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Infant Consciousness in Context: A Study of Consciousness through an Enriched Second-Person Perspective in Intercultural Philosophy

Yang, Xueyi Yang

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**Infant Consciousness in Context: A Study of Consciousness through an Enriched
Second-Person Perspective in Intercultural Philosophy**

Master thesis in Global and Comparative Philosophy, Leiden University

By Xueyi YANG (Camellia) - s2954680

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Supervisor: Dr. Jingjing LI

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Philosophy of mind has been discussed extensively in recent years, and there are many different perspectives. For example, some of them center their research around the gender issue: critics that the philosophical module of mind has centered on male experiences and that we should include feminist theories in the discussion of mental phenomena, and by using a female viewpoint, we can better see how culture and social background influence how a person constructs the identity of self (Maitra & McWeeny, 2022). Others focus on the most recent technology, and their philosophical questions are formed around recent AI development of deep neural networks and machine learning. Moreover, they try to figure out how we can understand that intentionality and consciousness are not only the computational mind but also the embedded experiences (Gonzalez, 2017). The relationship between the collective mind and individual minds is also a significant research direction; many focus on how collective phenomena influence individuals' experiences, beliefs, and cognitions (Smith & Thomasson, 2005). All those discussions are essential and revolutionary; they either challenge the traditional modules on how we think about the human consciousness as an individual isolated self, or they criticize the traditional male-dominated viewpoint, or they all provide new ways and angles to study the human consciousness. However, there is still a focus on the autonomous adult who can think, express, and communicate via language. In stark contrast, infants, a crucial part of our society and an unseparated stage of human development, are rarely considered research agents in philosophical inquiries. This disparity raises the question: Why are infants excluded from philosophical studies?

The significant difference between infants and adults is their ability to reason and express rational thoughts through language and words. In other words, rationality is something that differentiates infants and adults. The importance of rationality can be traced back to Socrates, who promoted rationality as a differentiating feature between humans and non-humans, and by using the methodology of rational questioning and dialogue, humans can get to profound concerts. Following this line of argument, Descartes's egoism has made the individual thinking self a prominent entity in studying consciousness. His famous "cogito, ergo sum (I think, therefore I am)" (Descartes, 1996, p. 17) makes the existence of humans a purely mental activity. Descartes probably would agree that infants

also think, so infants are also thinking beings. However, infants will not reach the level of rational and conceptual thinking as adults do. Logic thinking is a crucial ability for human beings to conceptualize, and with conceptualizations, humans start to understand the world. He used the example of chiliagon to demonstrate that perceptions and thoughts differ from the imagination level of mental operations and are more advanced. Language, as a tool for expressing rational and conceptual thinking, plays a crucial role in philosophical discussions on human consciousness.

As a matter of fact, we perceive [that is, think] the whole figure [of the chiliagon] at the same time clearly, although we are not able to imagine it as a whole at the same time, which proves that the two powers of understanding and imagining differ, not so much in respect of more and less, but as two wholly diverse modes of operation. (Descartes, 1911, p. 229)

It is obvious that infants cannot understand what a chiliagon is from conceptual knowledge. Moreover, suppose we follow the line of argument that conceptual and rationality are necessary for defining a human. In that case, it is clear why infants are not included in most philosophical discussions regarding human consciousness. Another point: for Descartes' egoism, the thinking self is the thinking "I"; there is a subjectivity needed, and for a long time, the traditional view, which held that infants lack the ability to recognize the subject self, treated infants as having no such ability. However, recent psychological studies, such as Vasudevi Reddy's study on infants' minds, have shown that infants can differentiate self from others at early ages, challenging this traditional view (Reddy, 2008). Additionally, this thinking separates mind and body, and the mind drives human consciousness. As a result, bodily experiences are counted as less critical than mental activities. Infants cannot speak yet; their primary expressions are bodily expressions; if those are not counted as essential sources of philosophical debates, infants will be excluded naturally. Lastly, rationality and conceptualizing ability are the core of Descartes' theory, and languages and words demonstrate those abilities. Infants cannot use language correctly, and even if they have some type of logical thinking activity, they cannot demonstrate it. As a result, infants are not part of the inquiries when the consciousness discussion is founded on logic and concepts.

Descartes' works have had a profound influence on Western philosophical traditions. However, it creates several barriers for us to look into the consciousness of an infant. Infants are conscious human beings, without a doubt; we cannot ignore them

simply because they do not fit into specific philosophical frameworks or because they cannot write philosophical papers themselves. Looking away is not going to solve the problem; understanding consciousness will not be complete if we exclude infants. To overcome the difficulties, we need to search for different philosophical frameworks that do not promote rationality as a critical criterion, are essential for human consciousness, and allow us to examine bodily expressions and interactions as foundational consciousness activities. To broaden our view, we need to expand our horizons from the Western tradition, look into different cultures, and perhaps get ideas from other disciplines, such as psychology, to help build a foundation for us to look into the consciousness of infants and consciousness in general.

This thesis follows the confluence philosophical methodology demonstrated by Mark Siderits. Confluence philosophy constructs new insights and positions from different philosophical traditions to address perennial problems (Siderits, 2017, p. 76). Importantly, the confluence methodology departed from the traditional comparative philosophy; the confluence methodology does not form an argument using one tradition as a base and uses the differences and similarities of another tradition to enrich the debts so that it is less likely to avoid the historical context of specific traditions, or making a one-sided comparison by using one tradition as a rule to measure another (Siderits, 2017, p. 79). It is crucial to answer the philosophical question rather than compare different traditions for comparison (Siderits, 2017, p. 80). For this thesis, we try to answer the philosophical question of how to understand infants and further define infant consciousness instead of comparing different philosophical traditions related to the consciousness of infants. I will use many of the *Yogācāra* theories, such as the eight layers of consciousness, to demonstrate that an infant's consciousness should be understood through a web of interactions; with the support of Dōgen's oneness idea, non-sentient beings should also be part of this web of interactions. Additionally, in order to elucidate how infants interact and navigate the complexities of social engagements, I employ the phenomenology of lived experiences to provide a detailed demonstration of their experiences. Moreover, this thesis adopts an interdisciplinary approach, integrating modern psychological research with philosophical arguments. While neither psychology nor philosophy is a solid science that uses evidence and experiences to prove a point, the combination of the two can bring experiences and ideation

closer. In other words, psychology can show how a philosophical idea reflects in general human experiences, which fortifies my argument and makes it more solid.

Unraveling the essence of consciousness necessitates grappling with the unique challenges of understanding infants. To comprehend infants is to comprehend a different kind of mind, distinct from that of adults. As mentioned before, the traditional model, which tries to observe or analyze the human mind, promotes the conceptual capacity as a core function for humans, which will treat an infant as an undeveloped human who won't get used to understanding the infant. So, we must employ the second-person perspective. The second-person perspective is not merely about addressing others as "You;" it entails profound emotional engagement, direct interactions, and reciprocal respect between the "I" and "You" (Reddy, 2008, p. 28). This emotional connection transcends the first-person perspective of sharing someone else's pain or the third-person perspective of observing painful experiences through data. It represents a more direct, interactive, and respectful approach to understanding the minds of others. The second-person perspective is indispensable because neither the first-person perspective nor the third-person perspective can help us bridge the gap in understanding infants as adults (Reddy, 2008, p. 25).

The third-person perspective is an objective approach; rooted in, it is the Descartes dualistic module. The third-person perspective is often used in psychology research. As mentioned in Reddy's Book, the observation model requires two steps: first, observe the research target; second, interpret the meaning behind their behaviors (Reddy, 2008, p. 22). The two-step module already indicates that we are disconnecting the behaviors and mind. If we try to use this method to understand infants, the infants will end up in the conclusion of the papers as what we might term "non-logical crying objects." This refers to the reduction of infants to mere objects of study, whose behaviors are seen as non-logical and therefore difficult to interpret. Because what a person can see behind the glass is purely behaviors like crying, moving arms and legs randomly, or having unpredictable reactions. All applying adult logic and rationality to those behaviors will fail. As a result, there are only so many options to exclude infants from the philosophical inquiries. Similarly, the first-person perspective does not help us understand infants; most of us do not have memories of our infancy (Josselyn & Frankland, 2012). When we see a baby cry, we

cannot recall how we cried as an infant; there is no way we can figure out the meaning behind the cry. So, if we try to understand the infant's consciousness through the lens of the first-person perspective, we are also reaching a dead-end. That is why the second-person perspective plays a crucial role in this study.

From a second-person perspective, instead of cold or confused observers, we are there as caretakers when an infant cries. The "I (caretaker)" and the "You (infant)" are in an interpersonal relationship and emotional communication. The caretaker wants to understand the infant; it feels the infant's needs and reacts to them in all different manners, including verbal communication and body/facial expressions. The infant feels the emotional response from the adults. There are potentially hundreds of misunderstandings, but with repeated active listening, emotional reactions, and confirmation, the trust between the "I (caretaker)" and the "You (infant)" starts to form, and the gap of understanding starts to narrow down. More importantly, the second-person perspective is expanding both in space (environmental aspect) and time (historical aspect). The environments influence the interactions between the caretaker and infants; the trust built for the infants is not just between the caretaker and the infant but also between the caretaker and the physical space where the interactions occur. Additionally, past interactions between infants and caretakers will significantly impact current ones. In this thesis, I will enrich the general idea of the second-person perspective of an "I" and "You" from a linear interaction towards a multi-directional web of interactions through time and space. The multi-directional web of interactions enables us to interact with infants with everything around them, and it is not only about the interaction that happens at the moment but what happens in the past that causes the current. That's also why we need the oneness theory from Dōgen to include non-sentients to support the multi-directional interactions and employ Sara Ahmed's phenomenological way of navigation in the lived experiences.

One of the challenges of expanding the definitions of second-person perspective interactions is that it involves non-sentient beings in the "I" and "You" relationship. Many debates exist about whether the non-sentient being can be included in the second-person perspective. The one who wants to exclude non-sentient beings emphasizes that the second-person engagement is a direct interaction between two subjects; the second-person

perspective is limited to sentient beings because non-sentient beings cannot acknowledge subjectivity. In this thesis, I advocate for inclusivity not only to include infants, but also non-sentient beings. I use Dōgen's de-anthropocentric oneness theory, a robust and widely respected philosophical framework, to support the idea that non-sentient beings can be counted as "You" in a second-person engagement. As Dōgen said, all beings are Buddha nature; there are no intrinsic differences between I and you, nor sentient and non-sentient beings (Dōgen, 2002, p.61). Sentient beings can recognize the other's subjectivity; the non-sentient can as well. As a result, there is no reason to exclude non-sentient beings from the second-person perspective. Therefore, we can form the second-person perspective as a web of interaction that includes sentient and non-sentient beings.

In the later chapters, I will examine Ahmed's way of constructing how humans orientate with attention to live experiences, using a similar argument to show how we can navigate in the web of interactions, and the navigation also indicates that we are all dependent on ours and others' histories. Ahmed is saying that our intentions are directional choices, which are not only physical but also social and psychological; spatially and temporal aspects influence where we turn our attention and how we make decisions (Ahmed, 2008). If we look into the second-person perspective interaction, every movement is not independent; they are dependent, dependent on the history of ourselves, of others, sentient beings, and non-sentient beings; it is a deep and complex nested web; no one can stand out as a pure independent consciousness, no matter it is an infant or an adult.

Alongside the works of Dōgen and Ahmed, I will introduce a novel approach by incorporating *Yogācāra* to delve into second-person interactions at a micro level. Unlike Descartes' module, where the thinking "I" is a prerequisite for consciousness, *Yogācāra*'s approach places a greater emphasis on interactions. I will employ Xuanzang's eight-layer consciousness structure, a tool that allows us to dissect the "I" into various functions and activities at different times. The first seven layers cater to different functionalities that support human functioning in daily life, while the eighth layer represents the continuity of consciousness. This framework reveals a unique perspective that consciousness is both dependent and independent. It is independent due to the eighth layer, which houses all memories and karmas that define a person as "I." Yet, it is also dependent, as every

perception and reaction of consciousness is intricately linked to the history of self and other consciousness.

In conclusion, the thesis's argument is not only a theoretical exploration but also a practical understanding of lived experiences. I argue that infants' consciousness, like other sentient and non-sentient beings, is both dependent and independent within the web of second-person interactions. This understanding has profound implications for our understanding of consciousness and its development.

