

# The Metaphor of the Body and Symbolization of Communication in Wang Yangming

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## Abstract

This paper offers a new way of reading Wang Yangming's 王陽明 (1472-1528) theory by reinterpreting Wang Yangming's body as a metaphor. It intends to interpret Wang Yangming's model of an ideal body as a symbolization of communication and not in the context of a feudalistic project. This thesis attempts to read the symbolization of communication through Wang's conception of "one body consciousness." It also elaborates *liangzhi* 良知 as a necessary attractor of the metaphor and interprets this as a signification of "resemblance."

This paper is based upon the philosophy of difference. To guarantee communication between people as well as communication between human beings and nature, careful analysis and critical consideration regarding unicity, sameness, and oneness must be involved. Under such circumstances, the philosophy of difference provides particularly valuable insights. Theory that only highlights one body as a symbol for oneness/sameness falls into the danger of emphasizing limited and hierarchical elements. Therefore, this thesis acknowledges differences within universality, and attempts to find the philosophy of differences within Wang's theory.

This paper discusses how Yangming theorizes the relationship between the body and the mind. Then it explains *liangzhi*, which is an important attractor in Yangming's theorization of the body as a metaphor, at the level of "similarity," and redefines Wang's conception of one body as a metaphor. In the end, it offers a reading of *liangzhi* as a symbolization of communication.

**Keywords:** Wang Yangming, *liangzhi*, metaphor, symbolization, symbol of the body, communication

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## 1. Introduction

This paper aims to investigate how Wang Yangming's 王陽明 (1472-1528) philosophy posits the model of an ideal body by metaphorizing the body as the world, and interprets this in terms of symbolic communication, not in the context of a feudalistic project. Until now, this metaphor has been primarily understood and used as a literary concept, but it has the theoretical potential to clarify and develop some notions which remain unclear in the field of Asian philosophy. In other words, the reason why this thesis focuses on the concept of the metaphor, which has typically been excluded from the field of philosophy (due to its lack of a logical basis), is because the metaphor as a structure of "as" provides an opportunity to reinterpret and reconstruct Wang Yangming's philosophy, particularly in relation to his notion of existence. Through its employment of "as," metaphor becomes a place where sameness and difference simultaneously coexist and conflict, and thus metaphors always generate differences in meaning, breaking familiar concepts and creating new horizons between words and objects.

With such issues in mind, this thesis provides a critical account of the "one body- consciousness" of Wang Yangming's *liangzhi* and in the process attempts to bring to the fore the problematic of communication as the symbolic. In metaphorizing the body as the world, the thesis proposes *liangzhi* as a necessary attractor of metaphor and interprets this as a signification of "resemblance."<sup>1</sup> In order for A to be a metaphor for B or vice versa, a "resemblance" between the two terms needs to be presupposed, but this "resemblance" inevitably presupposes difference as well: two terms yoked by metaphor must be understood as somewhat divergent rather than exactly imitative. Thus, resemblance can be a way of generating difference in the place of a conformity which implicitly prioritizes sameness and represses differences (or one can say that the universal is always accompanied by the particular).

This paper grounds itself on the idea that nature is one as Wang Yangming's suggests, but it does interpret this oneness not in a naturalistic sense but as an image: one body as a symbolic image. This is an attempt to understand the body in an open way, not as something that is closed and isolated. I think that through this infinitely extending meaning of the body, it is possible to develop grounds for the de/construction of borders within ourselves. So though turning to the symbolic meaning of One in Wang Yangming's philosophical account of the body, this thesis fundamentally bases itself upon the philosophy of difference. To guarantee communication between human beings and nature, as well as communication between people, careful analysis and critical consideration regarding unicity, sameness, and identity must be involved and the philosophy of difference becomes an important basis in this circumstance. If we only highlight one

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1 An attractor is a set towards which a dynamical system evolves over time. This is also used to denote a topological dynamical system in which an object does not pass the same points twice. I take it to express *liangzhi*'s signification. *Liangzhi* implies infinite dissemination of meanings in a definite boundary or space (particularity within universality or universality within particularity).

body as a symbol for the oneness/sameness or physical unicity, we fall into the trap of emphasizing limited and hierarchical elements. In order for true communication to occur, we need to consider differences in being and at the same time acknowledge universalism to prevent it from elapsing into relativism.

To effectively develop these points, this thesis will first observe the characteristics in Wang Yangming's philosophy regarding the relationship between body and mind, while contemplating the way Wang Yangming metaphorizes the body. Then it will explain *liangzhi*, which is an important attractor in Wang Yangming's study of the metaphor of body, at the level of "similarity" and within the same contextual approach the one body concept of holism of nature at the level of the body's image and consequently prepare grounds for interpreting it as a symbolization of communication.

