



北海道大学
HOKKAIDO UNIVERSITY

文学研究科 - GRADUATE SCHOOL OF LETTERS

International Conference

Self

Between Consciousness and Non-being

Hokkaido University, May 13-14, 2017

What do we have in mind when we think of a self? How is the self related to consciousness? Is it possible to have a self without consciousness or, otherwise, a consciousness without a self? Can self-consciousness provide direct evidence for the existence of a self? Or, rather, does the often alleged nonexistence of the self imply the nonexistence also of consciousness as well as its deceptive character?

The aim of this conference is to tackle the issue of the relationship between consciousness and the self, as well as of their existence, from a variety of philosophical and cultural intellectual traditions. The time has come to go beyond the sweeping generalizations (e.g. East vs. West) that have plagued attempts to understand culturally embedded views of the self, and instead provide a nuanced picture of how different traditions can provide a more fruitful dialogue concerning the relationship between self and consciousness, as well as the concrete implications of either their existence and nonexistence.



Keynote Speaker: Jonardon Ganeri

Invited speakers: David Chai, Ching-yuen Cheung, Shoshun Hayashidera,
Noriaki Hosoda, Tomohiko Kondo, Haojun Zhang

Organizers: Andrea Altobrando, Richard Stone, Shigeru Taguchi



How the notion of a self should be understood is not a line of questioning which has been undertaken by only one intellectual tradition or historical culture. Rather, over the course of any number of traditions and in cultures across the globe, what it means to be a self (or if we even have one) has been asked as almost a prerequisite for related social, political, not to mention existential, questions. Yet, despite the depth which these various debates regarding self and consciousness have reached over the course of their development, we find that attempts to describe such theories often devolve into claiming that in the Western tradition the self is a soul like substance while in the East it is a constantly changing non-being.

Yet, this presupposition conflicts with the facts. First, the notion that Western philosophy univocally advocates a soul-like understanding of self seems to be misguided. Contrary to many superficial - as well as popular - views in both the East and the West, many Western philosophers have disputed the very existence of the self - as well as of that of consciousness. That self-consciousness is a kind of deceptive phenomenon is far from being a uniquely 'Eastern' concept. Furthermore, the notion that the East refers univocally to a 'non-self' has been doubted over the course of advancements in Intercultural Philosophy and Anthropology. As can be seen through the course of this progression, the aforementioned generalizations cause us to lose sight of the issues which many traditions have considered. For instance, what are the limits of consciousness? Does consciousness, or, more obviously, self-consciousness, imply a self? In addition, how do the different answers to these and related questions affect our ability to engage in cross-cultural dialogue and understanding? Indeed, in order to answer these questions, and thus to see what is really at stake in the questions concerning the self, its consciousness and its existence, we should also investigate how such ideas are connected to certain social practices and institutions.

It is in this context that this conference aims to more fully investigate the myriad of understandings of 'consciousness' and the 'self' which have been lost to the sweeping generalizations of how the alleged West and East are different. Yet, in order to provide an actual sketch of how the self, consciousness and their relationship should be understood, it is not enough to merely point out what is different between these different cultures. Rather, it would seem as though the time has come for philosophical investigations - and confrontations - which both respecting the differences and the cultural embedding of several ideas of the self, consciousness, and self-consciousness, are able to tackle on these issues and go to "the things themselves". In other words, what is necessary is a genuinely, 'interculturally embedded' dialogue between different theories which does not prejudicially reduce the actors into an alleged cultural tradition or identity.



The conference «Self: Between Consciousness and Non-being» will face the aforementioned problems as well as other related issues. In addition to the talks offered by our invited speakers, we welcome contributions from different perspectives, such as Philosophy of Mind, Phenomenology of Subjectivity, Metaphysics, Aesthetics, Philosophical Anthropology, Philosophy of Interculturality and Intercultural Philosophy, Ethics, Social Philosophy, and Political Philosophy.



Submission guidelines:

All proposals will be evaluated through a blind-review process. Therefore, those who wish to present at this conference should prepare two separate documents, containing:

- 1) The title and abstract (min. 250 – max. 400 words) of the presentation. The abstract should clearly state at least the following: the topic of the presentation, the manner in which the presentation contributes to this topic, and as the general line of thought of the presentation.
- 2) A separate cover letter including the following information: your name, affiliation and contact information; the title of your presentation.

To submit a proposal, send it as email attachment to: [andalt\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:andalt[at]gmail.com)

Up to twelve contributions will be selected.

No travel nor accommodation grants can be offered to the selected speakers.

Please, make sure that the subject line of the email reads: `Hokudai17_Self_Proposal`

Deadline for submission: 15 November 2016.

Decisions will be communicated by 1 December 2016.

Scientific committee: Shigeru Taguchi, Andrea Altobrando