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解構西方知識生產中的福爾摩沙想像—— 一個中觀的論述分析

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中文摘要

本研究的目的有五重：第一，我企圖釐清一個佛學中觀的取徑並以此洞見以洞察事物和其名的空性和緣起性。換句話說，對事物和其名的實體論見解，亦即預設它們具有本然和獨立的自性的看法，將被解構。從中觀的取徑來看，事物乃以關係性和過程性的姿態存在，因此，有關事物的名和有關知識也必須是關係性和過程性的。其次，我企圖提出一個中觀的論述分析已解析字裡行間的言外之意。例如，我將探索西方作者的各種文類（如殖民長官、旅人、傳教士、自然學家和商人等）對福爾摩沙所做的論述形塑，藉以揭露他們的自性見及其衍生的隱藏利益並洞悉它如何形塑有關社會想像扭曲的實體觀。它乃透過有關福爾摩沙的論述形塑以強化一種建立在自我和他者間不均等的二元對立關係，並因而本質化福爾摩沙為異類或卑下者。第三，我將應用中觀的論述分析來具體解析西方人在歷史不同階段以旅人誌、傳教備忘錄、日記、地理學誌、民族誌等形式所建構的福爾摩沙論述。我所接觸的文本將出自十七世紀荷蘭的行政長官與傳教士、十八世紀一位自稱為福爾摩沙人的歐洲人以及十九世紀的歐洲旅人、傳教士和學術性作者，並藉以瞭解他們的歷史背景和構成其書寫的社會想像與潛存利益。第四，我將論證在那些歐洲人書寫背後所隱藏的文化擴散論的世界觀，它預設一個歐洲中心和處於邊陲的非歐洲。這顯然是一種實體化的不均衡二元對立關係，它漠視了西方和非西方文化形成的緣起性與空無自性事實。最後，我將提出一個中觀的關係性與過程性史觀以重新反思歷史。並進一步嘗試批判一種被視為當然的有關西方興起史知識生產，此種論述相信現代理性啓蒙的西方是自在生成的。透過這樣的反思，我提出一種關係性的緣起應將非西方，包括福爾摩沙，放入視域中。

關鍵字：福爾摩沙，中觀，論述分析，關係性，過程性

Examining “The Imagining of Taiwan in Imagined Time-Space Framework”—A Middle Way Discourse Analysis

Abstract

The purpose of this research is five-fold. **First**, I attempt to articulate a Buddhist middle way perspective based on the insight of emptiness and dependent co-arising of thing and its name. In other words, the substantialist view of thing and name, assuming that there is an own-being that exists inherently and independently, will be deconstructed. From the middle way perspective, things exist relationally and processually, and thus the name and the knowledge of a thing must be relational and processual as well. **Second**, I attempt to propose a middle way discourse analysis to analyze the language beyond sentences. By way of an example, I investigate the various discursive formations on Formosa conducted by Western writers (such as administrators, travelers, missionaries, naturalists and merchants) to see how their own-being view and its derived underlying interests contributed to the shaping of the substantialist social imaginaries. It was, I argue, realized by the imposition of self-other asymmetrical binary opposition through the discourse on Formosa, thereby essentializing Formosa as different and inferior. **Third**, I try to apply the middle way discourse analysis to the Western discursive formations on Formosa in different historical phases that was shaped in the form of travel accounts, missionaries memoirs, diaries, geographies, ethnographies, etc. The writings I encounter are written by 17th century Dutch administrators and missionaries, an 18th century European man who called himself Formosan and 19th century Western travelers, missionaries, and scholarly writers, and thereby to identify their historical background and the constitutive imaginary and the underlying interests in their writings. **Fourth**, I will argue that behind these writings there is a diffusionist worldview shared by European observers. It presumes a European center and a non-European marginal. This is evidently a form of substantialized asymmetrical binary relation that is against the reality of dependent co-arising and the emptiness of the formation of Western and non-Western culture. **Fifth**, I propose a middle way relational-processual rethinking of history. And hence try to confront those taken-for-granted knowledge production with regard to the history of the “rise” of the West and to reject those substantialist, and thereby biased, assumptions, which asserts the view of an endogenous self generation of modern rational enlightened West. Thus, by doing so, I claim that the relational dependent co-arising and the influence of non-West, including Formosa should be acknowledged.