Chapter 2: The necessity to enrich the meaning of the second-person perspective

The second-person perspective as a framework is crucial for understanding an infant's experiences. The second-person perspective emphasizes interpersonal interaction, mutual recognition with respect, and emotional engagement. It differs from the first-person perspective, emphasizing self-awareness and self-analyzing to understand others by one's own experiences. It is also unlike the third person perspective, which is objective to the others and tries to make sense of them via empirical data like conducting scientific experiments. In other words, both the first and third perspectives are self-centered (Reddy, 2008; Zahavi 2017; Garfield, 2019). On the other hand, the second-person perspective requires the individuals involved in the interaction, referred to as interlocutors by Schilbach (Schilbach et al., 2013), to be deeply involved in the relationship, and the understanding is via the interactions. Because of the second-person perspective of what Reddy emphasizes as emotional engagement, the interlocutors' understanding and connection are via various interactions, including verbal communication, bodily language, and facial expressions (Reddy, 2008). Because infants are not going through all the social and knowledge education yet as adults, if we try to communicate with them with an ego-first approach, like the first and the third person perspective, we are going to face the problem that they are different us and because of the differences, they are not understandable; as a result in the self-centered adult's eyes, infants are closer to animals or objects compare to themselves, the distance will become more prominent and increase the gap of understanding. We can view it clearly in an example.

I have a son, since he was born, it has been challenging to put him to sleep, and when he cannot sleep, he cries. Obviously, I cannot use the first-person perspective because I do not cry for sleep or anything else. His cry does not trigger any of my experiences. So, I try the third-person perspective in attempting to make sense of his crying and categorize it like a computer analyzing sounds. If there is a long high-pitch, it means he is hungry; if the cry sounds like a whisper, he is tired. I try to give my meaning to every single reaction he has. Of course, I fail horribly, and with each failing, I get more frustrated, and when I get frustrated, the situation gets worse; his cries become more unexpected, and he is not responding to any of my efforts to put him to sleep. Finally, I give up on understanding him in a scientific way. I follow a routine each time he cries, ruling out the possibilities like he is hungry, or he needs to change his diaper,

or he is sick. Then I join him in the cry. It doesn't mean that I also cry, but I start to follow my mood; if I want to sing, I sing a song; if I want to talk, I keep talking to him. Sometimes, he reacts to me, and sometimes he doesn't, but I no longer force it. I try to tell him: if he wants to sleep, he can; if he does not, it is ok. This behavior change is not a magic power to put him to sleep, but it creates more comfortable communication between us. His cry does not create anxiety for me as much as before, and sometimes it goes smoother, and he falls asleep with my singing.

The example described above does not try to prove that a second-person perspective, which involves acknowledging the other's subjectivity and engaging emotionally, can solve some of the difficulties in caring for infants. However, it indeed provides a non-self-centered way to interact with infants. The changing moment is when I do not try to interpret the infant's cry in an adult, understandable manner all the time, and accept that sometimes infants have their own emotions to express. It is something I cannot understand. In other words, I am admitting my limitations in understanding infants instead of blaming the infants for not communicating their wishes. In other words, I recognize my son's independent emotions, desires, and reasoning; he has his own reasons, even if I do not understand him yet. He is the same subjective being as I am. The other key point is that I treasure my emotions more than my behaviors. With the third-person perspective, I focus on making things right and what to do next. In the second-person perspective, I tried to focus on emotions and take care of both our emotions to be stable as well. When I am happier, there are very subtle changes in my son as well; his cries are not as sad as before. It could be a plausible effect, but it encouraged me to engage more with him, even when he cried. To summarize, the key elements of the second-person perspective are the willingness to participate in the interactions, the mutual acknowledgment of subjectivity with respect, and the attention to emotional engagement. These are also what most philosophers agree with when they discuss how we can use a second-person perspective to understand the self or get access to the minds of others. However, there are points that different philosophers disagree with. The main argument points are: Can non-sentient beings be included in the mutual recognition process? In other words, in the "I" and "You" relationship, can the "You" be a non-sentient being?

Ingar Brinck and Vasudevi Reddy recently wrote an article about how artists engage with materials. In the article, they mainly focused on the engagement of a potter and the clay they work with. Brinck and Reddy think that engaging with the clay is also a type of second-person engagement, even though the clay is obviously not a human being (Brinck & Reddy, 2020). However, during the interaction between the potter and clay, there is a conversation; the potter listens to the clay carefully; the interaction is not that a potter shapes the clay from one side - it is a two-way collaboration (Brinck & Reddy, 2020). I have tried pottering myself for years, and I shared the same experience as the potter they described in their book. There is a strong feeling of rejection when I begin to work clay on a spinning wheel. After a month of practice, I started to realize that what is necessary to work with clay is not to force the clay to go in the direction I want but to convince the clay to work alone with me. For example, I try to center a clay in the middle of the spinning wheel. Initially, I want to take the lead, and I use all my force to push the clay down and try to lock it at the center. But the more forces I try, the more the clay goes off the center. In the end, I get exhausted, and the clay is not able to stand anymore. It is very similar to the experience of telling an infant not to cry. The louder the voice you have, the harder the infant cries. The similarity is that in both situations, the failed tryouts are in one-directional order; there is no two-directional communication, which is why the conflict arises more when the order is enforced more. In this type of one-directional ordering process, the one who enforces the order treats the other as something that can be shaped according to their will. In the relationship, there is zero respect for the other. Because the otherness is not an object that simply follows all orders, it starts to refuse, to go against the order. It takes time for the one who gave the orders to understand what exactly is happening. Especially in those cases, the ordering one and the being-ordered one have a communication gap. The clay can't speak the human language. And infants can only cry. Both of them use their own way to show their objections, but the ordered side is not familiar with the ways.

In the paper, Brinck and Reddy detail how the second-person perspective can effectively bridge the communication gap between sentient and non-sentient beings and further support that non-sentient beings can be counted the same as the human subjective "You." We can see that the experiences of interacting with an infant and clay go in the same direction; even if one is a sentient being, the other is not. First, the potter and the caretaker need to open their mind and

accept the possibility of communicating with each other without the standard communication methods, like verbal language. The second step is giving it time. It takes a lot of practice and skills for a potter to recognize the different stages of response given by the clay (Brinck & Reddy, 2020, p.27). The same goes for the infants and the caretaker; time is one of the antidotes. In the beginning, it is always chaotic and frustrating, but it gets better when the caretaker and the infant get familiar with each other (Brinck & Reddy, 2020, p.27). The infants give subtle signs, and the signs will become habits over time; without thinking or any other mental processing, the caretaker might intuitively and efficiently respond to the infants. Last, the communications should be more emotionally imbued, feel it from the otherness. With the investment of emotions, the potter can let the clay lead the way when he feels the clay is willing to, and then they start to work smoothly. In this case, the potter is open, listening, and happy (Brinck & Reddy, 2020, p.38). Similarly, when the caretaker feels the infant's needs, they start to calm down and comfort the infant, and the cry goes down slowly as well (Brinck & Reddy, 2020, p.39).

Brinck and Reddy try to prove at this point that recognizing material as subjective "You" is not as intuitive as recognizing a human. Time is needed to get used to the materials and become familiar with their communication methods. It is more apparent when we see the differences between newbies and expert potters: the experts have a closer relationship with the clay (Brinck & Reddy, 2020, p.27-28). Suppose we compare a newbie potter and an expert potter. It is clear that the newbie holds a third-person perspective; they try to control, demand, and expect the clay to follow the movement of the hand, which is the nature of the clay. The newbie potters are closed off when they treat the clay as a "dead" object. They are not trying to feel the clay's response; that is why they cannot hear the reaction of the clay and re-act based on the reaction. Of course, there will not be any recognition because the newbie is not even open to this possibility. What happens between the newbie potter and the clay is not communication; it is one-sided ordering. After years and years of practice, newbie potters became the experienced potters. They can tell when the clay is willing to take the lead and when it is tired enough that it does not want to cooperate anymore. An expert potter's attitude has changed after years of practice; they are prepared to listen and get all the subtle responses from the clay to know when to push harder than to let it go. By doing so, the expert is already recognizing the clay as a coworker; they are listening and following the clay's lead when the time comes. They believed

that the clay is telling them when to help, and what the potter is doing is directing where they could potentially go together. Again, there are similarities in caring for infants; as an inexperienced mother, it is tough to tell an infant's feelings, even though they already express their emotions from birth. On the contrary, an experienced nurse can tell the infant's emotions and needs by listening to crying, whether crying out of hunger or tiredness. Nevertheless, all the cries sound the same for a new mum and it is a frustrating experience.

In summary, recognizing material as "You" from a second-person perspective is not as easy as a button switch. Changing minds requires not being open to the possibility that materials can have their subjectivity and willingness. However, time and practice are also needed to learn the way materials communicate. Through millions of failed communications, the mother does not see the infant merely as a crying object, and the potter does not treat the clay merely as clay. It is an emotional transformation as well as a transformation from a third-person perspective toward a second-person perspective. Brinck and Reddy summarize it as a two-fold process: openness is the first step; then, there is the necessity of recognition (Brinck & Reddy, 2020, p.38). With an open mindset, a potter needs to recognize that the clay can respond based on the potter's actions, and it can cooperate alongside the potter's movement so that they can work together. By having openness and recognition, the "I" starts to have an interest in the other, being open towards the other. Then, the "I" also recognizes the other's "subjectivity" or treats the other as an equal partner, so during the interactions, there is not only telling but also waiting, listening, and feeling. Therefore, the second-person connection has been built (Brinck & Reddy, 2020, p.39-40). As a result, with emotional engagement as the foundation of dialogic bi-directional interactions, the agents involved in second-person engagements can be expanded to include non-human materials (Brinck & Reddy, 2020, p.41).

There are different voices regarding the prerequisites for second-person engagement. Dan Zahavi thinks it has to be a reciprocal subject-subject relationship, which means not only does the potter need to recognize the clay's subjectivity, but the clay needs to recognize the potter's subjectivity (Zahavi, 2023). By subjectivity, we refer to the capacity to have experiences and feelings and to be aware of these experiences and feelings as one's own. Otherwise, the second-person perspective cannot be established. Obviously, materials are not conscious beings; it is not possible that the clay can respond to the potter with equal recognition. He claims that

reciprocal co-determination is essential; the I-You relationship must have a mutually addressed subjectivity (Zahavi, 2023, p.85). The experiences of “I” are intertwined with the experiences of “You,” and the relationship between “I” and “You” are co-existing. He thinks subjectivity is not natural as given to everyone and, of course, only for some; subjectivity needs to be learned (Zahavi, 2023, p.98). More in detail, the second-person perspective comes with a two-step process: first, there is a need to be aware of “I” and then the relationship between “I” and “You” (Zahavi, 2023, p.98-99). If the material cannot learn to recognize its subjectivity, it cannot have the ability to recognize other’s subjectivity. Therefore, materials cannot be counted as “You” in the second-person perspective engagement.

However, Zahavi’s requirements suggest that “I” need to know that “You” have the same ability to recognize subjectivity, and that “You” indeed recognize “I” as an equal subject. These conditions are impossible to prove. How can “I” know that “You” recognizes “You,” as well as recognizing “I”? As a participant in interpersonal interaction, what is the difference between “You” recognizing “I” and “You” actually recognizing “I”? In Zhuangzi’s Happy Fish story, it also indicates that there is a gap in directly accessing another’s mind.