## 2. Metaphorizing the Body

In Confucian philosophy, the exemplary person is one who ethically cultivates her own body and experiences oneness with the world by metaphorizing herself as the world. "*Xiujizhiren*" 修己治人 (cultivating oneself and ruling others), "*neisheng waiwang*" 內聖外王 (inner sageliness and outer kingliness) and "*xiushen qijia zhiguo pingtianxia*" 修身齊家治國平天下 (When one's personal life is cultivated, one's family will be regulated and then one's state will be well governed; and when all the states are well governed, there will be peace and harmony throughout the world) show typical processes of forming a desirable body. In Confucian philosophy, the body is not simply an isolated being in the world but its existence continuously establishes relations with the world.<sup>2</sup> The world cannot be an object but is connected to the body, and the body is understood as something that is always open to and in constant relation with the world. The same applies to Wang Yangming's theory of holism of nature, where the body of the human and the body of the universe and nature are connected as one.

Master Wang said: The great man regards Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things as one body. He regards the world as one family and the country as one person. As to those who make a cleavage between objects and distinguish between the self and others, they are small men. That the great man can regard Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things as one body is not because he deliberately wants to do so, but because it is natural to the humane nature of his mind that he do so.<sup>3</sup>

While recognizing the world as one body, Wang Yangming symbolized the model or ideal body as one which experiences oneness with the world

2 Kim, "Yuogacheolhak-ui mom-eunyu pangsik eul tonghan yeosung yihae," 148-152. Here Kim asks if female body can be a desirable and ethically complete body in the sense of body as metaphor while discussing the neo-Confucian way of metaphoizing human body. Kim also discusses how to understand the meaning of female body in the neo-Confucian conception of desire, according to which the way of forming desirable body is to eliminate desire.

3 Wang Yangming *quanji* 王陽明全集, "*Daxuewen*" 大學問, ch. 26: "大人者 以天地萬物爲一體者也。其視天下猶一家，中國猶一人焉。……大人之能以天地萬物爲一體也。非意之也，其心之仁本若是，其與天地萬物而爲一也。"

through the metaphor of body. However, for Wang Yangming the driving force behind the relationship between the body and world was nothing other than the way the body represents the center of the world; it is not given from the outside of the body but immanent within the relationship. For this reason, he saw the world as a spot that completes our bodies but the momentum of completing the body lies not in the world itself but in us.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, Wang Yangming insisted that the process of metaphorizing the body as the world does not allow for one-sided regulation or control from outside. There is no need for *causa prima*, any principles that unify the whole or the intervention of the third instance. This relationship was thus understood as something that could be established only through the mind of the subject. In a similar fashion, Wang Yangming also emphasized that what is decisive in metaphorizing the body is the subject's mind, but he did not address the mind and body in a hierarchical order or understand them as independent of each other. Rather, he understood the mind as something that is closely related to the body: in the process of metaphorizing the body as the world, the subject's mind is discussed as something important and the mind is also explained as something that is connected to the world. For Wang Yangming, the mind does not exist independently of the body, and the body also does not exist separately from the mind. Within this integrated mutual relationship, the body and the mind actively interact with each other. Wang Yangming's conception that where there is no mind there is no body and where there is no body there is no mind clearly demonstrates the intimate relationship enjoyed between the body and mind in his thought (in spite of the argument's circularity).<sup>5</sup>

The Teacher said, "Before you look at these flowers, they and your mind are in the state of silent vacancy. As you come to look at them, their colors at once show up clearly. From this you can know that these flowers are not external to your mind."<sup>6</sup>

In this scenario, the viewer's eyes and themselves are what are watching the flower, and their eyes are clearly part of their body. In this sense the unity of the world and the self seems to be realized through the body. However, it is not the case that all these activities happen regardless of the mind, as Wang Yangming clearly taught that the function of the mind is part of this relationship.<sup>7</sup>

These activities of seeing, listening, speaking, and moving are all of your mind. The sight of your mind emanates through the channel of the eyes, the hearing of your mind through the channel of the ears, the speech of your mind through the channel of the mouth, and the movement of your mind through the channel of your four limbs. If there were no mind, there would be no ears, eyes, mouth, or nose. What is called your mind is not merely that lump of blood and flesh. If it

4 Kim, "Yangmyunghakesoe-ui mom damlon gha gegeot-ui hyundaijeok uimi," 8.

5 *Chuanxilu* 傳習錄, Part 1, 32: "心外無物, 心外無事."

6 *Chuanxilu*, Part 3, 275: "你未看此花時, 此花與汝心同歸於寂; 你來看此花時, 則此花顏色一時明白起來; 便知此花不在你的心外."