Key words: Formosa, Taiwan, Social Imaginary, Buddhist Middle Way, Relational-Processual Perspective

1. Introduction: Middle Way Perspective as a way of seeing the Westerners' imagined Formosa

For Seng-zhao (僧肇) (374-414), a Chinese Buddhist middle way thinker, "name" and "thing" are locked in a co-dependent relationship of the signifier and the signified, and thereby the existence of an absolute truth in this sense is intangible to him. On the basis of this inevitable gap between "name" and "thing," I would argue that the assertion of discourses or names or "things" as essentially real is problematic. Based on this understanding, I will, later in this research, try to elaborate a middle way perspective on the discursive formations of Formosa through Western writings, and try to point out the limits of each writings and to propose a relational-processual approach to the understanding of Formosa.

The basic philosophic argument of middle way is that there is no such reality, "thing," or "name" in terms of sensible objects of social world, such as the reality of Formosa. Based on such insight of list four statements as follows:

- a. All things and names are empty of own-being.**
- b. All things and names are not non-existent.**
- c. Since emptiness is in synonymous with dependent co-arising, all things and names are existent relationally and processually.**
- d. The relation and process, the constitutive of things and names, are not tenable when we consider them as two discrete properties.**

Applying the above four statements to the imaginary of Formosa, I formulate another statements:

- a. All social imaginaries of Formosa and discursive formations on Formosa are empty of own-being. There is no ever-lasting, unchanging entity called Formosa per se. Nor is there a singular, coherent discourse on Formosa that is sufficient-in-itself and never shifted to another.**
- b. Conversely, All social imaginaries of Formosa and discursive formations on Formosa are not non-existent. We cannot therefore totally negate any meaningful and socially constructed existence of Formosa. Neither can we nullify the socially conditioned effects, or "truth-consequences" of discourses on Formosa.**
- c. The realities of Formosa societies and various discourses on Formosa are always already existent in certain concrete relational context, in ethnographical, historiographical, geographical sense for instance. It is also, in the meantime, constantly changing in historical-specific process, archaeologically and genealogically speaking.**
- d. Formosa cannot survive without interacting with its relational context. Neither can it live unless it could constantly refresh itself in an ongoing process. These two cannot be separated. The discourses on Formosa are constituted in a relatively constant but also ever-shifting binary opposition between itself and other societies. It is relational but not fixated. On the other hand, it is processual but not singular.**

In addition, my research also formulates a relational-processual perspective as below:

- a. All phenomenal things and names are impermanent existing in constant flux. Thus, it is unacceptable to assert an identity, in the substantialist sense, of things and names throughout temporal process.**
- b. Neither is it acceptable to say that, in nihilistic sense, there are no identifiable things and names in the flow of time.**
- c. It is also not plausible to claim that all phenomenal things and names are essentially different, in the substantialist sense, from other things and names, because this will assume many independent entities, which have no relation or connection between one another.**
- d. From the relational perspective, all things are interdependent, interweaving in specific and relevant contexts, therefore they cannot be essentially different from their relevant others. From the processual perspective, all things are changing and thereby mutating, so it is impossible to remain essentially identical all the time.**

In the context of Formosa these four points can be reformulated as follows:

- a. The Formosan society as a social reality and the discourses on Formosa as a social imaginary both exist impermanently in a constant flux.**
- b. It is unacceptable to assert an own-being, the Formosan society, for instance, as an unchanging entity, or the discourses on Formosa as an ultimate, final truth-claim despite its mutation throughout the temporal process. They both are empty of substantiality.**
- c. Nor is it acceptable to say that there is no identifiable society called Formosa in the flow of time, or to say that there is no meaningful discourse on Formosa in the history of knowledge constitution. They still arise, shift, and cease co-dependently.**
- d. It is also implausible to claim that Formosan society is essentially different from any other societies, namely, Chinese, Japanese, Dutch, or Western societies, because this will assert an independent entity called “Formosa”, which have no relation or connection to other societies.**
- e. According to the relational perspective, all societies, in some sense, are interdependent and interweaving in historically specific contexts, therefore they cannot be essentially different from their relevant others. Think about the dynamics of “transnational relations,” “global economies” and “intercultural hybridizations.” From the processual perspective, all societies and discourses in relation to them are, more or less, slowly or rapidly, changing, so it is impossible for them to remain identical all the time.**

2. Middle Way Perspective as a Method of Doing Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is understood as the analysis of language 'beyond the sentence'. However, western philosophy of language was long canonized by Aristotelian-inspired belief that linguistic signs are eminently matched to the task of describing things. The Aristotelian way of knowing, therefore, entails fixing the

identity of things in a system of universals so that only the fixed, not the flux, and the substance in the phenomena becomes knowable according to this system of knowledge.