莊子與惠子遊於濠梁之上。莊子曰：儻魚出遊從容，是魚樂也。惠子曰：子非魚，安知魚之樂。莊子曰：子非我，安知我不知魚之樂。惠子曰：我非子，固不知子矣；子固非魚也，子之不知魚之樂全矣。莊子曰：請循其本。子曰汝安知魚樂云者，既已知吾知之而問我，我知之濠上也。

Zhuangzi and Huizi were enjoying themselves on the bridge over the Hao River. Zhuangzi said, “The minnows are darting about free and easy! This is how fish are happy.” Huizi replied, “You are not a fish. How do you know that the fish are happy?” Zhuangzi said, “You are not me. How do you know that I do not know that the fish are happy?” Huizi said, “I am not you, to be sure, so of course I don’t know about you. But you obviously are not a fish, so the case is complete that you do not know that the fish are happy.” Zhuangzi said, “Let’s go back to the beginning of this. You said, How do you know that the fish are happy; but by asking me this, you already knew that I knew it. I know it right here above the bridge.” (Watson, 2003, p. 783)

In the story, not knowing whether the fish are happy is the same as not knowing whether Zhuangzi knows the fish are happy. Even if there are clear differences between fish and humans, we can’t have direct access to the consciousness of others, regardless of their nature. Humans, fish, even non-sentient beings, they are all other minds. When “I” tries to understand another’s mind – “You,” “I” cannot know whether “You” has recognized “I” or not; it always remains uncertain. How can uncertainty become a condition of a promise? To be more accurate, the condition that “I” need to recognize the fact that “You” also recognize “me” is better rewritten as

“I have to believe that it is the fact that you recognize me.” In this case, “I” can believe that “Fish” recognizes me, and “I” can also believe that clay recognizes me. Like what Brinck and Reddy proposed: if the potter gets a response from the clay and believes that the clay can recognize the potter as a coworker, then the potter is engaged in a second-person interaction with the clay (Brinck & Reddy, 2020). Later, I will use Dōgen’s oneness idea to further support how we can include non-sentient beings in second-person engagement.¹

Zahavi’s argument emphasizes the required reciprocal attention as a condition in the second-person perspective engagement. During the interaction, mutual addressing and communication need to be involved. The question is, why does mutual addressing need to happen between two humans? Zahavi criticized Reddy’s argument that seeing the interactions between the clay and potter as a second-person perspective engagement is a mistake (Zahavi, 2023, p.86). And the counter reasoning is that the interactions didn’t happen among humans. In other words, Zahavi thinks the second-person perspective is limited only to human interactions (Zahavi, 2023). Imagine that in the future, technology is so advanced. For example, in the TV series *WestWorld*, the robot looks like an actual human, speaks like a real human, and behaves like a human. There is no way to tell the differences between a human and a robot. Maybe a robot has the same consciousness as humans; maybe it does not. The key part is that there is no way to determine whether the “You” and “I” are human or not. What exactly happens is that during the second-person perspective interactions, there is mutual addressing and deep emotional involvement, and both of them think of each other as a human. Only in the end, we find out that one or even both of them are robots. So, in this case, will we cancel the value of the engagement that just happened? In summary, when there is no way to tell whether a human-like creature is a real human or not, what we can determine is only what we have received from the other and what we believe the other is. Therefore, in Zahavi’s argument, an autonomous human being should be an assumed autonomous human being. Going back to the potter and clay example, if a trained potter can feel the fine motor response from the clay and emotionally engage with the

¹I read it differently from Jay Garfield (Garfield, 2019). Garfield’s reading focuses on Huizi’s belief that to understand others, there needs to be an equal mind. Fish and humans are different, so humans cannot know a fish’s mind. Zhuangzi argues that we can know others if we keep an open mind and learn others’ perspectives. In other words, Zhuangzi supports the idea that a second-person perspective can help us understand others’ minds. In a way, Garfield criticizes Huizi’s idea that only equal minds can understand each other. I agree with this point, but I think we need to push it further. My emphasis is that in a second-person perspective, we can include non-sentient beings, even if they do not have the ability to recognize subjectivity. It doesn’t stop us from knowing them.

clay, what is the difference in the interaction between clay and a human compared to two potters working together? The potter receives signals from the other human; he needs to use less force; the potter receives the same response from the clay. He needs to use more force. The potter feels happy when the other human coworker praises him by saying so; the potter feels cheerful when the clay praises him for being in the center. The potter knows they need to rest when the coworker is not cooperating anymore and is reluctant to respond; the potter thinks it is time to take a break when the clay gives up by showing tiredness. How can you say clay cannot be part of a second-person engagement?

In the Chinese *Yogācāra*, the masters have explained what we perceive. This makes it clearer why there is no absolute certainty that the “You” is a subjective autonomous human in the second-person engagement.

三所緣緣。謂若有法。是帶己相。心或相應。所慮所託。此體有二。一親，二疎。(CBETA 2023.Q4, T48, no. 2016, p. 809a23-25)

The third, is the condition in the form of a [perceptual] object (*Ālambana*). For the existing dharma that is perceived by the mind is closely tied to their forms (*Ālambana*). Moreover, every existing thing, consciousness, and their corresponding phenomena, which are generated by consciousness. There are two types of *Ālambana*: direct *Ālambana* and remote *Ālambana*.²

For *Yogācāra* masters, how we can perceive is dependent on consciousness. The *Ālambana* can be explained as phenomena generated by consciousness. If the trigger of the phenomena is different from the consciousness that generates it, it is the distant *Ālambana*; otherwise, it is the immediate *Ālambana*. Xuanzang, a *Yogācāra* master, and his student Kuiji have commented on the original treatise and used a mirror analogy to explain how we perceive experiences: “the world manifesting through the mirror.” Li, in her article, points out that the concept of *Ālambana* matches the notion of second-person perspective engagement. According to the Chinese *Yogāchārins*, perceiving others is merely a false imagination. The perceiver and the perceived are initially from the same awareness (Li, 2019). Follow this line of argument if we look at the scenario of a potter interacting with the clay. When the potter perceived the image of the clay, it raised the consciousness of the potter itself. As long as the potter can feel genuinely about the feelings and response from the clay and the feeling is the same as what the potter

² All the translations from the Chengweishilun 成唯識論 are my translation consulted by Xuanzang, Vasubandhu, & Cook, F. H. (1999). *Three texts on consciousness only*. Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research.

received from a human coworker, such as tiredness of the clay or the intention to lead, there are no differences between the phenomena generated by clay and the phenomena generated from a human potter. In this situation, the potter is being open, treating the clay as respectfully as themselves, and recognizing the clay as the same as another subjective human, so this is a similar second-person interaction as engaging with another human potter. In other words, in the potter's presence, both a human potter and the clay have subjectivity and intentionality during the interaction process. Of course, there are still differences between a potter working together with another potter. The interdependency of potter versus potter is a shared consciousness of the two; the interdependency of the Potter versus clay is shared interactions raised by the consciousness of the potter itself. However, the differences are not a key element in changing the interactions. As a result, both of them should be counted as second-person interactions. The absolute and necessary prerequisites summarized from current debts for a second-person perspective engagement are emotional interactions, being open, and being able to recognize the counterpart's interactions. Whether the other, from the second-person perspective, is a conscious being or not should not be considered a necessity. To expand the second-person engagement to include non-sentient beings, in the later chapter, I will bring Dōgen's oneness theory to support the idea all beings are part of the second-person perspective.

Jay Garfield presents a unique perspective. He posits that a second-person viewpoint necessitates a dual layer. First, we must be receptive to engaging with others. Second, "I" must acknowledge that "You" recognize "I," thereby allowing me to manifest myself in these interactions (Garfield, 2022). While Garfield likely implies that the "You" must be a conscious entity, he also invites further discussion. He underscores the fact that humans are interdependent, not independent. He states:

We may take ourselves naively to be independent subjects who accidentally discover others; we may take our access to our minds to be more fundamental than our access to others; we may take socialization to be somehow accidental or optional. But in each case, we are wrong to do so. We become persons through our interactions with another person; as persons, we fully manifest who we are only in such interactions. (Garfield, 2022, p. 146)

Garfield's argument challenges the ego-centric perspective. He suggests that the self is not a given, but rather, it is brought to light through second-person interactions. If this is the case, then as long as "I" and "You" fulfill their roles in helping me understand my subjectivity, and I

acknowledge “You” as an equal subject, this dynamic is valid. The reason I struggle to recognize clay or infants as equal subjects is due to the arrogance of my ego, which assumes the existence of a completely independent self.

I want to expand Garfield’s dependency concepts. If we are dependent, are we only reliant on the “You” from a second-person perspective? In all the discussions above, the interactions are centered around the “I” and “You” relationship; it is a linear understanding. However, our interactions are multi-directional because “I” and “You” also coexist in an environment with a multitude of other “I” and “You.” It is a complex web of interactions. This complexity is exemplified in the interaction with infants. I can recall instances where understanding my boy’s cry and putting him to sleep in his early infancy stage is a challenge. The focus is on him, but upon reflection, I realize that the environment, despite my consistent responses, significantly influences his behavior.

When my baby was born, we get many visitors; everyone is pleased with him, how cute he is, and how nice he behaves. Everyone finds it surprising that the mother complains so much about the son’s difficulties: he cries randomly, sleeps short, has no sleeping patterns, and so on. Because each time there is someone other than the mother and the father, the baby behaves nicely. It is easy to please him; comparably, he falls asleep after ten minutes of walking or keeps sleeping for longer hours. The mother and the father often call the baby “little actors.” The baby purposely behaves as expected when there are visitors. The baby is more sensitive to the environment than the mother. The room temperature, whether both parents are in the same room or not, and the small details that adults might ignore are captured and reflected in the baby’s interactions with the mother. The baby is not only sensitive to space, but also sensitive to habit changes. The baby get used to the mother putting him to sleep in the evening and being held by his father when he wakes up; if one day the baby could not follow the routines, he would cry a lot. Habits are formed in the baby’s memories and supported by his past experiences. When there is a change in the baby’ routines, he interacts with the current situations and his past. As a caretaker, the mother is also affected by the environment and her habits, just because the mother is less sensitive or her responses towards those are too subtle, so it is not as evident as the baby.

From the infant example, we can clearly see that interaction is not just about the caretaker and the infants, but it encompasses everything around them in space and time. The second-person perspective, a key concept in this discussion, should be expanded in both environmental and historical dimensions. It involves interpersonal interactions with multiple agents, both sentient and non-sentient, and the engagement among all is not just emotional but also marked by a profound sense of mutual recognition and respect. In the later chapter, I will introduce Dōgen's oneness and *Yogācāra*'s framework to help construct the base for the temporal dimension of second-person perspective engagement and use both Ahmed's orientation system and *Yogācāra*'s framework to set the foundations for the time dimensions. This enriched second-person perspective will allow us to re-analyze the definition of an infant's consciousness, revealing its depth and complexity.

Chapter 3: Definition of the web of interactions

In the previous chapter, we have seen that infants interact with both sentient and non-sentient beings when they are involved in an interaction. The current debates show different opinions about whether we should include sentient or non-sentient beings in the second person perspective engagement. We have used the *Ālambana* concept in *Yogācāra* to argue that for some non-sentient beings, when the sentient being is well cultivated, the sentient being can communicate in the same way as they communicate with the non-sentient beings, such as clay. For a trained potter, the distant *Ālambana* generated based on the engagement with the clay is not much different from the distant *Ālambana* generated based on interaction with another human potter. However, using the distant *Ālambana* as a critical concept supports the argument that some interactions between sentient beings and non-sentient beings are limited in another way. It only includes some non-sentient beings that some sentient beings can recognize. In other words, it consists of a limited number of non-sentient beings and, at the same time, excludes some sentient beings. Following this line of argument won't help us look into the details of the infant interactions. First, we don't know which elements the interaction is like, like the clay, which the infants will recognize as how the potter recognizes clay; second, we can't approve of infants being as sensitive as the expert potter. So, we need another framework to support the idea that second-person perspectives include non-sensitive beings. *Yogācāra* is focused on consciousness and has many detailed discussions related to interactions among self and others. By looking into the details of how consciousness works, we have already moved away from the Western ego-centric way of thinking. But it is not enough; we need to go beyond conscious beings and beyond the general deanthropocentrism in Buddhism. Dōgen, the founder of the Sōtō school of Zen in Japan, has provided us with a different angle, which I believe builds up the perfect foundation to understand the second-person perspective.

Before we embark on the fascinating journey into the depths of Dōgen's deanthropocentrism (Dōgen, 2002)³, it's essential to first comprehend the foundations of

³ In this thesis, deanthropocentrism, a term coined by Masao Abe (Abe, 1992), refers to a philosophical stance that challenges the traditional human-centered view of the world. Abe uses deanthropocentrism and anthropocentrism to differentiate Buddhism from the Judaeo-Christian tradition: Buddhism doesn't place human beings above other sentient beings (Abe, 1992, p. 38). Later, Abe describes Dōgen's oneness theory as radically de-anthropocentric (Abe, 1992, p. 44) to emphasize that Dōgen goes beyond and includes sentient and non-sentient beings. It is not clear why Abe chose the word deanthropocentrism rather than non-anthropocentrism. I see the differences as deanthropocentrism is more active; it is not only denying anthropocentrism like non-anthropocentrism indicates, but

anthropocentrism. This understanding will not only shed light on the reasons why we should consider embracing Dōgen’s deanthropocentrism but also ignite a spark of curiosity about the intriguing contrast between these two philosophical perspectives.

Anthropocentrism sees human beings as the most significant existence. It is rooted in the Judeo-Christian traditions; humans are in a unique position in the world and are above other beings. The Book of Genesis, verse 1:26, encapsulates the very essence of anthropocentrism. It boldly proclaims: “God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.” This verse, steeped in religious and philosophical significance, establishes the belief that humans are not just another creation but are, in fact, superior to all other beings.

