

# in~~(ter)~~dependent studies

September 2019



# in(ter)dependent studies

*In(ter)dependent Studies* is an initiative for people to self-study together. It reflects upon ideas about personal development and “studying”, and the purposes and purposelessness of such endeavours.

The Japanese *kanji* for studying is ‘勉強’.

The characters ‘勉強’ in *hanzi* means ‘coercion’ or ‘reluctance’.

# (self-directed) questions

## What made you join this study?

A friend's invite. I learn sporadically anyway, whenever my interest is piqued. I thought this might give me a structured way to approach my learning, at least for the duration.

## What is 'studying' to you?

The dictionary definition is "to learn about a subject, especially in an educational course or by reading books."

I think it is the above and more. For me it is improvement, filtration, even meditation. It is one of the things that separate us from mere reactionary beasts, that we should set aside time to feed our minds rather than our stomachs.

## What did you intend to study?

I had initially wanted to do a semi-trance-like calligraphy study, where I try to replicate one of my favourite quotes from Mitsuo Aida through sheer repetition.



*Lifelong studying;  
Lifelong youthfulness*

## What have you learnt so far?

As it was, I started in week 2 with *Publishing Manifestos*, which led to the creation of this 'book', which now serves as an archival of my learning in shorthand notes. I had wanted to make this a social effort, but the lack of general interest dictates otherwise.

For week 3, I focused primarily on one professor's papers. She's big on culture and creativity, the latter of which is of great interest to me. I'm hoping to enrol into the course some time in the future, so there's some 'practical' aspect to this.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> week I re-read a book about *ikigai*, "the Japanese secret to a long and happy life". I wouldn't call it a secret, but herein I'll share my notes with you. Added a bit of *wabi-sabi* for taste.

## How is the experience different for you being part of this self-study group?

Thus far it didn't really *feel* like a group, per se. For the duration it felt like I was marking attendance for its own sake, and then trying to make the best of the time I have set aside for this. As a hypersensitive being, the physical presence of others was helpful and distracting at the same time.

The process itself was interesting, but far less structured than I expected. Still, I wanted to make something out of it, even if that something is temporal and of little importance to others.

*I don't know where I'm going, but I'm on my way.*

*–Carl Sandburg*

# on publishing

Every statement or idea made means a myriad combination of others becomes unsaid, exiled.

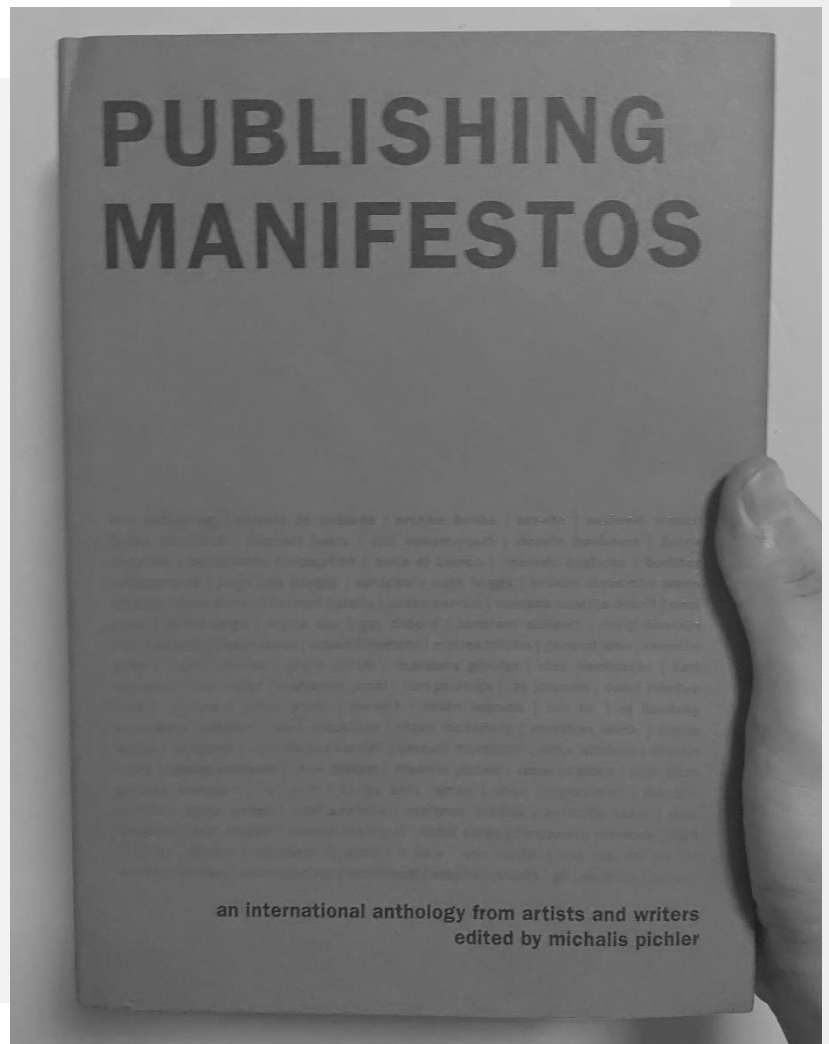
This means that the very act of publishing is one of massive exclusion.

“To write all things in a book is to put a sword in the hands of a child.”

“ For this reason, artists and authors must not leave the field of contextualizing and theorizing publishing practice to scholars or other interested players of the artworld.

If one hesitates to participate in the rather questionable process of canonizing, one might recall Mike Kelley's argument for radically subjective histories and canons in "Artist/Critic":

"Most of the artists that influence me are absent from these accounts. Historical writing becomes a duty for the artist at this point.“ ”