Let me extract two assumptions from Aristotelian view:

a. that sign system and linguistic definitions are correspondent to things as it is in itself;

b. that only the universal is knowable, particular is inconceivable.

In contrast, the middle way perspective always remains skeptical of the adequacy of language concerning the description of human world. In the context of this paper, our middle way discourse analysis is mindful of the futility of analytical representation and the inherent insufficiency of language. Our discourse analysis is in contrast with types of analysis more typical of modern analytical-empirical-realist writing, which are mainly concerned with the systematic study, and thereby writing, of “reality.” In our context, the systematic study of Formosa, for instance, such as geography, historiography, ethnography, anthropology, sociology, psychology, political science, and so forth. The middle way discourse analysis, based on the insight of emptiness and dependent co-arising, will address the larger chunks of discursive formations as they flow together, or one after another.

Before diving into the deep sea of historical materials, I shall first elaborate two different but problematic self-other relations regarding the knowledge production on Formosa:

a. The imposition of self-other asymmetrical binary opposition through the discourse on others, and thereby substantializing other culture as essentially different and inferior.

b. The internalization of self- other asymmetrical binary opposition on “self” and yet trying to reverse the judgmental power relation by essentializing self as superior.

3. A Middle Way reflection Over the History of Discursive Formations--Writing Formosa Through Western Hand

3-1 Formosa Under the Dutch—the Underlying Interests of the Dutch Colonial Writings

According to Lin¹ (2000), in the 17th century, the Dutch VOC had established almost twenty branch institutes, spreading from Japan in the east to India in the west. The headquarter of VOC was in Batavia, where information network among different parts of Asia regarding trade and other affairs had been established. What intrigues me in relation to this paper is that not only was this information networking conducive to the business expansion, it also facilitated a transmission of local information from colony, like Formosa, through Batavia to Amsterdam, or Europe at large. In other words, it is a turn of the local knowledge into the “universal” knowledge. It is specifically a system of representation by writing that makes the Asia in general, Formosa in particular, an object of European colonial gaze. The

1. See Lin, Wei-sheng 漢學研究通訊第 19 卷第 3 期 (民國 89 年 8 月) 1990.

object was silent, or at least passively responding, in the sense of this figuration of information circulation.

I am not going to be able to encompass all these details, but what I want to investigate about is the hidden interest-attachment behind these writings. Underlying these documents, I would ask, what kind of interest-driven social imaginary constitutes the main basis of the representation of Formosa in that period of time. My observation is as below.

a. Economic Imaginary

The Dutch valued Formosa primarily on account of its commercial strategic position. From Formosa the Spanish commerce between Manila and China, and the Portuguese commerce between Macao and China would be thrown into the hands of the Dutch, while the latter's dealings with China and Japan would be subject to no interruptions. From here, we can see a typical connection between the building of European nation-states and their competition with one another over colonial economic interests. What I want to argue here is that a great number of discursive representations, geographical mappings, religious writings, taxation reports and governmental documentations, and all kinds of colonial diaries and contracts were more or less, explicitly or implicitly, influenced by the strong economic interest. With this economic imaginary embedded in their cognitive scheme, the Dutch's vision of Formosa turned out to be like a treasure island, a profit making site, for Dutch themselves rather than native inhabitants or the Chinese. Indigenous people through the Dutch eyes, hence, were seen as productive manpower like animal rather than human being.

b. Religious Imaginary

For better mastering the problem of the governing the "savages", the Dutch fully appreciated the advantages that would accrue from the conversion of the natives to Christianity. For missionaries, like Candidius, the strong motive to convert the pagan, the savage away from their esoteric beliefs and practices, naturally revealed in their writing. From the "*Memorandum from Rev. G. Candidius to Governor Nuyts*", Candidius first expressed his optimism regarding the conversion. Out of this Christian-centered worldview, the pastor's construe of native Formosan's religion was evidently biased.