Following anthropocentrism entails that we often put the human ego and human needs above the rest of the world, including both sentient and non-sentient beings. If we follow this approach to look at the second-person perspective, it makes sense to highlight the concept of subjectivity and argue that subjectivity is a human privilege. Even if they can be addressed as “You,” the other beings will be identified as the objectified “You.” When an interaction happens between a subject and an object, even if it involves emotion and embodied experiences, it is hard to have equal recognition. So, to expand the second-person perspective, we need to think in the opposite direction: deanthropocentrism.

Buddhism, in general, provides a deanthropocentrism (Abe, 1992, p. 38). It encourages the cultivation of compassion for all sentient beings and emphasizes the core concept of dependent origination, which highlights the interconnectedness and interdependence of all life forms. Buddhism does not put humans in a higher position above other beings, instead it fosters a view that all life is equally significant. Dōgen expands the horizon of deanthropocentrism by providing a different understanding of Buddha’s nature. Dōgen’s oneness idea expands the deanthropocentrism of Buddhasim, so the Buddha nature is not limited to sentient beings; it includes non-sentient beings. The traditional way of reading the 一切众生悉有佛性 (*shitssu wa*

it also actively removes the bias of human-centered thinking. In this thesis, I will keep using the word deanthropocentrism to show that I want to actively remove the bias of excluding infants or other non-human beings in philosophical discussions, thereby broadening the scope of these discussions and making them more inclusive.

bussho nari) (Dōgen, 2002, p. 61) is that the whole being has the Buddha Nature (Abe, Heine, Heine, & Heine, 1992, p.35). Buddha Nature is like a seed carried by all sentient beings; one day, the seeds can change from their potential to actualization (Abe, Heine, Heine, & Heine, 1992, p.35). Dōgen read it as all beings; all sentient beings are entire beings, and all beings are Buddha nature (Abe, Heine, Heine, & Heine, 1992, p.35). In other words, Buddha's nature is the fundamental nature of all beings. Traditionally, the Whole Being is defined as all beings in the *samsāra*; when the Whole Being is out of the birth-death cycle, it realizes its Buddha nature. We can understand it as that in the traditional view, the Whole Being is still limited to the living beings, the sentient Being. This is already an deanthropocentrism compared to the Judeo-Christian traditions, but Dōgen pushed it more. For Dōgen, the Whole Being is the expanded horizon of sentient beings; it is about being and non-being. To realize Buddha's nature is not simply to overcome the birth-death problem and get out of *samsāra*; it needs to break through the being-nonbeing dimension. The being-nonbeing dimensions are more inclusive: sentient Being, non-sentient, human, animal, plants, objects, ghost, and everything else; they are the Whole Being, and the Whole Being is Buddha nature. Following this line of argument, there are no essential differences among whole beings; the Whole Being is Buddha Nature. The Buddha Nature is the Whole Being, and the Whole Being is nondual. Dōgen further argues that realizing Buddha Nature is to realize the impermanence of the Whole Being, the impermanence of Buddha Nature, and the dynamic oneness of Buddha Nature and the Whole Being. The impermanence and the nondual view didn't leave space for any duality thinking. Suppose we follow Dōgen's idea that the whole sentient being is Buddha's nature. In that case, we should not eliminate the possibility of non-sentient beings as a legitimate participant in second-person engagement. The sentient being is the Whole Being; the non-sentient being is the Whole Being. There is intrinsic interdependence between sentient and non-sentient, as both are non-separated from the Whole Being. Oneness is defined by its nature. Additionally, the Whole Being is being at the moment, past, present, and future. There are interdependence cross-time decisions; all actions in the second-person engagement are dependent, and they depend on the Whole Beings: sentient and non-sentient. How can we remove the non-sentient beings from the dependency web? Non-sentient beings have to be part of the second-person perspective engagement.

The enlightened fully understand oneness. Ordinary humans still tend to objectify others, but this can be overcome. Understanding the relationship between self and other, as

well as the subject and object, is essential, as this will form the foundation for second-person interaction for all beings. For Dōgen, self and others are nondual and mutually reversible, but they are still identical and distinct. He wrote:

The donkey sees the well, the well sees the donkey, the well sees the well, and the donkey sees the donkey. (Abe, Heine, Heine, & Heine, 1992, p. 91)⁴

In the example, the donkey and the well are in a reciprocal relationship; the donkey as the subject can see the well as the object, and the other way around, the well as the object can see the donkey as the subject. The well appears as an image of the donkey; the donkey is shown as a phenomena for the well. There is an interchangeable between the two. Abe used the words host and guest to replace the subject and object (Abe, Heine, Heine, & Heine, 1992, p. 91). It is a more accurate expression. The position of host and guest is defined in perspective. It is interchangeable. What has not changed is the reciprocity between the two and their distinctiveness. The guest appears as a manifestation of the host; it can only be manifested via the host itself. At the same time, the host appears as a phenomena for the guest, and it is the phenomena for the guest only (Abe, Heine, Heine, & Heine, 1992, p. 92). We can similarly rewrite the relationship between potter and clay: the potter feels the clay, the clay feels the potter, and the potter feels the potter, the clay feels the clay. The potter recognizes the clay; the clay recognizes the potter; the clay appears as an image of the potter; the potter is shown as a phenomena for the clay. In other words, in Dōgen's framework, not only the subject can recognize an object, but the object can also recognize the subject. In this case, I don't think there is a need to require a subject-to-subject relationship as a prerequisite for a second-person relationship. The de-anthropocentric framework supports Brinck and Reddy's idea that "dialog with material," a concept that refers to the active engagement and interaction with materials, can be included as a second-person engagement (Brinck & Reddy, 2020).

With the idea that materials can be part of a second-person perspective interaction. The second-person engagement should not focus solely on "I" and "You." All the other sentient and non-sentient beings in the background should be part of the interaction. With this in mind, let's

⁴ This is the English translation used by Abe in her book (Abe, Heine, Heine, & Heine, 1992, p. 91). The original text of Dogen is in Japanese in the book Dōgen Zenji. (1988). *Dogen Zenji zenshu*. Shunjusha. 2:100

see an interactive example about when I play peek-a-boo with my one-year-old son. This is a pervasive game played between an infant and their caretaker, even if the infant is only several months old, and it captures well how the interactions around the infant are like a connected web.

I, the caretaker, have my six-month-old son, sitting in front of me in a baby chair in our living room. We look at each other; he looks at me, looks at the ceiling, and then looks at me again. He doesn't know we are going to play a game now. I start by lifting and going towards my face, and he focuses on me again because he notices my movement. And then I cover my face with my hand. I wait and slowly move my fingers to allow my eyes to show up. I see that he is still looking at me. Then, I close the gap between my fingers very quickly. I hear that he laughs hard. I see him have his head turned up to the ceiling and then look back at me when he stops laughing.

In this game, it seems like he is only interacting with me, and I am only interacting with him. There are subtle actions that switch tensions to something else; it is hard to tell we are also engaging with the environment. We are often alone at home. But there, if we change one factor, the location where we play the game, it is evident that my son and I exchange feelings and attention with the surroundings.

This is my son's favorite game. Each time, we repeat the same steps, and no matter how many times we have played it, he always laughs and never gets tired of it. But there are exceptions, and the exception-changing factor is not me, the major player in the interaction, but the background. When we play the game in a restaurant, there are always moments of pause between the movement, which I show my face from the hidden hands and his laugh. His laugh comes with a delay compared to when we are at home. It is not a long pause, and it is not like he looks at someone else instead of me, but there is a delay. If there were a video tape, we could probably capture more details in his eye movement; maybe there were very short moments he looks behind me, or maybe his pause was caused by what he hears. What is sure is that the pause has shown that I am not the sole interacting factor he is engaging with.

In the restaurant example, the mother is focused on the baby, and the baby focuses on the mother. At the same time, the mother might notice they are in a restaurant, not at home, so she will keep her voice at a specific volume so as not to interrupt others. So, the

mother's response is not only towards the baby but also towards the people around her. Same with the baby, the baby is looking at the mother, a familiar face, peek-a-boo is a familiar game, but the restaurant is new; it is not the familiar, safe environment like the living room at home. The baby's hesitation is the response not only to the mother but also to the surrounding things that distract him, such as a person passing by or sounds of chatting. The background plays an important role to the major interlocutors in second-person engagement. The environment doesn't have to be a noisy one; the silence response is also a response. For example, when they play the game at home, both the mother's and baby's reactions are not solely toward each other; they are also toward the environment. The interaction seems like the mother is only looking at the baby, and the baby is only looking at the mother; the fact is that the mother and the baby both respond silently toward the living room. The living room is a safe environment; their silence shows their trust and their feeling of comfort. The interactions between the room, the baby, and the mother are subtle, but they exist. It is not something that consciously interrupts the interactions between the baby and the mother, but it is still there. Especially if we look at it through a second-person engagement lens, in which emotion plays a major role. The interlocutors do not trigger the emotional factors solely by themselves. The background environment, the weather, and the space, including humans and non-humans, all contribute to their emotions and what happens at the moment. In other words, dependency is not only a dependency between the mother and the infant but also depends on locations, surrounding objects, background sounds, and the weather; everything that appears as part of the image for the mother and the infant is a dependency.

This can be better explained by looking at one of the *Yogācāra*'s key concepts: *Ālambana*. As mentioned in the early chapter, in *Yogācāra*'s, our experiences do not directly reflect external objects, environments, or other consciousness. What we receive are specific phenomena (*xiang* 相) of the external world. The perceived phenomena (*xiang* 相) are processed by different layers of consciousness. The images that can be processed are called *Ālambana* (*suoyuanyuan* 所缘缘). There are two types of phenomena: Immediate *Ālambana* (*qinsuoyuanyuan* 亲所缘缘) and distant *Ālambana* (*shusuoyuanyuan* 疏所缘缘). Immediate *Ālambana* (*qinsuoyuanyuan* 亲所缘缘) are the phenomena that can be raised by the stem consciousness, which perceives the phenomena; if the phenomena perceived depends on external

worlds or other consciousness, it is the Distant *Ālambana* (*shusuoyuanyuan* 疏所缘缘). In the interactions of playing peek-a-boo between the mother and the infants, both the mother and the infants mostly receive the Distant *Ālambana* (*shusuoyuanyuan* 疏所缘缘).

Additionally, Kuiji commented on the *Ālambana*: When the mind and the other perceive, it is like the mirror revealing things 心等緣時，但如汝宗鏡等照物 (CBETA 2024.R1, T43, no. 1830, p. 493c29-30)[4]. It is a great analogy to tell that the relationship we have with the mind of the other is not the first-person perspective. What we have with others is interdependency. Interdependency can happen between conscious beings and another conscious being, or it can also appear between a conscious being and another non-conscious being. Besides the dependency, there is also a potentially hidden message behind this mirror analogy. When a mirror reveals things, will it relieve things one by one? No, it is not; it shows everything that reaches the mirrors at once. Maybe the question should be rewritten as follows: Does dependency only happen between the two interlocutors mainly, like the mother and the infant, or does engagement or dependencies involve more than that?

When discussing second-person engagement, it is common to assume the concept of the integrated self: a state of coherence and consistency within an individual's identity. This notion stands in contrast to the Buddhist concept of nonself, which emphasizes the absence of a permanent, unchanging self. The integrated self-assumption not only eliminates non-sentient beings from the interaction but also makes us easily ignore the connection between all beings and potential, blocking us from seeing the micro-interactions exchanged with the environment. As a result, we will miss the dependencies outside of the two significant interactors. However, by shifting our focus to the interaction level, we open up a realm of potential discoveries, challenging the viewpoint of an integrated self as a pre-condition.

The *Yogācāra* framework, with its inclusivity and respect for diverse perspectives, provides a robust tool for examining the details of interactions. It will help us better see the web of interactions and dependencies. Different *Yogācāra* masters have different views of the number of layers of consciousness, and disagreements exist on how each layer functions. In the context of this paper, the differences are less relevant. Here, I use Xuanzang's eight layers of consciousness theory modal in this thesis as an example.