7 Jung, "Hyunsanghakjeok yunlihak junglipeul wihan Yangmingcheolhakjeok shiron", 131-153.

were so, why is it that the dead man, whose lump of blood and flesh is still present, cannot see, listen, speak, or move? What is called your mind is that which makes seeing, listening, speaking, and moving possible.<sup>8</sup>

Here Wang Yangming explained that an act of mind is possible through the activity of the body that sees, speaks, and acts, and that the intentionality of the body comes into existence on the basis of the intentionality of the mind. For Wang Yangming, the body is connected to the mind; both functioning concurrently as a subject in the sense that they continuously generate and accommodate meanings in their interaction with the world. The body is always open to the world and the world is formed through the mind-body unity. The mind-body represents a singularity and is at the same time open to the world.

As explained above, for Wang the body itself is not an isolated being and serves to produce meanings through which the subject appears. That is, the subject comes into existence through the interactions of the mind and the body as well as from the ensemble of its relations in the world. In this sense, Wang Yangming's notion of the body is not a simple object but the mind-body subject, and this mind-body subject is conscious of unity with the world and serves as a starting point for actualizing the unity. In other words, for Wang Yangming, the body and the mind are not separate from each other, but are the basis for the formation of a totalistic relationship which is also the mechanism of metaphorizing the world. The unity of the mind/body is completed through coexistence with an awareness of the infinite possibility of the other.

### 3. *Liangzhi*: The Signification of "Similarity"

When metaphorizing the body as the world, "difference" and "similarity" coexist between the body and world.<sup>9</sup> For this reason, the metaphor is based upon finding "similarity" despite the fact that there are differences and contradictions between the two. According to Aristotle, a metaphor is "the application of an alien name by transference either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or by analogy".<sup>10</sup> When metaphorizing A as B, therefore, there must be some "similarity" posited between A and B. Without it, the metaphor does not exist. However, similarity (rather than identity or sameness) implies that two things in comparison are different as well. When a word or symbol or name, displaced from the original referent or meaning, accommodates or receives a new meaning, we call this a metaphor. In this sense, we can account for both universality and difference through the concept of metaphor.<sup>11</sup>

When we refer to a young girl with a small body as a sparrow by saying "Sun-Hee is a sparrow," it is apparently that this is not literally true.

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8 *Chuanxilu*, Part 1, 122.

9 Jung, *Sangjing*, *Eunyu grigo yiyagi*, 72; Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 107-115.

10 Aristotle, (*La*) *Poetique*, 441.

11 Chung, *Sangjing*, *Eunyu grigo yiyagi*, 72.

Sun-Hee does not share a species with a feathered bird. However, this description can still be said in some sense to be correct insofar that it successfully posits a resemblance between girl and bird; in this case its signifying that Sun-Hee speaks in a small but beautiful voice and is slight of stature. In this way, “similarity” can be seen as a base that makes a metaphor possible. However, what really makes a metaphor possible is not “similarity” but “displacement/difference.” The real function of a metaphor lies in creating a new meaning by displacing and substituting. If one only recalled just “sameness” or the plain function of substituting one word to another from “metaphor,” that would miss an important point in the working of a metaphor.

In order to grasp the core ability of metaphor from this perspective, it is necessary to distinguish “similarity” from “sameness.” Sameness presupposes simple changes of positions or one-to-one correspondence between two terms, which is not able to produce the displacement of meaning, the real force of metaphor. So, similarity’s immanence in the use of metaphor should be understood not in terms of ‘sameness’ but in terms of “resemblance.” If metaphor is reduced to “sameness,” it loses sight of differences in every being. Every human being is different. Resemblance distinguishes itself from sameness in that it always reflects differences in being. Let us look at the previous example of “Sun-Hee is a sparrow,” again. Here, the meaning of “Sun-Hee” drifts away from the context of everyday human life to another one, i.e. the world of birds. This metaphoric transition opens up a space in which a new meaning appears to explain Sun-Hee’s identity. The combination of Sun-Hee and sparrow creates a new meaning, which reveals that there is a third area which does not particularly belong to both of them, but subsumes them.

From this context let us return to Wang Yangming’s theory of the unity of everything. Wang Yangming uses *liangzhi* as an attractor of the metaphor and explains it in terms of “resemblance.” In Wang Yangming’s theory of the unity of everything, a human becomes a metaphor by displacing oneself from the human world to a different domain of grass, tree, roof tile, and rock, and in this process *liangzhi* works as an attractor of the metaphor. Wang Yangming shows how things from totally different domains become unified and interact with each other in the process by which the body is metaphorized as the world.