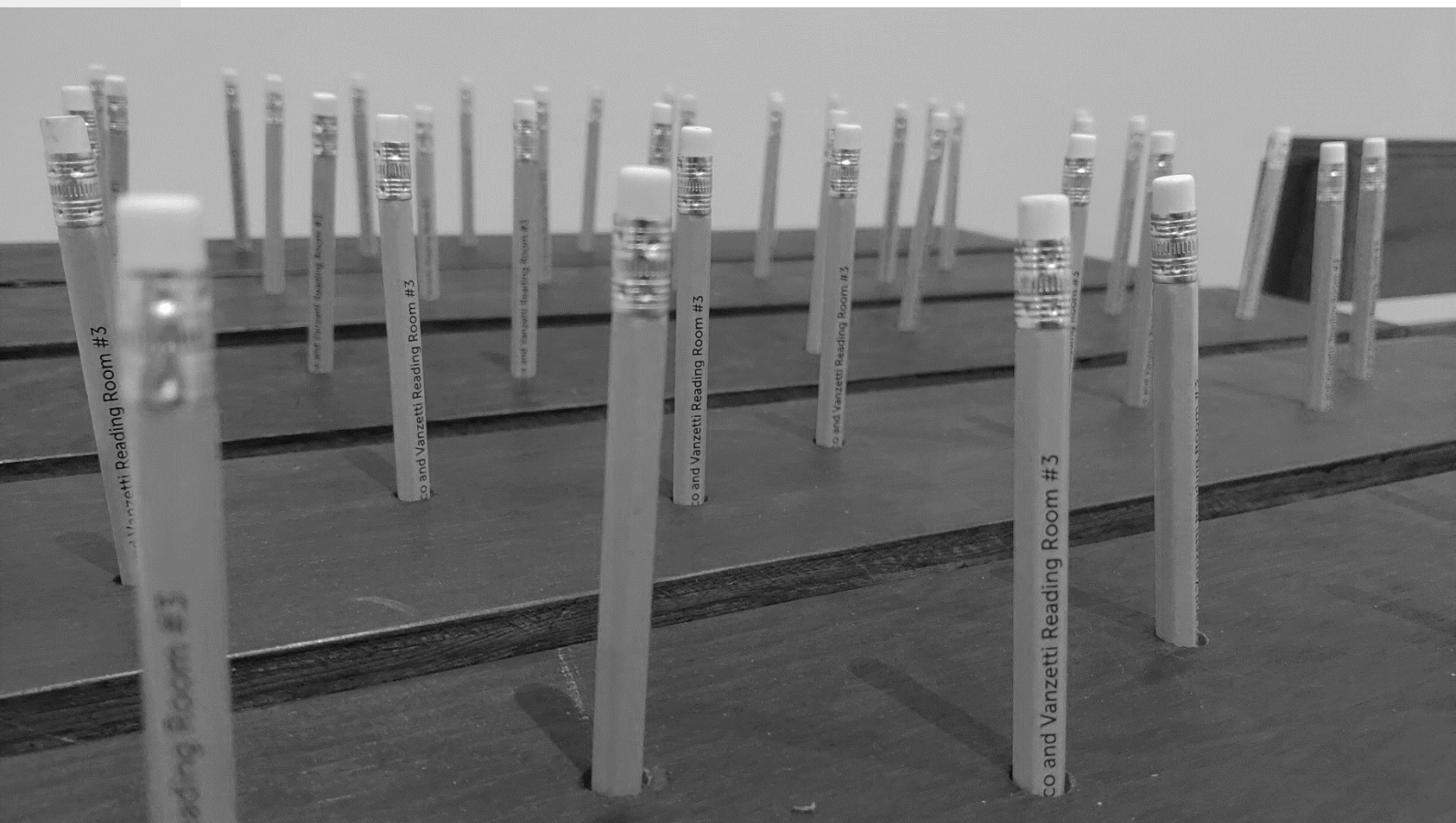


This is the first and only book I read at the *Siah Armajani: Spaces for the Public. Spaces for Democracy.* exhibition.

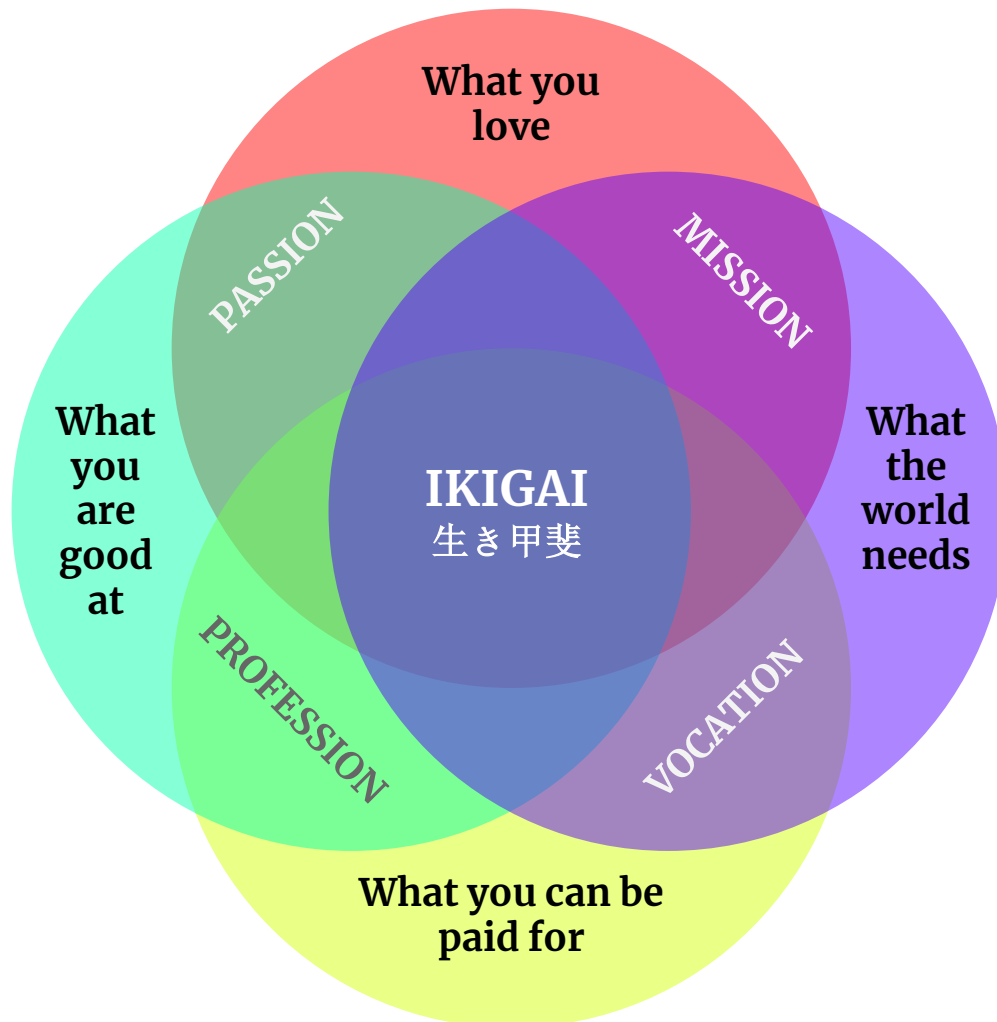
## on publishing

“It goes without saying that one is not limited to correcting a work or to integrating diverse fragments of out-of-date works into a new one; one can also alter the meaning of these fragments in any appropriate way, leaving the imbeciles to their slavish reference to “citations.””

*Citation: Methods of Detournement - Guy Debord and Gil J. Wolman  
Les Lèvres nues 8 (May 1956)*



# ikigai



Each person's *ikigai* is hidden deep within us, and requires a patient search. It is our *raison d'etre*.