There are eight different layers of consciousness. The first five consciousnesses are related to the five senses: the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, and the body. They process what we receive through the senses into something consciousness can process so that we can hear, smell, taste, and touch. The sixth one is the one that makes meanings/concepts out of the first five consciousnesses and also generates thoughts and mental activities. The seventh layer of consciousness, *Manas*, is the supporting layer for the first six layers; when the first six persons are interrupted, such as sleeping, the seventh layer is raised to keep the continuity of the consciousness. It is also responsible for more profound conceptual synthesis, such as identifying a subject, object, and attachment to self. The eighth layer of consciousness is called *Ālaya*, which is the storehouse of seeds and the foundation of all the other layers. Seeds are carriers for karmic imprints of past actions and are the core of the causal chain of a sentient being. The eighth layer is the supporting layer for a sentient being to be able to act based on past experiences and influence future actions. In other words, the continuity of a person's life, past, and future, as well as the continuity of the eighth layer, is dependent on the eighth layer.

The eight layers work closely together to help us navigate through our daily interactions. In the *ChengWeiShiLun*, it has mentioned:

是故八識，一切有情，心與末那，二恒俱轉，若起第六，則三俱轉。餘隨緣合，起一至五，則四俱轉，乃至八俱。是謂略說識俱轉義。(CBETA 2023.Q4, T31, no. 1585, p. 38b6-9)

For all sentient beings, the eighth consciousness (*Ālaya*) and the seventh consciousness (*Manas*) always arise together. If the sixth consciousness is also active, then all three arise simultaneously. Depending on the conditions, any of the first five consciousnesses may arise individually or all five may arise together. Consequently, there can be instances where four consciousnesses are active simultaneously, or all eight consciousnesses arise together. This is a brief summary of the simultaneous arising of the eight consciousnesses.

This tells us that the eight layers of consciousnesses are working together. The eighth and seventh consciousnesses are the supporting layers that ensure we can have continuous life experiences and the ability to differentiate between the self and the rest of the world. The seventh and the eighth layers are constantly rising. The sixth one can be interrupted if no distant *Ālambana* is being raised, such as when a person is in a deep sleep, the sixth layer of consciousness is not being raised. But when distant *Ālambana* is being built, the sixth consciousness and at least one of the first five consciousnesses will rise. We don't always have

the first five consciousnesses raised simultaneously because the first five consciousnesses depend on the situation. For example, if you are swimming underwater with your eyes closed, the eye consciousness won't rise in the experience.

The eight-layer consciousness structure allows us to look into our daily experiences from a different angle; we are not mainly focusing on the integrated self and the ego but shifting our focus on the interactions themselves, the moment, and the beings. If we rewrite the mother and the infant's interaction within the eight layers of consciousness structure, it will be like this:

The mother's eye consciousness gets the images of the infant; the mother's ear consciousness hears her own voice of peek-a-boo; the six layers and the seventh layer confirm that she is playing peek-a-boo with her own infant. In the meantime, the eye consciousness sees the infant's happy reaction and also a lot of people working by in the background; the ear consciousness captures the surrounding sounds; the mother smells all kinds of delicious food; the sixth layers figure out they are in restaurants, and with supporting of the eighth layers, the mother knows that based on her past experiences and learnings that she should consider others and lower her voices of saying peek-a-boo.

The infant's eye consciousness captures the image of women hiding and showing, also a lot of things moving around and colorful objects; the infant's ear consciousness hears peek-a-boo and many noises; the smell consciousness gets all different smiles; the sixth and seventh consciousness work together to recognize the mother and recall memories from eighth layer about similar happen moments of peek-a-boo; but it doesn't recall anything familiar with various smells, moving and colorful objects. There are mixed feelings raised in the sixth layer; the happy emotion of playing peek-a-boo with the same women and the unfamiliar sounds, images, and smells cause anxiety. The anxiety makes the eye, ear, and smell consciousness capture more details. With more details, there are seeds created for the experiences, and the unfamiliarity level goes down. As a result, it takes some time for the infant to decide what to make the first five consciousness focus on the mother and playing peek-a-boo.

When we break down the interactions in the individual layers of consciousness, we can see all the interactions constructed as a web of dependencies. The first five conscious keep

capturing all different phenomena from other conscious beings or non-conscious beings. The sixth layers constantly generate the distant *Ālambana* with what is received from the first five consciousnesses. The immediate *Ālambana* is also being raised with the help of the seventh and the eighth layers of consciousness, which could be pure thoughts or from various kinds of seeds. These distant *Ālambanas* do not solely depend on the root consciousness but also on others. For example, what the mother's eye consciousness captures includes the conscious ones, such as the guests or the staff; it also captures the non-sentient ones, like the food, tables, or decorations in the restaurant. When the sixth consciousness figures out that they are in a restaurant and comes up with a judgment that they are engaged in a game with the infants, the sixth consciousness also connects with the seventh and eighth layers to retrieve seeds and raise the cognitions about self and others.

In Yogācāra, seeds are the concept that can explain well the relationship how the present actions and tendency related to the past history. Seeds store in the eighth layer of consciousness, and it raises under certain conditions and becomes the support for the current action (Li, 2022, p.172). The seeds are not only the new seeds raised at the current moment; the past memories are also being called out. These seeds are likely from past experiences in restaurants and experiences of learning how to behave in restaurants. In short, the future actions of the mother, such as lowering the voices, depend on the many immediate *Ālambanas* related by the seeds of her personal histories. The actions influence the other's reactions, such as other consciousnesses behaving happily or angrily, depending on whether the mother's consciousness decides to lower the voice. The other's actions will give feedback to the mother's next decision; it is an endless loop. The infant's cases are similar. In the infant's eighth layer of consciousness, there are not as many seeds as the mothers' to recall, but there are still related seeds, and new ones will be generated all the time. It is not the case that because an infant has fewer past experiences, there are no dependencies on the seeds. The seeds could belong to the infant itself or be shared. The infant, like the mother, also generates both immediate and distant *Ālambana* all the time. Whether it is an infant or an adult, the connections between the past, the present, and the future are countless, and the dependencies, among others, are many.

In summary, the interactions between the mother and the infants are not solely between them and are not only limited to themselves at the moment. They are connected with other

human beings' voices, facial expressions, bodily movements, and so on. They are also associated with the smells of food and the sounds of noises and still live in the environment. This interconnectedness, no matter how small, is always present; just as humans, we are not able to notice them all at the moment. The web, with its countless connections, is a testament to the unity of all living beings. It has two major dimensions. One dimension could be seen as the remote *Ālambana* dimensions; the interactions depend on different conscious beings and non-conscious beings; there are countless points that connect their actions and seeds. The other dimension is the immediate *Ālambana* dimension, which goes more in-depth into one consciousness itself. The first five layers of consciousness give constant feedback to the sixth consciousness, and the sixth consciousness also depends on the seventh and eighth layers to complete the action, thinking, or emotions loop. What has been exchanged among all the eight layers of consciousness is like the stars in the sky; we don't know which light is exactly coming from where and how far it can reach. With the two dimensions intertwined, the web of interactions is built.

Look back into the *Yogācāra* framework. Both the interactions that happen in the first and second dimensions can be interpreted by the functions of seeds. Seeds have different characteristics:

然種子義，略有六種：一刹那滅，謂體纔生，無間必滅，有勝功力，方成種子。(CBETA 2023.Q4, T31, no. 1585, p. 9b7-9)

Seeds have six characteristics. First, some seeds are instantaneous, meaning they perish without interval as soon as they are born but still retain their effect. This quality allows them to function as seeds. This is what allows them to function as seeds.

二果俱有，謂與所生，現行果法，俱現和合，方成種子(CBETA 2023.Q4, T31, no. 1585, p. 9b10-11)

Second, seeds and their fruit exist together: the fruit came from its seeds, the seeds and the results raised together. This is what allows them to function as seeds.

三恒隨轉，謂要長時，一類相續，至究竟位，方成種子。CBETA 2023.Q4, T31, no. 1585, p. 9b17-18)

Third, seeds must continuously arise over time. This means that the same characteristics persist in a single series for a certain time, continuing until the bodhisattva reaches the ultimate stage of development. This is what allows them to function as seeds.

五待眾緣，謂此要待，自眾緣合，功能殊勝，方成種子。(CBETA 2023.Q4, T31, no. 1585, p. 9b22-23)

Fifth, seeds need to work together with dependent conditions, only those that meet its conditions can generate fruits successfully. This is what allows them to function as seeds.

Those characteristics of seeds indicate that seeds are not working alone. Seeds are raised or not depending on conditions involving conscious and non-conscious beings. Seeds exist across time, in the past, current, and future. In other words, for one consciousness, the amount of activity that seeds involve are countless. There are many seeds in one consciousness since it keeps rising and destroying. Imagine that interactions are generated among different consciousnesses. Each consciousness has an uncountable number of seeds to help build the connections, and the connections expand to the two different *Ālambana* dimensions. As a result, it forms a deep web that is impossible to see through. When we are involved in second-person interactions, we are diving into a web of countless seeds, countless images, countless conscious beings, and countless non-conscious beings. Every single action is not alone; every seed is related to another, and it is out of a human's ability to figure out all the causal chains and dependency links. Back to the example, the mother playing peek-a-boo with the infant is more complex than one subject interacting with another subject and exchanging emotions and actions within themselves. It involves all beings around them; the interactions nest among everything that we can or cannot see. Also, we should consider what happens around them as just a tiny piece of the whole picture, and there are many different histories behind them, as well as the possibilities waiting for them.

Chapter 4: Navigating through the web of interaction

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the web of interactions has two major characteristics: environment and history, each with countless seeds and connections. To navigate our experiences within this complex web, we need a starting point and a guideline for following the connections. The web of interactions involves both sentient and non-sentient beings. Regardless of their nature, we are all interconnected and dependent on each other; we cannot separate our lives from the rest. We treat both sentient and non-sentient beings equally in these interactions. However, as humans, we have our limitations. To better understand non-sentient beings, we must begin with our consciousness but focus more on the actions themselves. This approach helps avoid falling into the human-centric trap of viewing humans as integrated selves. Instead, by treating non-sentient beings as equal participants and utilizing the eight-layer consciousness structure from *Yogācāra*, we emphasize the importance of actions, the links between different interactions, and the histories behind them.

On the other hand, if we are too focused, we will go back to the methods in which we only see autonomous human beings and treat the interactions as sole independent events between two interlocutors. We must follow some guidelines to see as many potential connections as possible. In the book *Queer Phenomenology*, Sara Ahmed uses the phenomenology methodology to study lived experiences and how Husserl oriented his experiences toward the table to show us a possible fallacy we could have made when we are too much focused; what I found very useful in Ahmed's book is how she mentioned about the personal and social histories and how it shift our attention. In short, each time a person shifts their attention towards something, no matter how small it is, it is a choice, and this choice is intended. The decision of what to be oriented to is connected to the person's own history; in other words, their decision is made because who they are and who they are depends on what they have been through. Again, the person is not only in these words; they are connected with the environment close to them and also distant. The close ones can still be counted as personal history; the distant ones are social history. If we follow the line of histories behind our interactions, go from the near ones to further ones, we have found a directional guideline. It is the same for infants; we might assume that infants have little histories, but if we look into the details of interactions, what shapes the infants' current behaviors also has a huge connection. I will use a live example of interaction from an

infant's angle to go alongside Ahmed's analysis and try to construct a guide to navigate the web of interactions with a focus. Ahmed starts by analyzing Husserl's text below:

In perception properly so-called, as an explicit awareness, I am turned towards object, to the paper, for instance, I apprehend it as being this here and now. The apprehension is a singling out, every perceived object having a background in experiences. Around and about the paper lie books, pencils, in-well, and so forth, and there in a certain sense are also perceived, perceptually there, in the field of intuition. (Ahmed, 2008, p. 25)

As Ahmed explains, for Husserl, there are the tables, but not only the tables; there are also paper, ink, and so much more. How Husserl orient toward all those objects is an interesting question. Husserl's orientation mainly toward the table indicates a direction; his habitual situations influence the direction, which is not random or primitive. Ahmed summarizes it as a twofold process. First, the person is directed toward the object, and second, the person makes the decision to go toward the object's direction; the first direction is recognizing; the second one is an intention with emotions (Ahmed, 2008). There are no necessary orders between the two folds in Husserl's table example. Husserl does not only notice the table but also sees and feels the table; when he chooses to move toward the table, he is in his habit of being a philosopher and a writer. He is in the writing room; it is his writing table, his pen. In other words, Husserl is in his world, surrounded by his space, and this world is built based on Husserl's history. There are other rooms and spaces behind this table, but he did not turn towards them. He "wonders" about the other spaces, but he is directed toward the writing space. The space that occupies his attention is his room; the space he ignores is his family's space. For him, there is a difference between the working space and the domestic space. It is not only about how much time he chooses to spend in this space or how focused he is on the writing space but also his attitude towards the different spaces. When Husserl is focused on his writings, his consciousness still catches what happens in the other spaces; there are still interactions between him and the world outside of his writing table. The difference is that the family space and his writing space represent different meanings. And because of the various meanings, he chooses to see one and ignore the other, including the dependencies between the two spaces. His room is not becoming a nice and clean writing space by itself. Husserl's family makes the room ready for him to work. But for Husserl, the history behind the readiness and the cleanliness doesn't come to his attention. In other words, he takes the family, the effort which makes the table clean and keeps the environment quiet as granted; his orientations choose to skip those, and with time, the

orientation becomes a habit, and the ignorance has been normalized. But as a matter of fact, the table has more connections behind it than what Husserl chooses to see; before Husserl used it, the children might have played with it, and the housemaid needs to clean after the children messed around it; the wife might have come in and double-check whether the housemaid did a good job and perhaps put things back where it was because the housemaid doesn't know where things are supposed to be and the stories go on. The tables as focus points can lead to millions of interactions now and then in the web of interactions. And the countless interactions are the history behind the table.