The Teacher said, “The innate knowledge of man is the same as that of plants and trees, tiles and stones. Without the innate knowledge inherent in man, there cannot be plants and trees, tiles and stones. This is not true of them only. Even Heaven and Earth cannot exist without the innate knowledge that is inherent in man. For at bottom Heaven, Earth, the myriad things, and man form one body. The point at which this unity is manifested in its most refined and excellent form is the clear intelligence of the human mind. Wind, rain, dew, thunder, sun and moon, stars, animals and plants, mountains and rivers, earth and stones are essentially of one body with man. It is for this reason that such things as the grains and animals can nourish man and that such things as medicine and minerals can heal diseases. Since they share the same material force, they enter into one another.”<sup>12</sup>

12 *Chuanxilu*, Part3, 274: “先生曰：人的良知，就是草木瓦石的良知。若草木瓦石無人的良知，不

For Wang Yangming, *liangzhi* represents a universality that is inherent in all things and provides a basis for unifying the body and the world.

I said, "The human mind and things form the same body. In the case of one's body, blood and the vital force in fact circulate through it and therefore we can say they form the same body. In the case of men, their bodies are different and differ even more from those of animals and plants. How can they be said to form the same body?"

The Teacher said, "Just look at the matter from the point of view of the subtle incipient activating force of their mutual influence and response. Not only animals and plants, but heaven and earth also, form the same body with me. Spiritual beings also form the same body with me."<sup>13</sup>

Here not just unity but also particularity and difference, which cannot be lumped together as one, are also taken into account. Wang Yangming's conception of "attractor of metaphor" posits *liangzhi* as universality, it does not, however, simply stop at emphasizing the sameness but tries to reveal differences in being. In this way he shows how metaphors can serve to create new things by revealing differences latent in universality: universality is the precondition of the emergence of the particular.

"How does man become mind?" "Clear intelligence and clear intelligence alone."  
 "We know, then, in all that fills heaven and earth there is but this clear intelligence. It is only because of their physical forms and bodies that men are separated. My clear intelligence is the master of heaven and earth and spiritual beings. If heaven is deprived of my clear intelligence, who is going to look into its height? If earth is deprived of my clear intelligence, who is going to look into its depth? If spiritual beings are deprived of my clear intelligence, who is going to distinguish their good and evil fortune or the calamities and blessings that they will bring? Separated from my clear intelligence, there will be no heaven, earth, spiritual beings, or myriad things, and separated from these, there will not be my clear intelligence. Thus they are all permeated with one material force. How can they be separated?"  
 I asked further, "Heaven, earth, spiritual beings, and the myriad things have existed from great antiquity. Why should it be that if my clear intelligence is gone, they will all cease to exist?" "Consider the dead man. His spirit has drifted away and dispersed. Where are his heaven and earth and myriad things?"<sup>14</sup>

This innate knowledge of the good is what Mencius meant when he said, "The sense of right and wrong is common to all men." The sense of right and wrong requires no deliberation to know, nor does it depend on learning to function. This

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可以為草木瓦石矣。豈惟草木瓦石為然，天地無人的良知，亦不可為天地矣……風雨露雷日月星辰禽獸草木山川土石與人原只一體。”

13 *Chuanxilu*, Part3, 336: “問，人心與物同體，如吾身原是血氣流通的，所以謂之同體，若於人便異體了。禽獸草木益遠矣，而何謂之同體？先生曰，你只在感應之幾上看，豈但禽獸草木，雖天地也與我同體的，鬼神也與我同體的。”

14 *Chuanxilu*, Part3, 336: “曰人又甚麼叫做心？對曰 只是一箇靈明。『可如充天塞地中間，只有這箇靈明。人只為形體自間隔了。我的靈明，便是天、地、苞、神的主宰。天沒有我的靈明，誰去仰地高？地沒有我的靈明，誰去俯地深？鬼、神沒有我的靈明，誰去辯他吉、凶、災、祥？天地鬼神萬物，離卻我的靈明，便沒有天地鬼神萬物了。我的靈明，離卻天地鬼神萬物，亦沒有我的靈。』”

is why it is called innate knowledge. It is my nature endowed by Heaven, the original substance of my mind, naturally intelligent, shining, clear, and understanding.<sup>15</sup>

Wang Yangming's *liangzhi* aims to constitute the mechanism which encompasses both folding, where resemblance subsumes individual being, and unfolding, where particularity takes priority over universality. In other words, one of his theoretical objectives is to secure both universality and diversity at the same time. Although *liangzhi* involves universality it does not reduce itself to "sameness," which allows us to go beyond the boundaries between human, heaven and earth, spirit, animals, plants, and inanimate objects in Wang Yangming's thought. *Liangzhi*'s epistemological strategy of metaphor exerts an ontological force.