生き甲斐:  
生き Life 甲斐 Worthwhile  
甲 First/Ace/Armour 斐 Elegant/Beautiful



## ten rules of *ikigai*

**Stay active; don't retire** Keep doing things of value

**Take it slow** Walk slowly and you'll go far

**Don't fill your stomach** 80% full is good enough

**Surround yourself with good friends** Pitch in

**Get in shape** A healthy body begets happier life

**Smile** :) Be grateful for the privilege of life

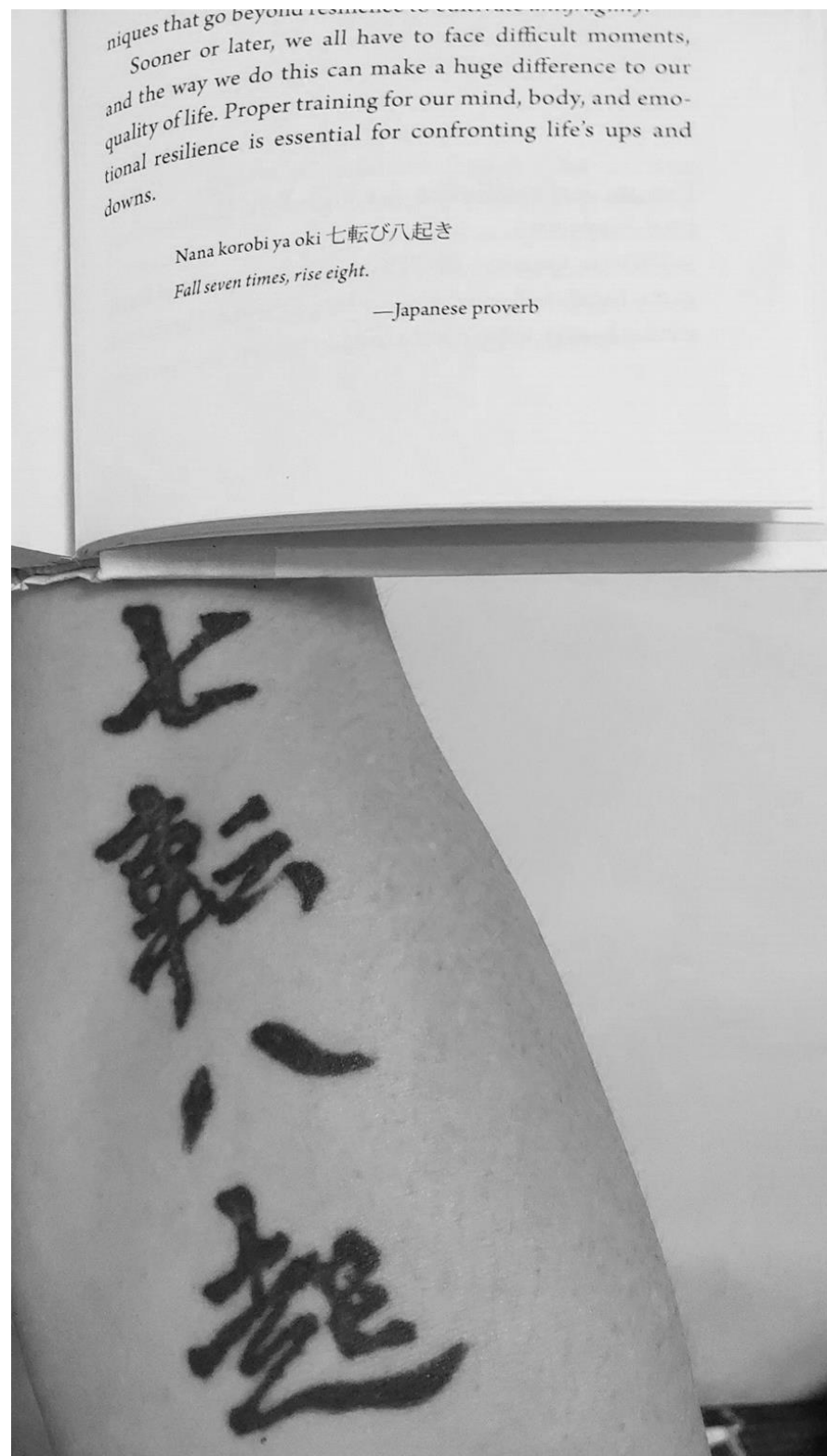
**Reconnect with nature** Recharge naturally

**Give thanks** Gratefulness = happiness

**Follow your *ikigai*** No one else can do it for you

# meta-resilience

There have been many instances where the material I am perusing speaks to me in real life, like this one:



## moving from resilience to antifragility

There has been many studies on resilience, an essential human quality. However, much of those are about weathering difficulties until they pass. Maybe it should not be about how enduring we can be, but how much stronger we can become.

Antifragility is best illustrated in *kintsugi* 金繕い



Not only do we go through hardship - we come out stronger than before.

# moving from resilience to antifragility

## **Steps to Antifragility**

### **1: Create redundancies**

Don't bet everything in just one thing. Instead of single salary, look for multiple sources of income. Develop multi-competencies. In relationships, cultivate friendships and a full life along the way - not just with your partner.

### **2: Bet conservatively and take many small risks**

Do the math. Everything comes with probability and there is an intersection where multiple investments can provide security and profit.

### **3: Get rid of the things that make your fragile**

Hardest of the three, but probably the most important. These 'things' include people, groups, objects, and habits that makes us more vulnerable. Setting 'good riddance' goals can be more beneficial than taking on new challenges.

# wabi-sabi

All things are  
imperfect / impermanent / incomplete

“Greatness” is hidden  
in the inconspicuous,  
the overlooked

Beauty can be coaxed out of ugliness

Irregular Earthy Simple  
Murky Intimate  
Unpretentious

侘  
寂

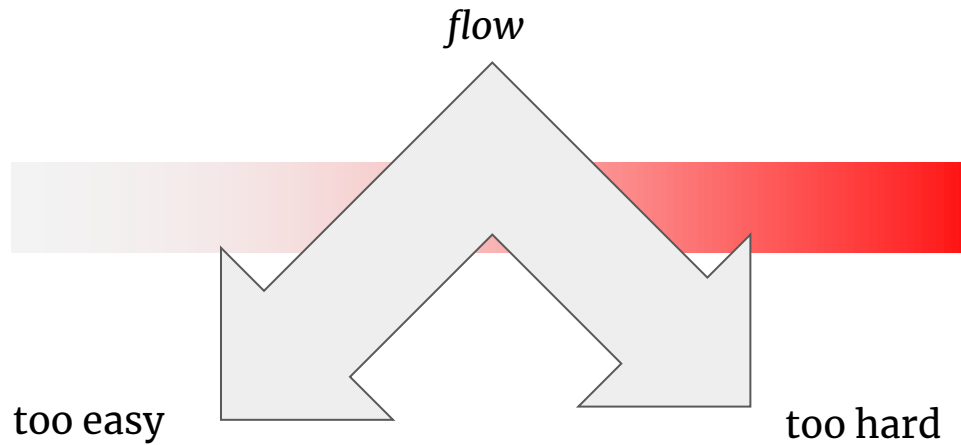
# finding the *flow*

Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi coined the term 'flow', the state of being completely immersed in what we are doing.