In short, the economic and religious imaginaries constitute two primarily underlying interest-attachments that had infiltrated most writings of the time, and that also had substantialized an asymmetrical binary relation, between colonizer and colonized, "reasoned" and "unreasoned", and thereby superior and inferior.

3-2 Imagined Witness—A Fake Formosan called Psalmanazar in Early 18th Century

There once was a fellow who called himself George Psalmanazar. In the late 17th Century, George wandered around Europe pretending to be a cannibal prince from the exotic Formosa. He made up a whole book of ethnography concerning Formosa, which included detailed descriptions of an alphabet system, religious practices and

exotic wildlife and so on. In 1704 he compiled these observations into the book “*An Historical and Geographical Description of Formosa*.” It was not until his death in 1763, a posthumous work, his memoirs, was published, in which he confessed to the decades old hoax. Eventually his life was revealed to have been one long work of amazing improvisational dramatic fiction.

Discourse Analysis—The Underlying Interests of the Fictional Writing

a. Writing and Subjectivity

The writing on the other is often replete with fakes, forgeries and prejudice. Travel writing is very frequently an area of deception where much hyperbole and conjecture are found. But like many recent ethnographers, George Psalmanazar not only forged a fake travel guide to Formosa in the early 18th century, but also constructed a systematic description of the culture of Formosa—its language, customs, religion, architecture, costumes, and social organization. To make a convincing writing on Formosa, he, unlike most ethnographers, invented an entirely fictitious object and named it “Formosa,” and then invented a character for him to match it. If “going native” is an ideal position for ethnographer to have deeper understanding of the natives, Psalmanazar’s plot of being native is even more “radical”. He fabricated himself to be the authentic native, an origin that ethnographers would love to possess. Because of this total invention, of writing and subjectivity, he represented a “true story” even truer than true travelers, such as Jesuit missionaries. This is why he won more credit than missionaries, who had been to Formosa and should have been the true storyteller of Formosan culture. His invented story was internally consistent and together with his personal qualities—secrecy, consistency, effrontery, and an air of sincerity—for enhancing the authenticity of his work, he merged his subjectivity, and thus his “first-hand experience”, together with his writing.

b. The Publication of Writing and Its Commodification

It is important to be aware that the production of this book is not the single effort of one individual. Concretely speaking, the rise of new forms of literary production in relation to its market value was emerged and aggravated. This market-oriented production of literary discourse constituted an environment of competition, in which authentication and fabrication becomes one of the most appealing means to gain sound profit. Moreover, such a trend of capitalization of literary production also paved the way to more entrepreneurial modes of the booksellers (Eagleton 1984:29-43).² Out of this market interest and its time pressure on its publication, Psalamanazar had to make up his quick, easy to digest and compelling fiction.

c. Defending Authenticity by Calling on the Anti-missionary Sentiments of Readers

As mentioned above, Psalmanazar’s book was not unchallenged. The strongest accusation of him as being imposter was from missionaries. To debate these doubts, Psalmanazar articulated his counter arguments. Even though Psalmanazar’s weird “self-representation” of Formosa was insufficient of many of the characteristics of Orientalism proper, or systematized Orientalism, it has one of them in spades. In

2. See Eagleton, T. 1984. *The Function of Criticism: From the Spectator to Post-structuralism*. London.

other words, it is the fanaticized social imaginary of the West in regard to the Far East that safeguards the apparently absurd discourse of Formosa by Psalmanazar, in spite of the skepticism coming from missionaries who had visited Formosa.

3-3. 19th Century Western Colonial Imaginary

Standing on the basis of the earlier mercantilism, or commercial capitalism, the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century greatly increased the military and technological power of the European countries, enabling them to extend their rule over areas inhabited with indigenous populations. T

British interests in Formosa grew stronger after China signed the barrage of unequal treaties forced upon it by the colonial powers during the mid and late nineteenth century.

Discourse Analysis—Gazing Formosa Through Western Eyes

a. The Geographical Imaginary of Taiwan

The imaginary of Formosa by the fellows of the “Royal Geographical Society of London”, missionaries writing of “The Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal”, and others, not only described but also systematized the observed natural and social scenery of Formosa. By putting specific localities within broader frameworks and world area, a Western geographer implicitly tells his readers how the West writes, and locates, the geographical characteristic of Formosa. It also orients readers with directional markers: “the Far East” always means “east of us” for Westerners, reflecting the prejudices of the geographers, the map-makers.

b. Ethnography and Uncivilized Others

The inner logic of ethnography often presents itself as transcendental seeing through the production of a system of differences—that is, an immediately apprehensible, and hence comparable, system of categories of the social whole: manner, custom, ritual, belief, costumes, kinship, etc. Such categories in turn internalize the situation of difference as sense of cultural hierarchy which enters into ethnographers in a pervasive and equally systematic way.