In this example, Husserl's orientation towards the table is a fascinating interplay of three types of histories. His personal history: Who is Husserl? A writer, a philosopher, and a man growing up in a patriotic society. His orientation towards the table at the moment is not a random and momentarily decision; it is a decision made by Husserl, the current Husserl, and the past Husserl. The second history is the close social history, the history of his family. The table is not cleaned by itself; it is done by his wife or maid. The writing room is not a playground for the child, but a place forbidden to play is also a connection. These close connections make his table clean and give him a quiet space to write. The third history is the distant history; if Husserl were living in matrilineality, he probably would need to clean the tables himself, and his orientation would be towards the trash on the table instead of himself. If he lives in a time when the table is handmade and very expensive, he might not have a table to which to focus his attention. So, his current orientation is also supported by his social history, which is not easy to see as a direct and close connection. We call them three types of histories here to make the concept easier to understand, but the three histories are also connected and dependent on each other. In other words, in the web of interactions, every current and historical connection is dependent on one or the other.

The orientation and connections can also be explained by the *Yogācāra* framework. In *Yogācāra* terms, what is behind the tables are the countless consciousnesses and countless seeds; what can be seen is the imagination generated by Husserl's eye-consciousness, and what Husserl decides to pay attention to is decided by the rest of the layer of consciousness. During the process, new seeds are generated, and old seeds are destroyed, but there are always connections.

令所熏中，種子生長，如熏苳藤，故名熏習。能熏識等，從種生時，即能為因，復熏成種。三法展轉，因果同時，如炷生焰，焰生焦炷，亦如蘆束，更互相依。因果俱時，理不傾動。能熏生種、種起現行，如俱有因，得土用果。(CBETA 2023.Q4, T31, no. 1585, p. 10a3-8 (CBETA 2023.Q4, T31, no. 1585, p. 10a7-9)

Perfuming occurs when the seven forms of consciousness act as perfumers, arising and perishing together with the consciousness that is being perfumed. The seeds in the perfumed consciousness are generated and grow, similar to how sesame seeds are infused with fragrance, that's why it is called "perfuming." When the perfuming consciousness arises from seeds, it can serve as both a cause and a perfumer, creating new seeds. It is similar to the relationship between the wick and the flame, while the flame burns the wick, or bundles of reeds supporting each other. Causes and effects are simultaneous, maintaining logical consistency.

As the treatise elucidates, seeds perpetually grow and destroy. The old seed, a silent benefactor, nurtures the new one to sprout; the new seed, in turn, traces its lineage to the old. The intricate web of connections between these seeds is unfathomable, their sheer number a mystery that surpasses our comprehension. It is beyond the capacity of a single individual to perceive all these seeds and their interconnections. Yet, the seeds that evade our consciousness are not non-existent. They not only persist but also mutually sustain and influence each other. The seeds theory supports that our memories are interdependent; we are not only influenced by what we are directly connected to but also by the social history supporting ourselves and our direct environments. The social habits that influence how an individual behaves also support my modern psychological studies. For example, in Australia, the Guugu Yimithirr people use absolute orientation, whereas the Dutch often use relative orientation based on the body. These habits are influenced by the language and cultural differences in two different societies (Wang, 2021). Further psychological experiences reinforce the notion that our memory is not a solitary entity, but a collective one. The social aspect permeates various facets of how we represent, reconstruct, and express our memories. Back to Husserl, he cannot link all seeds, or there is no need to link them all. His orientation towards the table is related to his current writing task, his profession as a philosopher, and his time when men do not need to care about domestic labor. In summary, the current focus point-Husserl's table leads to many background stories and Husserl's decision that neglects these background reveals a series of his personal histories.

The object is like a presentation of a moment, but this moment is not happening alone suddenly; it happens because a specific history has appeared. Moreover, this history could be complex. In other words, there are millions of seeds in millions of consciousness that have passed through history; one seed leaves traces on the others, and the other grows new seeds as

part of it. One activity might not appear to connect with others, but the causal chain has been set behind the senses. Going back to the table example, for Husserl, it is a writing table. If we follow the orientation led by Husserl, it is his writing table, and he is writing a phenomenology paper on it; the history supporting this orientation is his life story of being a philosopher, and the moment of focusing on the table by Husserl is the small presentations of his complex life story. Imagine if we turn the table with the orientation led by Husserl's wife; the orientation is still towards the table, but it is oriented based on the history of the wife. The table is the space she should take care of and also keep her distance; she is responsible for keeping it clean, but it is not hers; she avoids having too much contact with it, and she definitely has different emotions with the table compared to Husserl. This close and distant relationship represents her duty as a woman, a housewife. Moreover, her duties and positions represent the situations of other women at the same time. Ahmed also points out that the history behind the objects is not only one person's history; it could be a shared history. Ahmed uses Marx's theory to show us that the table could be seen as a result of industry commodity structure (Ahmed, 2008, p.40-43). How the table is being made is what the commodity structure in the society at that time contributes to shaping the table. If we follow the orientation led via the lens of Marx's theory, the table is the representation of the oppression of laborers at that time (Ahmed, 2008, p.40-43). By digging into the background of the table, we can go further and further and discover all the different angles and aspects of history.

It is the same if we go with how infants orient themselves; even if we think infants do not have much history behind them, it is still nested in the web of the worlds with connections of their seeds and shared seeds of others. When my boy was around six months old, we feed him solid food. Almost all foods are new to him. For example, when we give him a blueberry for the first time, there are no related seeds of eating blueberries in his eighth layer of consciousness. His sixth layer of consciousness cannot construct a concept of fruit yet, and he relates blueberries to the category of fruits, which is something to eat. However, he can recollect seeds that Mum is giving him something similar yesterday at a similar time in a similar environment, and what happened at that time? He throws the thing on the ground. Now, what he does is throw the blueberry on the ground as soon as he grabs it. As Husserl turns to his table in a two-fold structure, the infant also turns towards the blueberry with the two-fold process. Obviously, the blueberry catches his attention because it is forced into his hand, and he has to face it. And his

attention towards the blueberry grows like the blueberry is a toy. The blueberry in his eyes is connected with playfulness and fun, maybe something similar to a ball. So, in the later action, throwing the blueberry on the ground and following a laugh will generate new seeds.

As a result, the new seeds enforce more connection between “throwing is fun” and “blueberry.” This link might become his habitual behavior; something round in hand means that it can be thrown on the floor, and it is funny. The habitual link might not be as strong as Husserl’s writing and the table, but there are the links. There are also histories here, like in the Husserl example. My son is a sixth-month-old baby; he is a straightforward and happy baby. That is probably why his attention is on playing the blueberry instead of eating it; having fun is more important. The close history is me and the home. Because he is at home and with his Mum, it is a safe environment; he barely gets blamed for anything he does. This family history provides him with support for exploring. One of the distant histories is the blueberry; it is affordable and edible. That is why the blue there is accessible for him to play with.

Also similar to Husserl’s table story, Husserl ignores the domestic background and everything unrelated to his habitual behaviors. The same goes with the infant; he ignores that Mum is eating the blue burry instead of throwing it away, and he ignores that Papa is not happy about him throwing food on the floor because his attention is on the laughing. Comparing an adult and an infant in this situation, the infant will ignore more than an adult. For example, if an adult is eating something new, they will observe the others and imitate the other’s behaviors instead of ignoring them. However, adults will probably still ignore some of the blueberry’s history. For example, adults probably will not ask those questions while eating: Are the blueberries dealing with fair trade, or do growing berries create environmental problems? As a result, an adult might ignore one hundred connections behind the blueberries, and the infant ignores one hundred and ten. Compare the experiences of adults and infants, regardless of the history itself and how they choose to orientate; the difference is negligible. In other words, no matter whether it is an infant or an adult, no one can exhaust the histories in the web of interactions; when they navigate, they are making choices, focusing on something, and ignoring something else.

If we use the *Yogācāra* framework to explain, what we perceive is either remote or immediate *Ālambana* generated by our consciousness. The distant *Ālambana* is limited by the seeds within the consciousness. Husserl's negation of housework, the wife, and the children behind his working space is because the seeds he retrieved are mainly related to philosophy. The infant ignores that the mother is eating the blueberry but focuses on playing with the blueberry because his retrieved seeds at the point are mainly about playing. In other words, how we are oriented towards the world is about what seeds we have and what seeds are triggered as related. Since the seeds are perfumable, our orientations can be directed. We can cultivate ourselves, perfume our seeds to have different orientations, or at least be aware of the possibilities of different orientations.

Space is also important in orientation, as it is about the object following the orientation and the object the body navigates towards. The space is the co-inhabiting space; it is co-created by the object and the body. It is a shared and open space. If we think of the space as private, we are blocking the interactions with others. If we perceive the object in a space with only our intentions, habits, and history, we potentially limit our understanding. For example, Husserl's orientation to philosophical writing made the rest of the home move out of his horizon. The cut-off of the space also cuts off connections. As Ahmed points out, objects are not only statistically alone but also interactive; when they engage with a person, they fail for certain functionalities it is designed to do. But no matter if it fails or succeeds, it gives opportunities for the human body to react differently; in other words, it extends the human body, but within a horizon (Ahmed, 2008).

The space expands history's possibilities and connects the histories of different elements in the world. In the infant's example, the blueberry, for me, is a food, but for my son, it is a toy. I tried to expand his story with blueberries, from toys to food, and he gave me a memory of him laughing when throwing a blueberry. This shared laughter, this moment of joy, created a new link between my son and me and between blueberry and laughing. I am sure if I look back at the moment after a couple of years, my attention towards the blueberry at that moment will be fun instead of being annoyed that he is not eating the blueberry. This transformative power of attention, of noticing, can change our understanding of things. It does not come for granted; it needs cultivation.

The first cultivation we need is to understand our limitations. It is impossible to know all the histories that happened for all consciousness the whole time. In the second-person perspective, we have mentioned that we must be open to treating others as equals and respect (Reddy, 2008). I think we also need to expand the concept of being open; being open also means acknowledging that there are always possible background histories that we have ignored. We might not yet see history because of our own habitual tendencies; we might not yet understand history because our own seeds are not powering us with enough information. But at least we should be open to what might arrive or could arrive. If we start with the mindset that there will always be more explanations or possible reasons, there will be more space to accept the unexpected when it arrives. For example, if the potter is prepared to see the possibility of seeing the city as another potter, they might be faster in recognizing the clay's tiredness. If the mother is open to the possibility that there are reasons undetected and not yet understood behind the infant's crying, there might be fewer frustrations and emotions generated. Openness is the first cultivation we need to be fully in a second-person engagement, and this openness is twofold (Reddy, 2008). First is to be open to acknowledging others as equal and respectful, including sentient and non-sentient beings; they all have their viewpoints. Second, we need to be open to embracing the history behind others and their actions.

The other cultivation needed is to accept our dependency. There is the dependency among all beings: sentient beings and non-sentient beings. No one is alone; nothing is created without dependency. The dependency is throughout time and space. In the example of Husserl and his table, the dependency in time dimension could be traced back to when it is cleaned to when it is built; the dependency in space expands to the whole house, the table is not only a writing table but part of the domestic space. By acknowledging the dependency, we have more chances to see the background stories. The background is not always background; it can show up as the front stage with a changed perspective.