## Seven Conditions of Flow

- 1 Knowing what to do
- 2 Knowing how to do it
- 3 Knowing how well you're doing
- 4 Knowing where to go
- 5 Perceiving significant challenges
- 6 Perceiving significant skills
- 7 Freedom from distractions

# finding the *flow*



Vague objective:

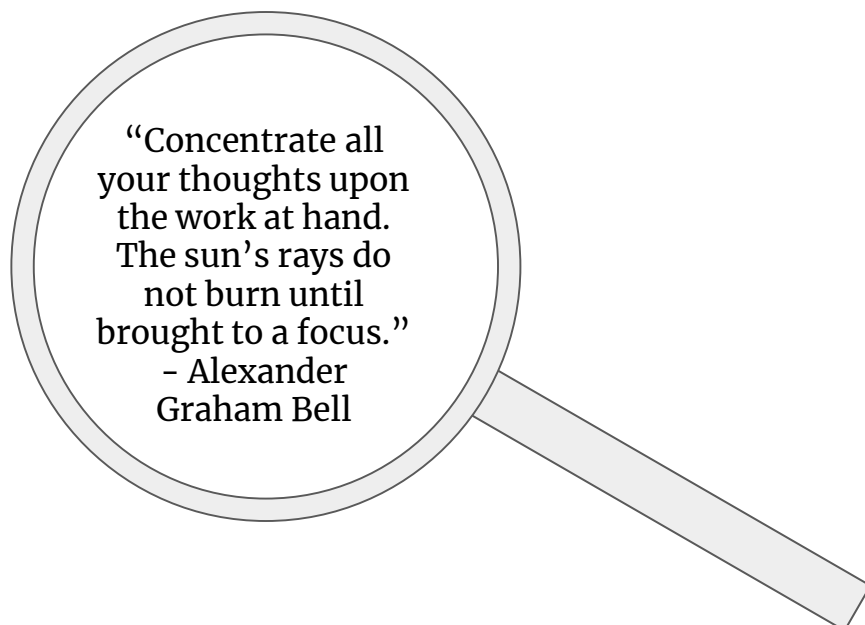
Confusion;  
timewasting,  
meaningless tasks

Clearly defined objective  
with focus on process:

Flow

Obsessive desire to achieve  
goal ignoring process:

Fixation on objective  
instead of actually  
progressing



# arts as communication

“It is when I call the work meaningless that I really demonstrate myself capable of almost any crime.”

“Why *should* a work of art have meaning?”

“Why can't it just be itself?”

“It should be self-evident that if a work of art is put on public display, the public ought not to have to shrug it off as the artist's personal secret.”

“Pointless self-revelation is a sign of immaturity. Works of art that are universally considered great reveal a degree of maturity that we associate with *human*, and not only with artistic, greatness.”

“Artists frequently offer incomprehensibility on a tray of silver - not only to confound their public, but to trick everyone into thinking that their lack of clarity is proof of their profundity.”

“By now, it is evident and we should recognise that generalisations about art have limitations. I wish artists would set aside petty and narrow definitions and admit that there are very many standards and ways about doing things and help each other to get there... somewhere, wherever. Or at least get out of each other's way.”



# the need for arts

“Our feelings help us complete our humanity. They enable us to function better, even intellectually.”

“Our humanity is reduced by half – indeed, by much more than half – when feeling is eliminated from our quest for understanding.”

We should not reject the existence of feelings, but ask for clarity in its expression.

“Where the arts serve the cause of intellectual criticism, their effectiveness is due above all to their appeal to our feelings.”

“Analysis may supply convincing *reasons* for change, but the arts have the power to awaken in us the *desire* for change.”

## the need for arts

“Art can never be taught, or learned. The techniques of painting can be studied, but the subtle heart of painting must be discovered by the artist for himself.”

“A painting done with merely technical skill, but with an absence of artistic feeling, may be clever, but it cannot be profound.”

“Center everywhere; circumference nowhere.”  
– Paramhansa Yogananda

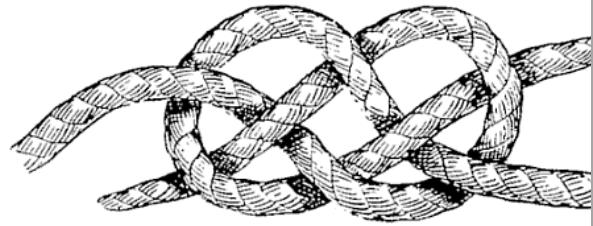
“If we ourselves don’t return repeatedly to the inner wellsprings of our being, we become starved, eventually, of inspiration.”

“The search for understanding is a process of perpetual discovery, not of mere affirmation.”

“Art is merely a vehicle for various states of consciousness.”

“ Art is not something that can be encapsulated in a couple of short random quotes, taken out of context.”

# culture, creativity, and innovation



Culture affects how we view creativity, and creativity steers culture. Until recent times, psychology has focused on intrapersonal aspect of creativity without considering the power of culture. Cultural values and norms, especially those with multicultural experiences, have a profound impact on an individual (and the nation's) creativity.

## **The Contrasting Dimensions of Creativity**

Creativity is defined as being novel and useful. What is novel or useful is, however, not universal. What is new or functional in one culture can be a waste of time in another.

Novelty and usefulness can also be obstacles within themselves. The usefulness of a product can often be improved incrementally without being very novel, and yet be very useful in the long run. Conversely, groundbreaking ideas that are 'ahead of their time' may not have practical applications at the time of conception. How, then, should we gauge creativity?

*Source: Kwan, L. Y-Y., Leung, A. K-y., & Liou, S. (2018).  
Culture, creativity, and innovation.*

*Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 49, 165-170.*

*Image: Knots, Splices and Rope Work, by A. Hyatt Verrill (1912)*

# Culture, creativity, and innovation

## **The Cultural Lens on Creativity**

As mentioned, culture affects our perception of creativity. While Western cultures focus on the analytical and object dependent aspects of creativity, while Eastern culture tends to look for more holistic thinking.

Take the classic example of Eastern vs Western medicine. The West primarily addresses symptoms with focus on how the physical body reacts. The East approach is to cure the person as a whole. Someone has frequent calf cramps, the West might prescribe topical heat rubs, while the East may offer acupuncture to the knee and foot, plus a course of bitter herbs. As more research is conducted on Eastern medicine, we find that it is not mere placebo effect, and potent partner to Western medicine when done right.

