen and Cowley 2021: 732).

I interpret this as a shift from individual language use to language as a world-involving activity. This is deeply important because they are developing a scientific research program that does not place the rational human being above nature, which has been the standard of Western science for generations. Instead, they view the human being as a relational process of human becoming that involves interaction with each other and nature. Thus, I argue that in order to understand the lifecycle of ideas throughout human history, we have to think about the world in these terms.

This kind of radical non-dualistic approach to languaging and our world is easier to grasp with a concrete example. Consider the contemporary debate in America regarding the removal of monuments to Confederate generals from the American Civil War. This is an important example for this framework because it helps illustrate how bias and political ideologies emerge over time and how our environments shape them.

The United States has a long and complicated history with racism, racist laws, and white supremacist ideology. There is a kind of misremembering of history that results from a reimagining of US history which glorifies the Confederacy by covering up historical injustices and atrocities. At this moment, there are hundreds of statues built of Confederate generals and soldiers. In the abstract, it is possible to think of these as historical monuments designed to remind us of the divisiveness of our history. In reality, the majority of these monuments were commissioned decades after the Civil War in the 1920s in direct response to political movements fighting for equal rights for non-White Americans. They were political tools designed to glorify powerful symbols of cultural segregation and assert the power of white American culture. These monuments are materialized narratives of white

supremacy which persists today.

This has created problems today because as we start having real conversations about taking these monuments down, there are people who claim that this is an erasure of history. When you understand the mind as something that is distributed throughout the environment, you can start thinking about how brands, or statues, or signs are actually external memories. If you create something like a statue and you leave it there long enough, it will outlast your life and outlast the conversations you have about it. Even if you know the history of a particular monument, the next person who comes up is going to have to discover that for themselves.

Consider again how Steffensen likens the power of languaging to a beaver's dam. Each monument persists and shapes how others think about, interact with, and view the area. Language empowers us to change our environment in ways that will outlast any individual conversation. Thinking about ideas this way necessarily involves wrestling with how ideas, monuments, and works of art create cultural histories and national identities. This is deeply significant. When you think of things this way, there is a clear continuity between the problems in both the philosophy of mind and world philosophy. It is my hope that this shift in perspectives makes it more difficult to accept that Western philosophy and culture emerged in isolation. Instead, our view of a monolithic Western civilization is better understood as a series of misunderstood monuments to a false narrative of the past.

Path 2: A Reflection on Nishida's Worldview

Having explored ways to reimagine problems in Western cognitive science and linguistics, I would now like to conclude with a path forward toward cross-cultural cognitive science without borders. I

have written extensively about the fruitfulness of fusion philosophy as a method and the mutual benefits of exploring Nishida's nondualistic philosophy in dialogue with the enactive and ecological approaches in cognitive science (See McKinney 2020; McKinney et al. 2020). Now, I would like to turn to a brief reflection on Nishida's worldview and approach to world philosophy. Yusa (2002) captures key insights into Nishida's life as he reflects upon his work.

> Logic is not something separate from the historical world; rather, it is the formula of the expressive self-formation of historical life (*rekishiteki-seimei*). Even Aristotle's logic was not a simple formal logic; it was a historical and social logic of Greece that had Plato's philosophy in the background. As such, it was connected with the metaphysical world of the Greeks. But this does not mean that logic is a product of each historical epoch, nor does it mean that there is no objective universality. Rather, each historical epoch is a unique product of concrete historical life, and as such, it has its own way of looking at things and thinking about things. Each epoch may be considered a particularized formulation of concrete logic. The formulation of concrete logic has to be sought in the establishment of historical life (Yusa 2002: 304).

He ends by reflecting on his own path to get to this realization. He says that;

> I'm not suggesting that people take up the philosophical problems that I took up. But I'd like to say this much: to simply switch the topic of one's philosophical inquiry is not synonymous with making one's thought anew. Also, that a philosophical problem touches on concrete reality does not necessarily mean that the thinker's thought

> is "concrete". In this present historical period, which requires us to look back on the cultural heritage nurtured by our ancestors in a global perspective, I think it's necessary we return to the most fundamental mode of viewing and thinking of our philosophical engagements (1939) (Yusa 2002: 304).

Nishida's reflection encourages us to reimagine the world and our foundational and seemingly universal beliefs about it. Even views that are said to encompass all of reality, like Aristotelian logic, are situated perspectives on the world. This directly relates to Nishida's rejection of God's eye views of objective reality and resonates with the embodied perspectivism in ecological, enactive, and ecolinguistic approaches. Importantly, Nishida motivates his approach to world philosophy by rejecting the narrative that all ideas are derivative of Western philosophy and science. Instead, our worlds are social, cultural, and developed over time. Nishida has been criticized for the conclusions he draws about Japanese culture, which are worth exploring, but the key takeaway for this project is the shared ground of each system. Regardless of what perspective we take, when switching from one worldview to another we are still thinking about the same world. This creates pathways for comparing ideologies, even if they are supposed to be exclusive or universal, because they arise in the same place and through the same world.

Instead of arguing for one worldview over all others, I hope to adopt Nishida's motivation for engaging in world philosophy and the exchange of ideas. Every human being, and each culture and tradition, arise as parts of the same world. This creates a unique path forward when trying to overcome ideological differences. I want to encourage us to consider the history of the world without borders. To do so, we should think about the world differently, both as embodied agents and in

terms of how language can shape the possible narratives and imaginings in the future.

Cross-cultural philosophy should not be seen as a subfield of philosophy. Philosophical traditions do not arise in isolation and exclusive narratives obscure the interconnectedness of human history. The importance of this kind of argument can be found in debates about the relationship between the mind and the world and in the rise in nationalist narratives around the globe. Resolving the extended mind debate will likely not impact ongoing debates about the importance of cross-cultural philosophy, but it does provide us with a place to start. Much like the road to San Jose, the path to overcoming the borders between countries and traditions is before us. It's up to us to follow it.

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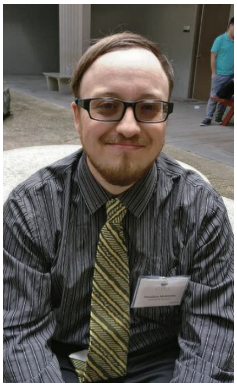

Chapter 1: The Philosopher's Path to San Jose: Nondualism, Distributed Cognition, and Imagination

Jonathan McKinney received his Ph.D. in Philosophy at the University of Cincinnati. He is also currently completing his MA in Experimental Psychology at the University of Cincinnati through the Center for Cognition, Action, and Perception (CAP). He completed his MA in Comparative Philosophy at the University of Hawaii with an emphasis on Buddhist and Japanese Philosophies. His research focuses primarily on Cross-Cultural Embodied Cognitive Science, Comparative Japanese philosophy, and community-based inquiry. His current projects include the development of tools for teaching engaging and community-based classes online, exploring agent-world, agent-tool, and agent-agent relationships, and establishing spaces for international and interdisciplinary research.