In the sense of Foucauldian panoptic gaze, Western naturalists performed their imaginative trips from the advantageous outlook of the center, underneath its various, empirical vantage-points. Western writers on Taiwan, in turn, perceived it with the surveillant eye, which was detached, dis-embedded and yet also interconnected in an asymmetrical relation. Taiwan was thus visualized by Westerners as uncivilized, natural and unreasoned society, yet to be enlightened.

4. Euro-centrism and Its Diffusionist Imaginary

From middle way relational-processual perspective, aforementioned Western geography, ethnography and historiography is embedded in an underlying imaginary, which is basically European-centered and often colonial and religious. The constitutive imaginary serves up visual assumptions and theories, most of them implicit and latent, upon which geographers, ethnographers and historians “map out” their “findings” and “discoveries.”

Behind these writings there is a diffusionist worldview shared by European observers. It presumed a European center and a non-European marginal. The center was naturally progressive, rational and therefore superior. The marginal was naturally stagnant, unchanging or slowly changing, and hence inferior. The reason of its inferiority was a lack of progressiveness and a lack of rationality. This produced a world in which civilization rose at the center and diffused to the marginal. This outward flow of Western culture (Christianity, utilitarianism, etc.) was deemed natural and justified.

Colonialism was the vehicle for this diffusion of civilization to the periphery. Therefore, since the diffusing of civilization from Europe to non-Europe was deemed natural and beneficial, colonialism was thus natural and beneficial. Eurocentric diffusionist imaginary served to justify and assist colonialism. This is apparently a form of asymmetrical binary relation that is against the reality of dependent co-arising and the emptiness of own-being of Western culture and non-Western culture.

5. Middle Way Relational-Processual Rethinking

One of the sources of persuasiveness of the diffusionist imaginary is the taken-for-granted “natural attitude” among lay people and even various fields of social scientists. The founding fathers of all disciplines in social sciences are Westerners. The canonical interpretations of the origins of modernization, globalization, industrialization, democracy, science and technology are basically Euro-centric. These classic theoretical construes were so pervasive and paradigmatic, which was so buttressed by implicit beliefs that could significantly impede an alternative, relational-processual, imagination. It is also difficult to think differently by a non-Westerner, because of the deep embeddedness of the disciplinary canon already ingrained so radically into his or her own scheme of conception and even perception in regard to scientific research, empirically or theoretically. But it is important to confront these taken-for-granted paradigms and reject their substantialist, and thereby biased, assumptions.

However, it is important to note that a deconstruction of Euro-centric diffusionist imaginary does not mean to reverse the asymmetrical power relation and to downplay Western culture in order to glorify the superiority of non-Western culture. This kind of reversed binary opposition is still a form of substantialism in the sense that it remains attached to an “own-being” assertion. It still cannot overcome the internalization of self- other asymmetrical binary opposition by trying to reverse the judgmental power relation by essentializing self as superior. In other words, it also, as Euro-centrism does, lacks a relational imagination, and thereby cannot think of, or appreciate, the historical and geographical interpenetration and interdependency between different parts of the world. Besides, it is also insufficient of a processual imagination, and thus often identifies a fixed point of glorious cultural essence, historically and geographically. From our former reflection we can assure that there is no one culture or society that is not experiencing a constant movement in the temporal process.

From a middle way relational-processual perspective, a counter Euro-centric argument should not be another centrist or essentialist alternative. It is rather an acknowledgement of the mutual influence of different societies. Based on this understanding, I would like to voice a frequently silenced voice, an influence of the “West” by the “Rest”. Let me summarize it below.

It is necessary to denaturalize and defamiliarize a widely accepted assumption that Europe has, historically and geographically, always been the singular source of cultural creations or innovations. Before 1492, Europe was not in any way more advanced than a number of African and Asian civilizations. Nor were the Europeans more progressive, more "rational," more "venturesome," or the like than the other peoples. The cultural transmission (such as the use of paper, printing technique, numerical counting, compass, and what have you) from other civilizations to Europe was, and still is, as crucial and significant as the other way around if not more. Therefore an endogenous construe of the “rise” of the West is substantialist, non-relational so to speak, and thereby erroneous.