## Culture, creativity, and innovation

There is research showing how East Asians tend to harmonise conflicts rather than tackling paradoxes or contradictions. While this is beneficial on the social relations level, it is not ideal for creativity as conflict-avoidance discourages engaged complex integrative thinking. Compromise is often made instead of looking for a solution that can answer every challenge of the original problem.

### **Diversification for Creativity**

Multiculturalism is great for creativity and helps individuals break cultural frames. Yet, this also means that there is a higher likelihood of intragroup conflict. Too much diversification can adversely affect creativity as a group, and too little means there's little stimuli for great ideas. This is compounded by each member's ability to manage diversifying experiences.

# convergent and divergent thinking

Like a *yin-yang* flow, convergent and divergent thinking are important for learning and creativity. Traditionally, education systems have focused primarily convergent thinking – the ability to come up with a singular right answer amidst a variety of ‘wrong’ options.

Then came an era of ‘disruption’, where anything goes and no cows are sacred. Divergent thinking allows one, by sheer numbers and chance, to come up with novel solutions.

In recent times (2019?), we seem to have reconciled that both are not just useful and/or necessary, but powerful when used at the right times.

In design thinking, divergent thinking opens up its eyes and ears to absorb and understand the scenario. Convergent thinking helps narrow down what to ask to get to the heart of the issue.

Divergent creates possibilities based on the (un)stated problems. Converge on a few workable solutions. Diverge for future improvement.



# embodied metaphors and creative acts

*Think out of the box.*

*Put two and two together.*

*See both sides of the problem.*

Metaphors present a mental shortcut to understanding abstract concepts. Concrete bodily experiences are intuitively understood by individuals, and good *embodied metaphors* take advantage of this by extending these physical experiences the realm of the mind.

It has been shown to promote fluency, flexibility, and originality.

Much of existing research focuses on how these metaphors help to prime preexisting knowledge. There is now evidence that embodiment can also trigger cognitive processes that connects previously unknown concepts and connexions.

Can you come up with some original *embodied* metaphors that inspire creativity?

- Burn the box.
- Let the idea digest.
- Think with your hands.
- Get out and smell the dirt.



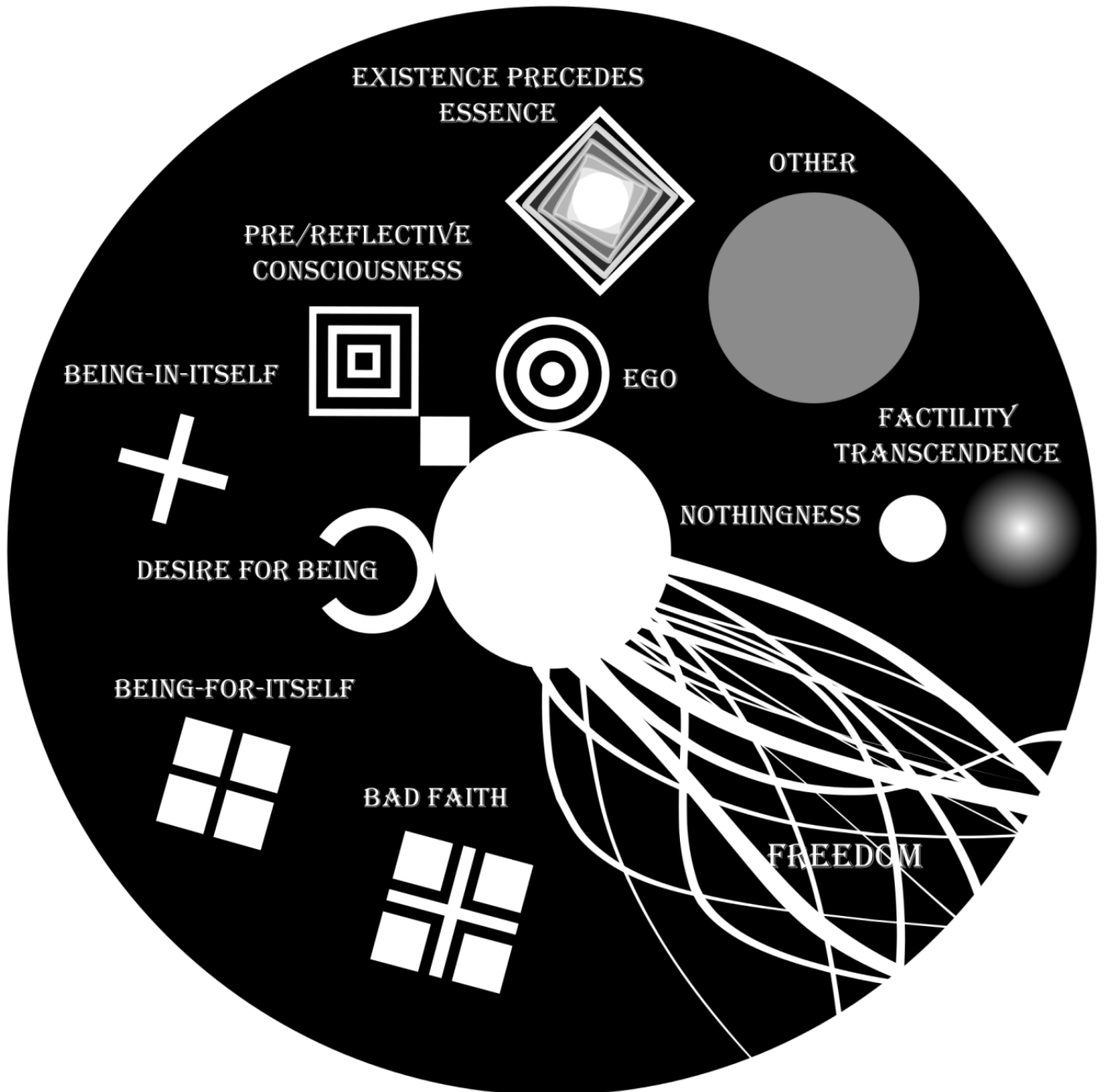


Figure X: Jean Paul Sartre's philosophy map

# culture and personal experience

The *feeling* of self, our consciousness, can arise from cultural ideologies. In turn, individual psyches affect and evolve culture itself.

In looking at how culture affects our experience, there are two subcultural systems: An 'outsider' perspective comes from a third person viewing the self. An 'insider' perspective is more common - the individual dwells in their own private thoughts.

These inner thoughts are often repeated, unchallenged and amplified, to the point where one a) projects those experiences onto others, or b) mistake that their personal experience is the only reality in the world outside of themselves.

It's hard to be self-aware or to reduce that consciousness to a simple collection of beliefs and artifacts.

Source: *Culture and the Structure of Personal Experience: Insider and Outsider Phenomenologies of the Self and Social World*  
COHEN, Dov, HOSHINO-BROWNE, Etsuki, & LEUNG, Angela K. Y.. (2007).