#### 4. Seeking Communication from the Impossibility of Communication: "One Body" and "One Body Image"<sup>16</sup>

Communication is possible when one recognizes and embraces differences in one's consideration and hospitality towards others.<sup>17</sup> It is consequently extraordinarily difficult (if not altogether impossible) to locate the possibility of communication in the subjection of each individual into one substantiated entity. In this sense, the work of interpreting the meaning of symbolic communication in Wang Yangming's unity of everything is necessary when trying to make sense of Wang Yangming's metaphorization of body. In fact, the conception of "one body consciousness" prevents one from addressing the problems of individual rights or of being a self-regulating human, and thus from understanding the real meaning of communication or solidarity. How to interpret "one body consciousness," therefore, constitutes an important point in understanding Wang Yangming's conception of symbolic communication.

As discussed previously, Wang Yangming's conception of the unity of everything is derived from the process of metaphorizing the body as the world. That is to say, it is grounded in the idea that the world is a kind of unified body, which is derived from his metaphorical construction of the world as one body. Wang Yangming understood different beings, different species such as birds and animals, trees and life force to be all part of one body. So as to tie or integrate them into one body, Wang Yangming relied upon the principle that the human and its body, plants, inanimate objects all flow through one energy. He argued that because all objects are connected

15 Wang, *Wang Yangming quanji*, "Daxuewen", ch. 26: "良知者孟子所謂是非之心，人皆有之者也，……是乃天命之性，吾心之本體，自然靈昭明覺者也。"

16 In this thesis, the 'one body 'image' borrow from Shilder's concept that the body image is not "fixed by nature or confined to the anatomical 'container,' the skin, and its borders, edges, and contours are 'osmotic.'" The body image as a new terminology mediates the polarization of mind/body, subject/object, as a result of the work of neurologists, psychologists, and psychoanalysts. Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*, 61-85.

17 Agamben, *Means without End: Notes on Politics*, 106.



through *yiqi* 一氣 (one *qi*), all of them can be regarded as one body: the world as the function of energy. It is through their mutual relationship to *qi* that Wang Yangming thought inanimate objects and plants as being capable of feeding or fostering human life or even curing human diseases.<sup>18</sup> His assumption that all beings are made from one energy thus allows us to understand one's experience of the other.

The Teacher said, "The innate knowledge of man is the same as that of plants and trees, tiles and stones. Without the innate knowledge inherent in man, there cannot be plants and trees, tiles and stones. This is not true of them only. Even Heaven and Earth cannot exist without the innate knowledge that is inherent in man. For at bottom Heaven, Earth, the myriad things, and man form one body. The point at which this unity is manifested in its most refined and excellent form is the clear intelligence of the human mind. Wind, rain, dew, thunder, sun and moon, stars, animals and plants, mountains and rivers, earth and stones are essentially of one body with man. It is for this reason that such things as the grains and animals can nourish man and that such things as medicine and minerals can heal diseases. Since they share the same material force, they enter into one another."<sup>19</sup>

To recognize all different, diverse beings and objects as one body, there must be an attractor for the metaphor that links my body and objects as part of the body. For Wang Yangming, this attractor was *liangzhi*, such that all objects were seen as capable of interacting and connecting with each other through its mediation. Based upon this supposition, Wang Yangming insisted that one can share feelings such as happiness, pain, sadness, etc., with other beings in different species or different forms of being.

Man is the mind of the universe. At bottom Heaven and Earth and all things are my body. Is there any suffering or bitterness of the great masses that is not disease or pain in my own body?

Those who are not aware of the disease and pain in their own body are people without the sense of right and wrong.<sup>20</sup>

One crucial step in approaching and understanding other beings is to share in their bodily experiences. Apparently, my body is not the same as (identical with) others' bodies, and it is physically impossible to directly share another body's experience. If one could directly experience what the other is experiencing, that would mean that they are the same body. Wang Yangming dealt with this problem by employing the notion of "sensitivity [sharing and interacting]," which comes from *liangzhi*. For him, people become truly ethical subjects when they have the sense of telling right from wrong (*shifei zhi xin* 是非之心). He also felt that it was important to interact with others and to share others' pain.

18 Kim, Wang Yangming-ui Saenmyung cheolhak, 236.

19 Chuanxilu, Part3, 274: "人的良知，就是草、木、瓦、石的良知：若草、木、瓦、石無人的良知，不可以為草、木、瓦、石矣。豈惟草、木、瓦、石為然，天、地無人的良知，亦不可為天、地矣。蓋天、地、萬物與人原是一體。……風雨露雷日月星辰禽獸草木山川土石與人原只一體。故五穀禽獸之類皆可以責人，藥石之類皆可以療疾，只為同此一氣，故能相通耳。"

20 Chuanxilu, Part2, 179: "夫人者，天地之心，天地萬物本吾一體者也。生民之困苦荼毒，孰非疾痛之切於吾身者乎？不知吾身之疾痛，無是非之心者也。"

Wang Yangming's one-body consciousness grasps humans and nature as one; within his conception they complement each other in an organic relationship. He also thought that it is possible to form a strategy for happy and friendly communication from this mutually integrated relationship between beings.<sup>21</sup> Stressing that the community is one, and imagining the community of love and end of conflict will help people to constitute harmonious communication within the community. Contrary to the original intention, however, the pursuit of communication through the one-body consciousness may produce adverse effects. For instance, it always risks a totalitarian communication whereby all differences are repressed. However, it should be noted that Wang Yangming's ideal of communication is not achieved through integration into the sameness of the world, but by accepting differences within it.