Moreover, we need to cultivate emotional engagement. Emotional engagement helps us fully participate in second-person interaction. In the two-fold structure mentioned by Ahmed about orientations toward the object, the first one is to face the object, and the second is to take a direction toward it. Taking direction also means to "feel" it. The decision to direct toward the table could be logical. I need to write now, but there is always the emotional part. When Husserl

turns towards the table, he also turns towards his professional life; when he turns towards his professional life, he has feelings at the moment, which could be pride or respect, which are emotions he might not even notice, but they exist. There are many actions we make every day, a lot of decisions are taken, and a lot of different phenomenologies we are oriented to. Having logical or conceptual descriptions is not always achievable; it is more feasible to pay attention to the emotions. Emotions are intuitive and direct communications; when we are sensitive enough to them, it helps us navigate through the history behind them. Take the infant throwing food on the floor as an example. If logic goes first, the adult will make a judgment that throwing food on the ground is wrong, and the reaction is to correct it. If emotion goes first, the adult will ask why throwing food on the floor is happy. It is more likely that the questions lead to discovering the history that oriented the infants to this result rather than the judgment. In such a complex world, navigation might not be viable, but it does not mean we can always get better. With more cultivations, more seeds are generated to help us to be open, be aware of dependency, and detect emotions. If we get enough seeds to make the second-person engagement a habitual approach, there might be less of a gap among different sentient beings, such as the gap in understanding an infant. Language barriers, perception differences, various thinking models, and more are behind an adult and an infant. However, the gap might be slightly smoothed out with the second-person engagement. Via our generated phenomena, we no longer see an infant as a less-advanced adult but as an equal conscious being. We feel that the infant is in a close relationship with undeniable dependencies. We are aware of the shared space and commonalities in which we are both located. We are open to accepting the different reasons behind the infants' unexplainable behavior. And we are willing to respond emotionally and use more embodied actions instead of solely depending on verbal and logical communication. As a result, we will potentially accept an infant's crying as a standard way of communicating and responding to them with care. The cultivation for the readiness of openness, in a way, is cultivation to be better at navigating ourselves in the web of interactions, avoid negating different histories in the background of each consciousness and non-conscious beings, and share histories created in space and time.

Chapter 5: Consciousness of an infant

By expanding the second-person perspective to include the interactions of sentient and non-sentient beings, we can better see that infants are very sensitive to their environment; they interact with all beings around them, regardless of whether they are sentient beings or non-sentient beings. By following the infant's interactions, we also see that they navigate the same as an adult; their orientations are based on their own histories, as well as dependent on the near and distant social history. To complete the picture of the consciousness of an infant; we need to follow the infant's steps closer via the lens of the second-person perspective. So, there is another question we need to discuss further: What are the differences between an infant and an adult? As a result, we can better define an infant's consciousness. There is no doubt that infants are sentient beings, and there is no doubt that infants lack some mental and physical abilities compared to adults. But how about subjectivity? For second-person interactions, one condition we have discussed before is being open. The meaning of being open requires the consciousness to differentiate between self and other and then recognize the other as equal. An important question is whether infants have the subjectivity to differentiate themselves from others. In order to unpack more details, we need to unpack some other concepts from *Yogācāra*.

The fourfold structure of perception serves as a progressive model, offering a systematic approach to unraveling the intricacies of interactive experiences. This model plays a crucial role in our understanding of second-person engagement.

又心心所，若細分別；應有四分。三分如前。復有第四證自證分。此若無者；誰證第三。心分既同；應皆證故。又自證分，應無有果。諸能量者，必有果故。不應見分是第三果。見分或時非量攝故。由此見分不證第三。證自體者，必現量故。此四分中，前二是外。後二是內。初唯所緣。後三通二。謂第二分，但緣第一。或量非量。或現或比。第三能緣第二。第四證自證分，唯緣第三。非第二者；以無用故。第三、第四、皆現量攝。故心心所、四分合成。具所能緣，無無窮過。非即非離，唯識理成。(CBETA 2023.Q4, T31, no. 1585, p. 10b17-28)

If we examine the distinctions in the mind and its activities, we can identify four parts. The first three have been explained above: the seen part (*xiangfen* 相分 *Darśana-bhāga*), the seeing part (*jianfen* 見分 *Nimitta-bhāga*), and self-cognition (*zizhengfen* 自證分 *svasaṃvitti-bhāga*). The fourth part is the cognizing self-cognition (*zizhengzifen* 自證分證 *svasaṃvitti-saṃvitti-bhāga*). If this fourth part did not exist, what would authenticate the third part self-cognition (*zizhengfen* 自證分)? It does not make sense the third part self-cognition (*zizhengfen* 自證分) had no fruit, because all parts have fruits. The seeing part (*jianfen* 見分) cannot be considered the result of the third part because it is categorized as non-direct perception.

Therefore, the cognizing self-cognition (*zizhengzifen* 自證分證) must be direct perception to authenticate the third part. Among these four parts, the first two are external, and the latter two are internal. The first part is only an object of perception, while the last three are both subject and object. Although the second part always has the first part as its object, it may or may not function as a means of knowing and can sometimes perceive through direct perception and sometimes through inference.

The third part of consciousness can have both the second and the fourth parts as its objects. The fourth part has only the third part as its object, never the second part, because there is no need for it to do so. Both the third and fourth parts are categorized as direct perception. Therefore, the mind and its activities are formed from the union of these four parts, which constitute subject and object without falling into infinite regression. They are neither identical nor different, thus demonstrating the principle of consciousness-only.

Again, we use the mother and infant interaction as an example. In that case, what the mother sees, the infant, the restaurant, is not the infant or the restaurant themselves as such, but the seen part (*xiangfen* 相分 *Darśana-bhāga*) generated and received by the seeing part (*jianfen* 見分 *Nimitta-bhāga*). When the consciousness in the process of generation the seen part (*xiangfen* 相分) triggers the corresponding seeds in the eighth layer of consciousness, the perceptions are being preceded by self-authentication (*zizhengfen* 自證分 *svasaṃvitti-bhāga*); so that the mother can identify that the infant is her child and they are in a place called a restaurant. The authentic self-authentication is helping the mother complete the loop to identify her position and the current situation.

The four distinct functions, each with its unique role, offer a fascinating lens through which to observe these interactions. This perspective allows us to discern the subtle nuances and intriguing parallels between sentient-being vs. non-sentient-being interactions and sentient-being vs. non-sentient-being interactions, thereby enriching our understanding of this complex field.

Sentient beings are conscious beings with the eight-layer structure consciousness; whether interacting with sentient or non-sentient beings, the consciousnesses take the lead and support all interactions. If we look at the interactions in detail, the first six layers of consciousness need to process what they received and make them into an image, the seen part (*xiangfen* 相分). And then, the seen part (*xiangfen* 相分) is raised with the support of other layers of consciousness. In this process, the sentient beings interact with the seen part (*xiangfen* 相分), which is part of their own consciousness. It supports the idea that interactions with non-sentient beings should be counted as second-person interactions. Because there are no intrinsic differences between engaging with a sentient being and non-sentient beings: interacting

with a sentient being is interacting with the seen part (*xiangfen* 相分); interacting with a non-sentient being is also interacting with the seen part (*xiangfen* 相分). The reciprocal subject-subject relationship should be seen as a reciprocal relationship between the seen part (*xiangfen* 相分) and the seeing part (*jianfen* 見分). Consciousness, explained by early *Yogācārins*, can generate a subject-object relationship as long as consciousness is in function (Li, 2022, p.72). Different from Zahavi's view, reciprocity is limited to human to human, and it requires two participants (Zahavi, 2023, p.86); the four-fold structure enables us to see how a reciprocity relationship can happen in one place instead of two (Li, 2022, p.72). When we follow *Yogācārins* and try to explain the second-person engagement, it is a twofold process. First, either sentient or non-sentient being can trigger the generation of the seen part (*xiangfen* 相分); second, the consciousness needs to recognize the subjectivity of the seen part with the help of self-authentication (*zizhengfen* 自證分) and authenticates self-authentication (*zizhengzifen* 自證分證). At the second stage, a subject-subject reciprocal relationship is between consciousness and consciousness itself. In other words, reciprocity is no longer limited to two individuals; it could be an internal reciprocity. As long as there is one conscious participant in the web of interaction and the seen part (*xiangfen* 相分) is treated with subjectivity, it is enough to build the second-person interaction.

There is still something special about the conscious being interacting with another conscious being. Consciousness has an eight-layer structure. The last layer is *Ālaya*, which is the storehouse of the seeds, and the seeds are connected with the past, current, and future. There are different types of seeds that rely on the eighth layer. Then, when sentient beings interact with sentient beings, there are different seeds generated from different consciousnesses, and some of them share; they influence each other. Nevertheless, this is not the case for non-sentient beings. Seeds are unique to sentient beings.

有共相種，成熟力故，於他身處，亦變似彼，不爾應無，受用他義。(CBETA 2023.Q4, T31, no. 1585, p. 11a10-12)

Because of the power of the shared seeds, one consciousness can generate images of the other consciousness. Otherwise, it does not make sense to interact with (or use) the other consciousness.

The treatise above tells that one consciousness can generate the image of the other consciousness because of shared seeds by referring to the examples: when a sentient being, like a human, is

eating another sentient being, like an animal, the shared seeds are the ones that empower the scenario. Perhaps the example of eating another sentient being is a bit too extreme; the power of shared seeds can be used to empower general interactions between two sentient beings, such as hugging or fighting, which brings two sentient beings closer in the web of interactions.

Compared to non-sentient objects, there are no shared seeds nor consciousness involved if the interaction happens among non-sentient beings. So, when sentient beings are at the focus of the engagement, dependency is strongly intertwined and lasts longer in time and space because of the shared seeds.

Going back to the discussion regarding defining infant consciousness, there is no doubt that an infant is a sentient being with eight layers of consciousness, the same as an adult. The *Yogācāra* framework also supports this:

又由三處現前，得入母胎。一、其母調適，而復值時；二、父母和合，俱起愛染；三、健達縛正現在前。復無三種障礙。謂產處過患所作，種子過患所作，宿業過患所作。若無如是，三種過患，三處現前，得入母胎。(CBETA 2023.Q4, T30, no. 1579, p. 282b25-c14)

When the three conditions are met, [Consciousness] can root into the womb of a mother. First, the mother is healthy, and it is the time; second, the father and the mother are engaged in intercourse, the love arises; the other has no sickness. And there are no three abstractions, [Consciousness] can root into a mother's womb. There is nothing wrong with where the infant will be born; there is no problem with the seeds, and there is no problem with the previous life's casualties.

The part above clearly tells that an infant arrives from consciousness. The consciousness comes into the mother's womb with the right conditions and is then born as an infant. It also explains in detail how the first six consciousnesses grow after the infant is born, and the eighth layer, *Ālaya*, is the continuity in the *samsāra*. The eighth layer, *Ālaya*, is the base, the conditions, and the support for a sentient being to have experienced.

The significant differences between adults and infants lie in the first six layers of consciousness. As for an infant, it might not have the complete functions of the first six layers of consciousness, but it does not stop them from interacting with the rest of the world. For example, an adult sees the color blue and knows it is blue. An adult can tell it is light blue like the sky or dark blue like the sea. The sixth consciousness of an adult tells the concept behind the color blue very quickly. Meanwhile, it might trigger some seeds of the memories with blue, and the emotion of likes or dislikes might rise. Because of all those connections, an adult builds experiences of

seeing the blue color. But for an infant, when the eye consciousness sees the blue, it also generates the seen part (*xiangfen* 相分) of the blue; it might not know all the concepts of blue, and it might not be related to the sky or sea, it could be the first time they see this color, and there is no seed to be triggered. However, the infant is still enjoying the blue; potentially, they might enjoy it more intensely than adults. Because there are no seeds to interrupt, there is no need to get the concepts, and the infant can entirely focus on the blue itself. In summary, nothing is stopping an infant from connecting with the blue; in contrast, it might get a more profound experience from the blue compared to an adult.