## culture and personal experience

Our phenomenological experience is not generated randomly, but derived from our cultural beliefs – which then shapes our personal beliefs and values.

### **outside looking in**

In the outsider phenomenology, there is understanding that the self is embedded in a social matrix where one is observed by others. The self is, in this view, interdependent even when our feelings are personal. (E.g. we feel ashamed as we assume others are feeling contempt for us)

There are two tenets to this view: “Think about how your actions look to others.” and “Consider what the world looks like from their point of view.” Propriety and social harmony are the imperative to this view.

In the tight, collectivist Chinese culture, the ‘face’ is often the ‘self’. How one is perceived by others is of paramount importance.

The Chinese sociological concept of ‘面子’ (*mian zi* / ‘face’) is deeply ingrained into their culture. When one brings shame to the family, they are considered ‘丢脸’ (*diu lian* / ‘throw face’).

# culture and personal experience

## **inside looking in**

Our own perspective is but one viewpoint, yet the one we use and often trust the most. If one is unable to separate their own internal feelings from what is outside, this tends to create:

- a) the feeling that the self is right.
- b) an agentic readiness for action.
- c) relationships/alliance based on perceived similarity to self.

Looser, individualist cultures expect individuals to  
i) know what they want, and ii) go out and get it.

## **seeing what we want to see**

Because we have an innate confirmation bias based on our culture and belief systems, the implicit messages which we create for ourselves are especially powerful.

Even in the face of contrary evidence or phenomena, we often justify those occurrences in a way that strengthens our beliefs. We are all at risk of egocentrism, all of our lives.

# culture and personal experience

## insider bias is closer than you think

In Newton's (2011) experiment, lab participants were paired as sender-receiver. The sender would tap the rhythm to a popular song for the receiver to guess.

When asked how confident they are of their guess, they estimated a 50% accuracy for themselves.

The reality: Only 3% got it correct.

The discrepancy comes from what the sender was attending to. Once the receiver makes a mental guess, the full song plays in their mind - when in reality all one can perceive is really just a series of indistinct tapping.

*During its inception, phrenology – the idea that you could study the brain by looking at the shape of the skull, was regarded as science. Empirical research debunked this untruth.*

*Image: The Illustrated Self-Instructor in Phrenology and Physiology, by O. S. Fowler and L. N. Fowler (1857)*



The only way to counter insider bias is a neutral, non-judgemental observation of what is truly out there - a feat far harder than it seems.

## culture and personal experience

**i think (how others perceive me), therefore i am**

Miyamoto, et al. (2004) ran a modified experiment on Japanese participants who were tasked to hold a pen with either their teeth or lips. And watch cartoons.

In the original experiment by Strack, Martin, and Stepper (1988), those who held the pen with teeth had a smile, which makes them more significantly more predisposed to perceiving others as more humorous (vs lip-pen-holders).

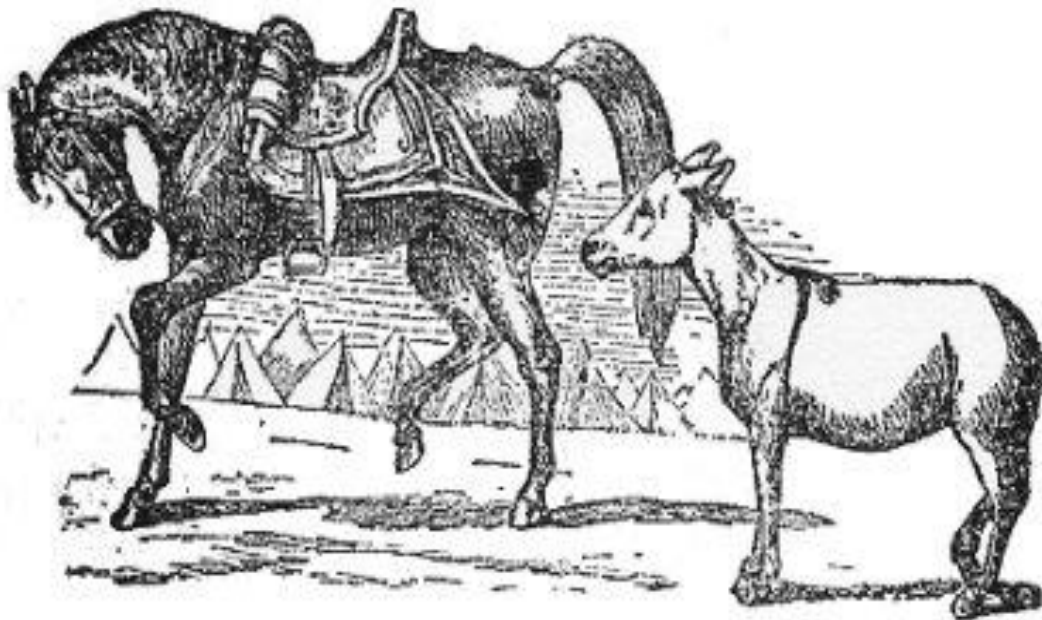
This original experiment did not work on the Japanese participants until the scientists included faces that looked at participants. As the latter were reminded of how they perceived by others while pen-biting, the same effect (facial expression of smiling making one think others are humorous) was observed.

How one thinks others perceive them can become their identity.

culture and personal experience

### **the illusion of transparency (insider)**

in which we overestimate how much others understand our feelings



*Source: Harrison Weir, John Tenniel, Ernest Griset, et al. Aesop's Fables 1881*

### **the illusion of empathy (outsider)**

where we mistakenly believe that we know what others are going through



**“Do unto others as you would  
have them do unto you”**

- the Golden Rule

**“What you do not want done  
onto you, do not do to others.”**

- Confucius



## egocentric projection

1- take own feelings

2- project onto others

## relational projection

1- project onto others the feelings that generalised others perceived to be looking at them

2- associate others' behavior to how they relate to self: shame v. contempt / anger v. fear / sadness v. sympathy