Thus if we interpret Wang Yangming's oneness (unity=one body)'as "one body" and derive the unity of the one and the other or appersonization from it, we in fact move further away from the problematic of communication intrinsic to Wang Yangming's theory of the unity of everything. Associating *yiti* 一體 with "one body" and emphasizing "sameness" would lead one to confuse the subject and the other; it tends to erase differences in beings, and thus makes it difficult to discover the real meaning of communication. Communication implies not only "closeness" and "intimacy," but also the irreducible sphere of the "in-between."<sup>22</sup> We need to consider and respect "space" and "otherness" to avoid the subordination of others to the one, and thus to properly address the singularity of beings. Then the communicative orientation for the one represents only the impossibility of communication.

It is difficult to resolve the matter of communication with what one-body consciousness implies, that is, with oneness and sameness; generalization and unification are not sufficient to account for differences and variations among/within beings. What is required the development of a theoretical framework to consider not only similarity, harmony and communication but also these irreducible differences in being. Wang Yangming's conception of symbolic communication is one such theoretical device to deal with this, one that is designed to accept universality and differences and one which does so not to relativize differences but to maintain relations with others. If we translate the unity of everything into the sameness of everything, we eliminate the possibility of real communication; there will only be the reproduction of existing and dominant meanings. New meanings and their articulation derive from the relations between heterogeneous things and beings, and the function of metaphor is to intervene and create commonalities, not identical oneness.

21 Kim, *Wang Yangming-ui Saenmyung cheolhak*, 180.

22 Grosz, *Architecture from the Outside*, Massachusetts Institution of Technology, 92-93. The in-Between has been a privileged concept for only a short time, for only in the last century or less has it been understood as a space or a positivity at all, as something more than a mere residue or inevitable consequence of other interactions. The space in between things is the space in which things are undone, the space to the side and around, which is the space of subversion and fraying, the edges of any identity's limits.

The body image can shrink or expand; it can give parts to the outside world and can take other parts into itself. When we take a stick in our hands and touch an object with the end of it, we feel a sensation at the end of the stick. The stick has, in fact, become part of the body-image. In order to get the full sensation at the end of the stick must be in a more or less rigid connection with the body. It then becomes part of the bony system of the body, and we may suppose that the rigidity of the bony system is an important part in every body-image.<sup>23</sup>

According to Shilder, the meaning of the body (as a symbol or image) is not confined to the physical or anatomical sense of the human body. The body is not the boundary of the self. Besides, the body-image functions in unison by moving in the direction of increasing the subdivision and division from an amorphous state. The body-image distinguishes the body from other things. That is, it distinguishes between the subject and the object, between active and passive relationships, between the internal organs or the outer skin. The body-image does not put its focus on integrating the various parts into one body. Wang Yangming's body as image emphasizes flexibility and infinite differences; the defining moments of the body keep creating new boundaries and formulations in the totalizing process of the body as image. Based upon this perspective, let me explain in detail how we can interpret Wang Yangming's theory of the unity of everything in nature in terms of the body-image.

Therefore when he sees a child about to fall into a well, he cannot help a feeling of alarm and commiseration. This shows that his humanity forms one body with the child. It may be objected that the child belongs to the same species. Again, when he observes the pitiful cries and frightened appearance of birds and animals about to be slaughtered, he cannot help feeling an "inability to bear" their suffering. This shows that his humanity forms one body with birds and animals. It may be objected that birds and animals are sentient beings as he is. But when he sees plants broken and destroyed, he cannot help a feeling of pity. This shows that his humanity forms one body with plants.<sup>24</sup>

Wang Yangming believes that human beings share and communicate feelings with others, whether they be humans or not, because they are connected with one another. However, this universality does not prevent the existence and emergence of differences. Despite the fact that these are interconnected through one energy, it is simply not possible for them to be classified as identical. For Wang Yangming, there is no universality without difference.<sup>25</sup> So, borders among beings are not to be neglected as borders create universality, which in turn prepares other instances of differences or borders. Thus Wang Yangming mentions:

23 Shilder, *The Image and Appearance of the Human Body: Studies in the Constructive Energies of the Psyche*, 202.

24 Wang, *Wang Yangming quanji* 王陽明全集, ch. 26. "Daxuewen": "是故見孺子之入井而 必有怵惕惻隱之心焉。是其仁之與孺子而為一體也。孺子猶同類者也。見鳥獸之哀鳴殫殫而必有不忍之心，是其仁之與鳥獸而為一體也。鳥獸猶有知覺者也。見草木之摧折而必有憫恤之心焉。是其仁之與草木而為一體也。草木猶有生意者也。見瓦石之毀壞而 必有顧惜之心焉。是其仁之與瓦石而為一體也。"

25 Kim, *Wang Yangming-ui Saenmyung cheolhak*, 175.

The Teacher said, "It is because of principles that there necessarily is relative importance. Take for example the body, which is one. If we use the hands and the feet to protect the head, does that mean that we especially treat them as less important? Because of their principles this is what should be done. We love both plants and animals, and yet we can tolerate feeding animals with plants. We love both animals and men, and yet we can tolerate butchering animals to feed our parents, provide for religious sacrifices, and entertain guests."<sup>26</sup>

According to Wang Yangming's principle of intimacy (*qinqin* 親親), human beings, animals, plants, lifeless beings and the world understand the body in the way they admit and respect irreducible differences. He admits that signification inevitably defines beings, however it also generates differences in them. So, love for all things is not just love (*ren* 仁) between people. Love takes different forms depending on its objects and the relationship which between beings: as for example, in the different manifestations referred to as *ceyin zhi xin* 惻隱之心 (sympathy), *buren zhi xin* 不忍之心 (Heart of compassion and conscience), *minxu zhi xin* 憫恤之心 (Heart to help poor people), and *guxi zhi xin* 顧惜之心 (Heart of regret). So, the unity of everything in Wang Yangming blurs border lines between myself and others, life and lifeless beings, animals and plants, etc., but it does not nullify them. It approaches beings as they are through the symbolic communication of one-body, which is flexible, dynamic, and inclusive of the relationship between one body and another body.

## 5. Conclusion

According to Wang Yangming's philosophy, the Sage represents an ideal being; not a real entity but an ideal or symbol for a being that is able to communicate with everything by metaphorizing herself as the world. Wang Yangming's theory of the unity of everything likewise functions as a practical symbol for mediating communication between beings, particularly between human beings and others. Metaphor has the potential of narrating and describing things from a new perspective by associating signifiers with the signifier and signified. That is, it works on double referents, and creates the divergence of meaning.

Regarding this double referent, Paul Ricoeur has argued that in order to be a creative metaphor, a metaphor's primary referent goes beyond the first order of signification towards the second order of signification.<sup>27</sup> According to Ricoeur, a proper understanding of metaphorical symbolization should not stop at the primary, literal interpretation of meaning.<sup>28</sup> The real meaning of metaphor consists in its secondary signification and interpretation. Wang Yangming's entire work is fundamentally based upon this symbolic communication. The metaphor of the body as the world does not literally reflect the world, but denotes the necessity of communication between beings

26 *Chuanxilu*, Part3, 276: "先生曰惟是道理自有厚薄。比如身是一體，把手足捍頭目，豈是隔要薄手足，其道理合如此。禽獸與草木同是愛的，把草木去養禽獸，心又忍得，人與禽獸同是愛的，宰禽獸以養親與供祭祀，燕賓客，心又忍得。"

27 Jung, *Sangjing*, *Eunyu grigo yiyagi*, 110.

28 On this point see Ricoeur. *Le conflit des interpretations*, 40-42.

through which new forms of being can emerge. The linguistic, practical elements of Wang Yangming's theory are such that his symbolic strategy (the production of subjectification through symbolic communication) is capable of creating an ontological power which not only universalizes being through its notion of "one body" but opens up the emergence of other beings in the incessant processes of metaphorizing.

In terms of question of communication, symbolizing the world as one body can be interpreted in two completely different ways. First, it can be read as stressing oneness as totality and prioritizing the whole over parts by encouraging hierarchy and discrimination. Some negative interpretations of Wang Yangming's philosophy have relied on such an interpretation, branding his thought as connoting a "complete orientation towards the whole" or as implying "total subjection to the whole."<sup>29</sup> According to this line of interpretation, Wang Yangming's theory is just a dominant ideology which serves to hide and justify inequality and structural contradictions in medieval society; and as such it does not allow for the possibility of any legitimate communication.