The production of knowledge about Formosa and its publication in the context of the West is framed by the relation between observing and observed in which the observers were also colonizers, soul savors, or at least citizens of colonial countries. The asymmetrical exchange relation in terms of material, spirit and information was also established. The observer’s gaze or desire to write was interested. Out of these interests, the observation, conducted by travelers, ethnographers, geographers, missionaries, naturalists and so on, was in turn schemed and prejudiced. Their social imaginary underpinning this scheme was shaped by colonial, religious, scientific and popular interests. Conditioned by the scheme, the discursive formation on Formosa was to some extent fixated and inherent. The constant flux regarding the concrete life situation either was ignored or disappeared altogether within their framework. The so-called first-hand-experience concerning Formosa claimed by those writers was therefore not native, indigenous point of view. Local knowledge was downplayed by Western “universal knowledge.”

6. Concluding Remarks

Historically speaking, the dependent co-arising of Formosa has gone through enormous change in the constant flux. In some of the aspects, the changes were acknowledged by lay people, or social scientists, yet some other, even more so, weren’t, mostly due to the limitation of people’s reified vision. However, from our theoretical reflection in the light of middle way perspective and its social-historical retrospection, we can argue that, Formosa history is like a constant flowing river, which can never repeat and remain the same. Different historical periods, political regimes, social imaginary, underlying interests or positionalities tend to establish substantialist discourses, to define and thus confine as something essentially existent, just like building up water dam to block the natural flow of the water. But according to the middle way perspective, this kind of attempt is problematic and also unjust, because it ignores the interweaving and interpenetrating relationships and changing process.

Nevertheless, a relational-processual view of Formosa doesn't mean that Formosa cannot so exist. The middle way perspective cannot accept this kind of nihilistic extreme either. The interweaving relationships and changing process doesn't impede the formation of an identifiable particularity of Formosa, in the sense of culture, politics, economy and what have you. Although Formosa in the past, say, four hundred years ago, or more, cannot be the same Formosa today in a substantialist sense. Formosa perceived by the Dutch, Psalmanazar or writers in the 19th century was significantly different from how we perceive Formosa today. But, it is impossible to say that Formosa does not have any continuity of development or recognizable community formation over time. Just like the Nile will never change into the Indus, neither will Formosa dissolve all her historical-geographical uniqueness and turn into an essentially different society despite its constant intermingle and inter-dialogue with her significant others. Pragmatically speaking, Formosa cannot survive as an independent entity without taking into account her relation with other societies. Hence, an interdependent relation with her surroundings is crucial for her survival. Nor can Formosa persist as an inherent being that never changes her constituency. Therefore, a constantly metabolic revitalization and refreshing of her figurations is inevitable. However, this relational-processual social imaginary doesn't mean that Formosa has no socially effective identity, or Formosa can be assimilated or represented by other society without considering the will of her people. The will formation of Formosan people makes the social imaginary of Formosa and its institutional figuration relatively strong and sturdy, even though it is not a solid essence. This is the dependent co-arising of collective force, which constitutes a set of structural complex of constraints and enabling. Any change of this configuration must go through the acknowledgement of the will of her people, consciously or unconsciously, gradually or progressively. By the same token, any discursive formation on Formosa must recognize the contribution and existence of Formosan inhabitants in a relational-processual sense.

Without overcoming substantialism, empiricism can never be truly empirical, realism can only be unreal, and historicism ends up being ahistorical. It does not matter whether or not it is Eurocentrism or Orientalism, Sinocentrism, Occidentalism, or any other kind of cultural essentialism, once a discursive formation on others or self is founded on a fixed and biased positionality and attitude, its observation will be significantly flawed. From our middle way perspective, historically and geographically speaking, there was, and still is, no essence or entity of the West and the East, or self and other. So both self and other are interlocking into process of mutual modification, reinforcement, and embeddedness. It is erroneous to insist that all the conceptions of self-nature in Taiwan, or the East, fall to one side of the wall and that all so-called Western perception of the self-nature fall to the other side. Isn't it possible that societies might grapple with similar problems in similar ways? Is there no mutually enriching exchange among societies? Why do we need to essentialize an East and a West in our writing?