3- anticipate/expect reactionary response

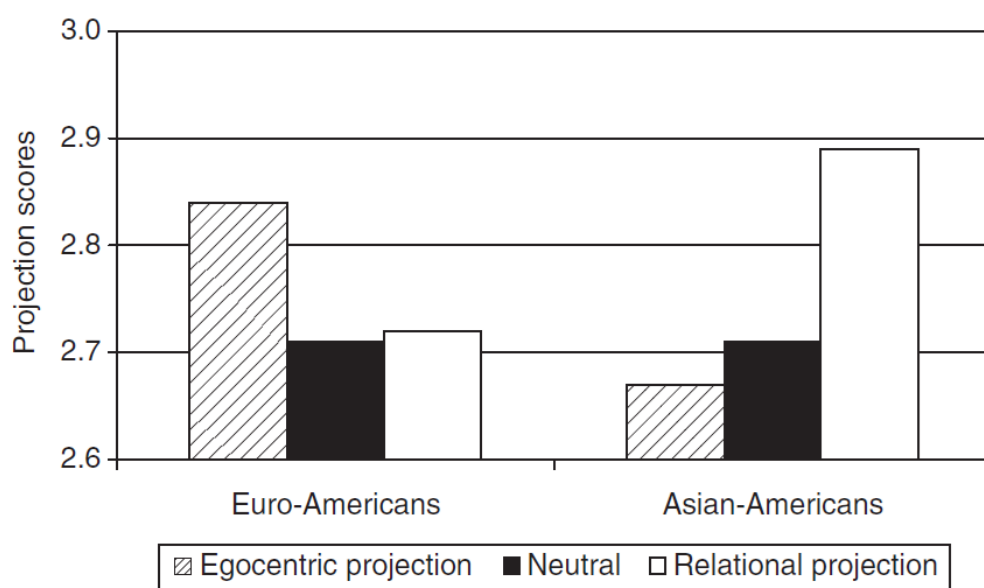


Fig. 2. Egocentric and relational projection scores among Euro-Americans and Asian-Americans.

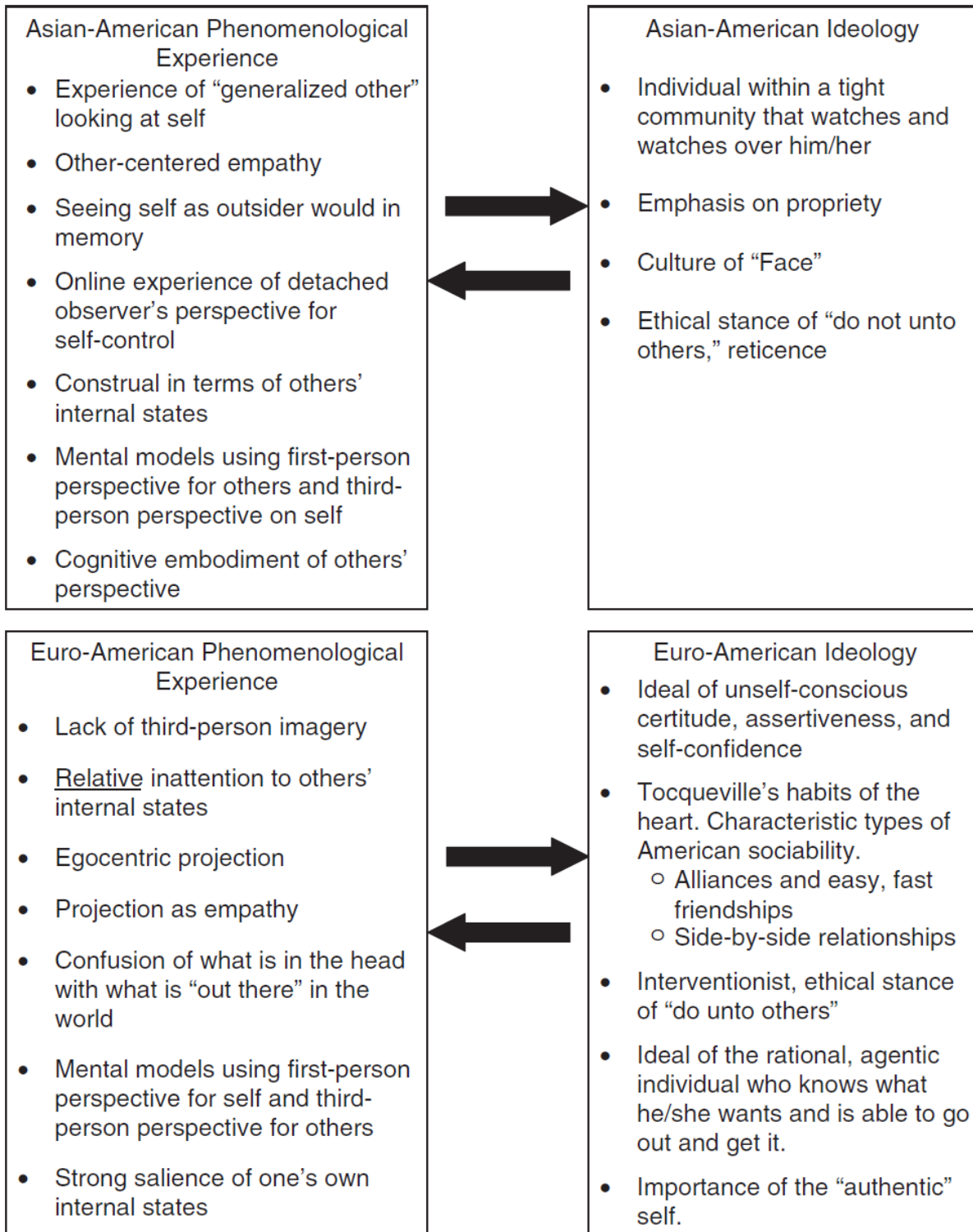


Fig. 10. Phenomenology and ideology: The embedded (and embodied) assumptions and lessons of experience from the insider and outsider perspectives.

Why is it  
that the look  
of another person  
looking at you  
is  
different  
From everything else  
in the Cosmos?

-Walker Percy

# embodied cultural influence on cognitive processes

## Embodied Cultural Cognition

*“To say that cognition is embodied means that it arises from bodily interactions with the world.*

*From this point of view, cognition depends on the kinds of experiences that come from having a body with particular perceptual and motor capacities that are inseparably linked and that together form the matrix within which memory, emotion, language, and all other aspects of life are meshed.”*

Mental processes in body–environment interaction can affect how we learn and perceive things.

### **Embodied simulation**

It is shown that the facial expression augments an individual’s senses, allowing for a larger visual field, increased rapid eye movement, and greater nasal air intake. Conversely, facial expressions of disgust lessen the effects of sensory stimuli.

There was also a study which found that priming participants’ smiling muscles helped them perceive a cartoon as much funnier, as opposed to those primed with frowning muscles.

# embodied cultural influence on cognitive processes

## Conceptual Metaphors

Conceptual metaphors help with understanding of abstract concepts through mental association of related elements. Many such metaphors are linked to bodily states or interactions with the learner's world.

For example, moral impurity is linked to 'contamination'. Someone described to have a 'dirty hand' or 'dirty mouth' is considered malevolent.

## Distinguishing Embodied Simulations vs Conceptual Metaphors

Both embodied simulations and conceptual metaphors are closely linked to bodily states and interactions with the environment.