Those with inferior ability were contented with their positions as farmers, artisans, or merchants, all diligent in their various occupations, so as mutually to sustain and support the life of one another without any desire for exalted position or strife for external things. Those with special ability like Kao, K'uei, Chi, and Hsieh, came forward and served with their ability, treating their work as their own family concern, some attending to the provision of clothing and food, some arranging for mutual help, and some providing utensils, planning and working together in order to fulfill their desires of serving their parents above and supporting their wives and children below.<sup>30</sup>

This can be taken to imply that one should follow and obey what one is supposed to do as parts of the one body. That is, one can only appreciate coercion and subordination from this. In fact, the stress this passage places on obedience and harmony can easily be taken advantage of to hide inequality and maintain dominance. In other words, it is not difficult to read this passage as belonging to a clear discourse of domination.

However, it is possible to try a different kind of interpretation. In such a reading, Wang Yangming's philosophy can be utilized to understand concrete, different situations, as well as the particularity and concreteness of individual beings. What is crucial here is that despite its conservative aspects, Yangming's theory has the potential of communicability, or contains within itself a theory of symbolic communication. As explained above, translating the unity of everything as a metaphor allows us to read into the theory of communication; the metaphorical unity of the body need not subordinate the many to the one, but can both allow for the existence of difference, and stress the importance of communication to form a unity,

29 Kim, "Jungsejeok giwhekeuroseo-ui Nayeopang-ui cheolhaksasang," 197.

30 *Chuanxilu*, Part2, 142: "其才質之下者，則安其農、工、商、賈之分，各勤其業，以相生相養，而無有乎希高慕外之心。其才能之異，若舉、夔、稷、契者，則出而各效其能。若一家之務，或營其衣食，或通其有無，或備其器用，集謀并力，以求遂其仰事俯育之願，惟恐當其事者之或怠而重己之累也。"

whether that unity is achieved through solidarity, sympathy or love. Similarly, Wang Yangming's notion of *liangzhi* can be seen not as sameness, but as resemblance, which is open to difference. This philosophical strategy does not simply express what is given *a priori* in Yangming, but on how we can maximize the potential attributes of his thought. So, we can then take advantage of what remains ambiguous in it.

In my attempt to comprehend *liangzhi* as the principle of difference within universality, the dichotomy of activity/passivity, subject/other is no longer valid. In the metaphor of one-body, which regards the emergence of a moral subject as the consequence of interactions (sharing and communication) between a subject and other beings, individuals still exist, but not in the subject-object relationship as it is commonly conceived. According to Wang Yangming, inter-subjectivity between people also applies to the relationship between human and animals, plants, and lifeless objects. So, it is possible to interpret the unity of everything not as a simple reflection of reality, but as symbol for communication through Wang Yangming's body metaphor.

However, it should be also noted that Wang Yangming's idea of communication does not take into consideration the dimension of gender. So one may wonder if it is really possible to constitute a philosophy of difference and communication from Wang Yangming's philosophy. But it is also true that Wang Yangming's theory of the unity of everything contains intimacy, sharing and giving/receiving between different beings. It starts by asking "Can you feel or share others' pains?" and "Do they have rights, too?", and moves on to the question of "Can they feel pain?"<sup>31</sup> Here "they" is not confined to human beings. So it stresses the relationship between men and lifeless objects, and does not privilege the rationality of human beings. Although it may not explicitly embrace any sexual difference, the fact that it accepts various types of being paves the way for thinking that accommodating sexual difference is possible.

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31 Singer, *Dongmulhaebang* (Animal Liberation), trans. Kim, 43-47.

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## 王陽明哲學的身體隱喻與溝通的象徵性

金世緒利亞

### 中文摘要

將身體隱喻成一個世界，並以理想的身體(聖人)為指向的陽明哲學為中心，本文從溝通的象徵性(而不是封建性的預設)去解讀其含義。為此，本文在身體隱喻成一個世界的過程中，試以王陽明哲學的核心概念-良知作為牽引一些必備隱喻的吸引子(attractor)，把它視為‘相似(similarity)’的意義作用。

此外，本文將萬物一體的‘一體’意義化為‘一體形象’，而不強調結合為一個整體的身體。之所以將萬物一體的‘一體’詮釋為‘一體形象’，就是要解讀其溝通的象徵性，而不要把它只看作為整體性的一個標幟。這樣我們可用開放的方式來理解身體，而不是以封閉而孤立的方式來理解身體，同時我們可從這種無限擴張的身體的意義發展出一種解構邊界的思維。

本文從下列三個階段來論述上述的內容：

第一，通過陽明的身體隱喻方式，探討身體與世界的關係、身體與心的關係中的陽明學特徵。

第二，陽明的身體隱喻說明方式中，良知扮演重要的牽引作用，本文從‘相似’的層面來說明良知。

第三，從身體形象的層面去切入萬物一體的一體概念，找出其中能夠詮釋為溝通的象徵性的一些依據。

**關鍵詞：**王陽明，良知，隱喻，象徵，身體形象，溝通