There should not be functional differences between adults and infants for the seventh and eighth layers. The self-authentication (*zizhengfen* 自證分) and the authenticates self-authentication (*zizhengzifen* 自證分證) are the more intuitive functions and are powered by the seventh and eighth layers. The ability to differentiate oneself from others should always be present in the infant since the eighth layer, *Ālaya*, is the continuity cross *samsāra*. It could be difficult for an ordinary human who has no experience of taking care of infants to spot the ability of an infant to differentiate themselves from others. However, this does not mean that it does not exist, and for an expert in the field, there is evidence to prove that infants are aware of the differences between themselves and others. In the psychological study of Reddy, she sees that a four-month infant can differentiate between self and others. The grandma held a four-month-old baby in her lap. When the grandma greeted the baby, the baby smiled back. At the same time, her arm curved in front of her face, which shows coy behavior. According to Reddy, similar coyness behaviors have been found in various infant studies. At two months old, it is too early for an infant to have a concept of selfhood. However, those emotions clearly indicate that they can tell the differences between self and others. Even if there is, coyness behavior is generally classified as behavior that blurs the differences between self and others (Reddy, 2008). Reddy classifies those emotions as self-conscious emotions; besides coyness, there are also show-off behaviors, which are also observed by psychological studies. As early as seven to nine months old, parents report that their infant has behaviors such as shrill shriek squeals to gain or manipulate attention (Reddy, 2008). One notable self-conscious emotion observed in infants is the “showing-off” behavior. This behavior, often characterized by shrill squeals or other attention-seeking actions, indicates that infants are seeking recognition for their achievements (Reddy, 2008). This self-rewarding behavior is a clear demonstration of their developing self-awareness and

self-consciousness. Both these self-conscious emotions are essential in shaping the concept of self. From Reddy's point of view, self-consciousness and emotions are related to recognizing others. All the observed emotions, like coyness, show-off, or even jealousy, manifest in others instead of self. This led Reddy to rethink the idea of self. Self could be a moving point of flux, and it is always in relationship with others (Reddy, 2008).

Reddy's psychological study goes hand in hand with *Yogācāra's* theory. The concept of selfhood is mainly processed by the sixth layer of consciousness, Manas, and it also needs the seeds of memories about the knowledge of self. For example, infants have the ability to see blue and differentiate blue, but they do not have the knowledge of blueness, so they cannot connect seeing the color blue with the concept of blueness. But it does not stop the infants from enjoying the blueness. In my opinion, the differences in conceptual knowledge are not crucial differences for the concept of consciousness. The more important factor is when the infant arrives in the mother's womb, the eighth layer of consciousness, the foundation layer. So when an infant is born, it should have the ability to generate the self-authentication part (*zizhengfen* 自證分) and the authenticates self-authentication (*zizhengfen* 自證分). What is lacking is that the infants cannot yet interpret the self and others conceptually. As a result, infants cannot prove that they can differentiate themselves and others as adults do. There comes the misunderstanding that adults often think infants cannot tell themselves apart from their mother or the rest of the world. The only things that can be counted as evidence are the infant's emotions and behaviors, but emotions and behaviors are too subtle and complex for adults to understand, which stops adults from seeing the ability. Another possible reason could be that adults navigate all the time via their own history and neglect what is behind the infant's orientation. This is also why second-person engagement is so critical as a method of understanding infants and their behaviors. Suppose we keep looking at the infants via second-person interactions. In that case, we can potentially cultivate our adult seeds to have more similarities to the infants and start to follow their orientations. Additionally, we might not only understand that infants can tell the difference between self and others, but also we could be able to narrow the general communication gap between adults and adults. The dialogue between the infant and adult from a second-person perspective can be built through emotional and behavioral exchanges. With the help of second-person perspective dialogue, *Yogācāra* framework, and psychological proof, we

are sure that the subjectivity of infants and their ability to differentiate themselves and others are not illusions.

As we have seen so far, through the lens of second-person engagement, we can understand an infant better and redefine the infant's consciousness without using the adult as a ruler. For instance, a third-person observation might lead us to view infants as crying objects, while a first-person engagement might lead us to see them as less-advanced and unbelievably little humans. However, from the second-person perspective, adults and infants are on the same web of interaction, including countless sentient or non-sentient beings. In the web of interactions, there are all kinds of dependencies. One could depend on one's own history and also the shared history of the directly connected others or distant others; One could depend on others' consciousness or phenomena. The dependencies are complex and countless, done through time and space. In short, both infants and adults are dependent conscious beings.

Infants have the same eight-layer consciousness structure; it is the same as an adult consciousness. Infants' seeds are much less than adults', so infants cannot use language appropriately, utilize concepts properly, and perform specific actions alone as adults. Nevertheless, infants have their own seeds and their own history; they cannot be ignored. A mother might lower her voice in a restaurant environment while interacting with the infants because the mother has seeds that contain the proper manner of behaving in public or experiences of mis- or good behavior or examples in public. All the seeds can be used as guidance to construct decisions on lowering voices. This is the history of my mother. The infant also has seeds, and their seeds interact happily with the mother and fear feelings when the mother is not around, so if the mother disappears in restaurants, the infant will not lower its crying volume; the decisions come with the infant's own history. New history will be generated based on how the situations turn up. If the mother gets embarrassed and angry at the infants, it might generate more fears and become a seed that links the restaurants with fears. If the mother did not get any complaints or even support from the others in the restaurants, the new seeds might link the restaurants with happiness. We define infants by our relationship with them and how we see them as infants. Suppose we keep being closed and insist on non-emotional observations with the infants. In that case, the infants will be forever crying objects that cannot differentiate themselves from the environment and cannot act or respond properly. We will feel

more about the infant if we are open to recognizing the infant as an equal conscious being. If we also acknowledge our dependence on them and allow them to get into our space and feelings, we may understand them more. As an adult, we have more experiences, more seeds, and more history; we can use them to initiate more interactions and more changes; we can also use them as excuses to build fences to differentiate; differentiate ourselves from infants from other sentient beings have different backgrounds, from animals, from non-sentient beings. It depends on how we decide to orient our views and interactions. We are not static beings; the world is also constantly changing. There is no reason to keep infants as we used to see; the moment we change our views, the moment history has also been modified. In summary, everyone comes with their own history, including infants, and everyone's history changes all the time, including the infants. Both infants and adults are dependent, conscious beings with their own history behind them, and they should be defined based on their own history over time.

Chapter 6: Summary

This thesis starts with why infants are not included in major philosophical research. Following some classical philosophical ideas, adult human beings are treated as something special in this world, and the specialty is related to anonymity and thinking ability, which do not belong to infants. But why should we use adults as rulers to measure infants? Why not the other way around? Because the adult is the better version, the adult is the standard and ideal of human beings? Is there a hierarchical structure between infants and adults? All those lead to the final question: What is an infant? Either we do not understand the infant at all, so we avoid it, or we misunderstand the infant as an incomplete version of human beings, so there is no need to include infants. No matter what, there is a communication gap between adults and infants. This is how the second-person perspective as a method comes into view. The second-person perspective is key to helping us bridge the gap in understanding infants. Both the first-person and third-person perspectives fail to understand the child in an obvious way. The second-person perspective brings us closer to the infants' world. Current debts have led me to think more advanced in seeing what conditions are to be engaged within a second-person perspective and see the necessity of expanding the second-person perspective in two ways: first, it needs to include the non-sentient beings; second, it is not a linear "I" and "You" interactions, it is a complex multi-directional web of interactions. To better navigate through the web of interactions, we need to understand the histories behind each action.

The expansion of the defining second-person perspective brings sentient and non-sentient beings into the same picture, and *Dōgen*'s oneness theory fully supports it. By focusing on the actions level instead of the integrated personal level, we can better switch from a linear way of interacting towards a web of interactions. The philosophical work of the *Yogācāra*'s eight layers of consciousness structure, a crucial guide in this exploration, emphasizes the internal reciprocal relationship supported by one consciousness. This structure helps us understand that it is less important to put the reciprocal relationship between two integrated selves, the coherence and autonomous individual, as a presumption for second-person interactions (Zahavi, 2008). Instead, we first see actions, emotions, and connections contributing to a conscious self. Following this direction of thinking, it is easier to see the dependencies among all beings. By putting the human ego aside, it is also easier to accept that we are not independent but have many dependencies.

Dependencies do not mean losing a self; as long as there is the eighth layer of consciousness that stores the seeds, the continuity as a self is there. Dependencies can be seen as connections in the context: connection first, self later, and dependency is not a defect but just a fact. All actions, decisions, and intentions are connected with another action or another emotion, which could be our own emotions or actions, or it could belong to another conscience. Think about this thought experiment: Imagine any action we just did. Then, ask where and when the action was performed and how it was triggered. Then, change one of the factors, such as the people around us, the place, or the weather; finally, there will be a changed factor that completely turns our original decision into something else. As an example, the action is drinking water, the location is home, and the time is before sleep. If I change it from before sleep to when I wake up, nothing changes. But if I change location from home to desert, I probably will not drink it at all. It means the drinking action decision is my action, but it is also dependent on the environment. If every action we make is dependent on something, how can a person be defined as a pure, autonomous, independent consciousness? Dependency is something ordinary, and it's a concept that we should embrace and accept with an open mind.

Once we accept the idea of dependencies, it is easier to envision the complexity of the web of dependent actions and how navigation in the web of interactions causes problems. And it will help us rethink the practical meanings in our current livings. Following the structure proposed by phenomenologists, we can see that it is easy to neglect specific decent histories of either sentient or non-sentient beings. History can be shared or private, correlated with time and space. However, human abilities are limited; we cannot see every single connection behind an action and trace all its histories. What we can cultivate is to be more aware of falling into the trap of focusing too much on one single dependency line. In other words, we can overcome that by seeing an action as generated based on one history and treated as a definite, non-changing one. With the cultivation, there is space for us to detect the differences between self and others and be more considerate. As a result, it could help us narrow down the gap that stops us from understanding infants. The dependency chains behind an adult and an infant are so different, increasing the difficulty in orienting. Because an adult might not see the history behind an infant or even be aware of the existence of the history, how could the adult be able to navigate toward the infant? When the adults try to understand the infant's actions based on his own history, it

causes misunderstanding, and misunderstanding causes frustration, anger, and other negative emotions and results.

These challenges are not confined to the realm of infancy and adulthood, but also manifest between two adults with varying cultural backgrounds, genders, or religions. When we habitually prioritize our ego-self, essentially our own history, it becomes all too easy to overlook other histories and comprehend the legitimacy of others' actions and emotions. We see our own as something superior to others. When the other is another culture or nation, it creates wars; when the other is a non-sentient being, there is an environmental crisis. They could all be traced back to the habitual tendency to objectify others and subjectivity to the ego self. By familiarizing ourselves with the second-person perspective, we become more open to differences and begin to acknowledge that each action carries its own historical context. It is wiser to comprehend history before passing judgment. The history-centric interpretation of the second person's perspective potentially offers us a fresh approach to interpersonal interactions. By identifying this pitfall and striving to transcend it, we can equip ourselves to navigate these intricate interactions with greater understanding and empathy, thereby avoiding the negative consequences of ego-centric thinking.

With promising insights of second-person engagement, the definition of an infant's consciousness becomes clearer. Under *Yogācāra*'s concept of consciousness, an infant is no longer the incomplete version of an autonomous adult self. Infants have subjectivity and continuity, and it is both dependent and unique. As with adults, adults are also different and unique. There are no hierarchical differences between infants and adults; in other words, there is no reason for adults to think they are superior to infants and think that an infant is a blank paper, and we teach infants everything. From the moment the consciousness arrives at the mother's womb, it starts its own traces of history. Those are histories that adults cannot get access to directly and easily, but it is there. Additionally, it is arrogant for an adult to think there is nothing we can learn from infants; at least infants are more open to other possibilities behind actions than adults. To teach my six-month-old boy that blueberry is not a toy but something to eat might take days or weeks, but to teach a patriarchal husband to see domestic housework as valuable as working in a company might take a whole lifetime. Usually, the barrier between two different conscious beings is built by the ego-first self, and the ego-first self is complex to overcome

because of the fear of admitting dependencies, and the fear of admitting dependencies causes the misunderstanding of dependencies. Dependency is not an individual dependent on another individual; it is more like an action that depends on many different factors; in the *Yogācāra* term, actions depend on seeds. Your action depends on many others' actions, and some other's actions will depend on your actions. In other words, the dependencies are fair among all conscious beings. As a matter of fact, no one is living in a complete silo. The real power is being able to co-live on the web of interactions with complex dependencies. As a result, the infant's consciousness can be seen as the collection of dependent seeds, and the adult's consciousness is the same. To better co-live together, perhaps infants need to perfume their seeds related to language, logic, and many others; adults need to perfume their seeds related to bodily engagement, fine motor sensations, and many others. Infants need to learn something from adults; adults also need to learn from infants. Not only is the interaction reciprocal, but the cultivation is also reciprocal.

Looking into the interactions between adults and infants and the definitions of infant consciousness reveals a possibility of understanding the relationship between self and others, especially with different others. When the seeds of consciousness vary, a significant gap exists to block mutual understanding and communication. More needs to be done regarding the dependent relationship: How are they connected? Maybe through the causal chain or via shared experiences? The nature of dependency also helps us further discover how we can better navigate our attention. Focusing on our own history might blind us, but trying to grasp everything might also cause us to lose attention. How to cultivate is still a bigger question. All those will require further investigation.

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