The key difference is:

*embodied simulations* is the modality-specific bodily representations that are tied with past experiences with a given concept. (*intraconceptual*)

*conceptual metaphors* map relatively abstract concepts onto concrete bodily related concepts (*interconceptual*)

## Embodied Cultural Cognition

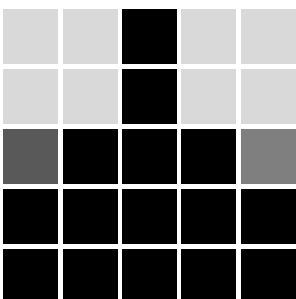
How does one map body-states and mental representations? At least some of the mapping comes from meanings informed by socio-cultural contexts. This recognises the cultural effects on the emergence of certain embodied phenomena, and may be more prevalent in some culture than others.

*“The mind is not merely embodied, but embodied in such a way that our conceptual systems draw largely upon the commonalities of our bodies and of the environments we live in. The result is that much of a person’s conceptual system is either universal or widespread across languages and cultures.”*

This is perhaps why we share a certain commonality when we share a certain culture. For example, many Asian stories have similar morals, even if told in different languages, plot and settings. Memes shared by American Asians are still relatable to those who are born in the Philippines.

All of us learn via scaffolding. For example, a young child touches a cat, and the parent says it’s a ‘cat’. On seeing a dog or a furry carpet, the child still calls it a ‘cat’. When corrected, layer by layer, the child might scaffold their knowledge. Cultural inputs affect how we learn-scaffold as well.

Over time, these contextualised concepts can be scaffolded into more abstract concepts, mapped onto concrete bodily related experiences.



Consider this: Why is the middle finger offensive? Point it to a young child, and he might chuckle and copy you. Yet if an adult is on the receiving end, why do they usually feel offended?

## embodied cultural influence on cognitive processes

Certain physiological embodiments are cross-cultural or even universal. For example, the heart described as a container (“my heart was sloshing” “my heart is heavy”) is somehow common through American, Chinese, Japanese, Hungarian, Polish, and Tahitian cultures.

*Culturally specific embodiment* is far more narrow. The expression “he reduced my flesh into crumbs” may be understood by non-Tunisians, but the full embodiment belongs to those who have participated or witnessed the sacrifice of sheep where the animal’s flesh and bones are literally cut into crumbs.

*Culturally tainted embodiment* happens too. “I found him growling like a camel” scaffolds onto the Tunisian cultural knowledge of a camel’s (bad) temper.



# embodied cultural influence on cognitive processes

## Time and Perception

It is interesting that English speakers tend to use *front/back* orientation to represent time (e.g. “the worst is behind us”), while Chinese speakers use the *up/down* orientation (e.g. 上个月 previous month is the ‘up month’) on top of *front/back*. Could this have been due to Chinese usage of vertical text (in writing, on pillars, etc), as well as the horizontal?

言宣杈人界世  
← ←  
↓相↓係↓應↓和↓們↓律↓和↓由↓人 Vertical text  
對↓的↓以↓良↓賦↓平↓權↓在↓人  
待↓精↓兄↓心↓有↓等↓利↓尊↓生  
。↓神↓弟↓並↓理↓他↓一↓嚴↓而  
互↓關↓性↓。↓嚴↓自

Horizontal text  
人人生而自由.在尊嚴和權利上一  
↓律平等。他們賦有理性和良心.並  
↓應以兄弟關係的精神互相對待。  
↓



## **Gender- and religion-related embodiments**

*“Specifically, for both genders, making a gesture of bodily force (fist) activated power-related concepts in a Stroop task; for men only however, making a fist was associated with higher hope for control in hypothetical situations and the perception of an ambiguously acting male target as more kind and less hostile. Women displayed the opposite patterns as men.”*

*“Like gender-related embodiments, it is conceivable to have embodiment effects specific to a certain religious group.”*

Gender and religion factors can cause different groups and individuals to experience different ‘social realities’, even within the same cultural setting.

# cultural influence on learning

*“We think through our bodies, making our reason primarily unconscious, metaphorical, and imaginative.”*

## **Culture X Person X Situation**

This structured interaction approach helps us identify how individuals within a group are affected by the culture, their idiosyncrasies, and the situations at hand.

## **Culture Learning and Assimilation**

While individuals can socialise quite easily through imitation or observation (hard embodiment), this does not give them a true insight into the mental model of others. (e.g. one can follow a ritual/custom without understanding why). If we could better understand how soft embodiment - psychological embodiment of a culture's imperatives - we would be closer to understanding cultural learning and change.

## cultural influence on learning

There also exists active participants who can go against pertinent cultural norms. It helps to note that atypical cultural members or rejectionists are part and parcel of any culture.

In any case, people react to moral dilemmas differently when they embody one code or another. This dynamic interaction also underlies how people justify their beliefs and learnings – at times even *strengthening* against contrary responses, situation, or evidence.

*“While the embodied cultural values are less likely to be subject to reflection and challenge, they nonetheless implicitly instantiate an approach to understanding the world, and because of this, they may be all the more powerful.”*

Ask this question of any controversial topic:  
“What is right?”

“What makes *you* think it is right?”  
Quite often, the second question will be culturally linked, rather than empirical.

# multicultural influences on creativity

One way to achieve *creative conceptual expansion* is to combin seemingly non-overlapping ideas from different cultures.

Multicultural experiences increases creativity in many ways:

## **Liberation of Mental Mindsets**

Experience can help an individual learn, but at the same time narrow their knowledge to a specific domain. Having differing experiences helps break boundaries that often comes with well-learned concepts.

## **Provision of Intellectual Material and Opportunities**

The humble bubble tea was originally a drink with almost-risque history in Taiwan. After a boom and bust in Singapore circa 1992, it is witnessing a resurgence as 'boba' in the U.S..

Arduino was conceived in Italy. When it went open source and allowed Chinese manufacturers to freely copy, manufacture and even iterate, it has become a global phenomenon for DIY enthusiasts and professionals alike.

CHIU, Chi-Yue and LEUNG, Angela K. Y.,  
"Do Multicultural Experiences Make People More Creative? If So, How?" (2007)  
ResearchCollection School of Social Sciences.Paper 537.

# multicultural influences on creativity

## Unconventional Solutions

Interestingly, multicultural experiences can also cause an individual to seek out unusual solutions - likely a result from habitually combining or navigating non-overlapping concepts.

How *creative* are you? Look into the Figural Tests of Torrance Tests of Creativity.

Experiments have shown that even mere exposure to presentation slides of cultural fusion is significantly correlated with increased creativity. The same participants, when tested again - this time without slides priming - still displayed higher creativity scores than those who were not exposed.

Interestingly, this only works only when the slides shown placed different cultures *simultaneously*, prompting a deliberate juxtaposition in the viewers' mind. Holding two seemingly incompatible ideas invites engagement in creative conceptual expansion.

Which are the popular dishes you know of that are an amalgamation of different cultures? How many of your culture's dishes are actually 'purebred'?

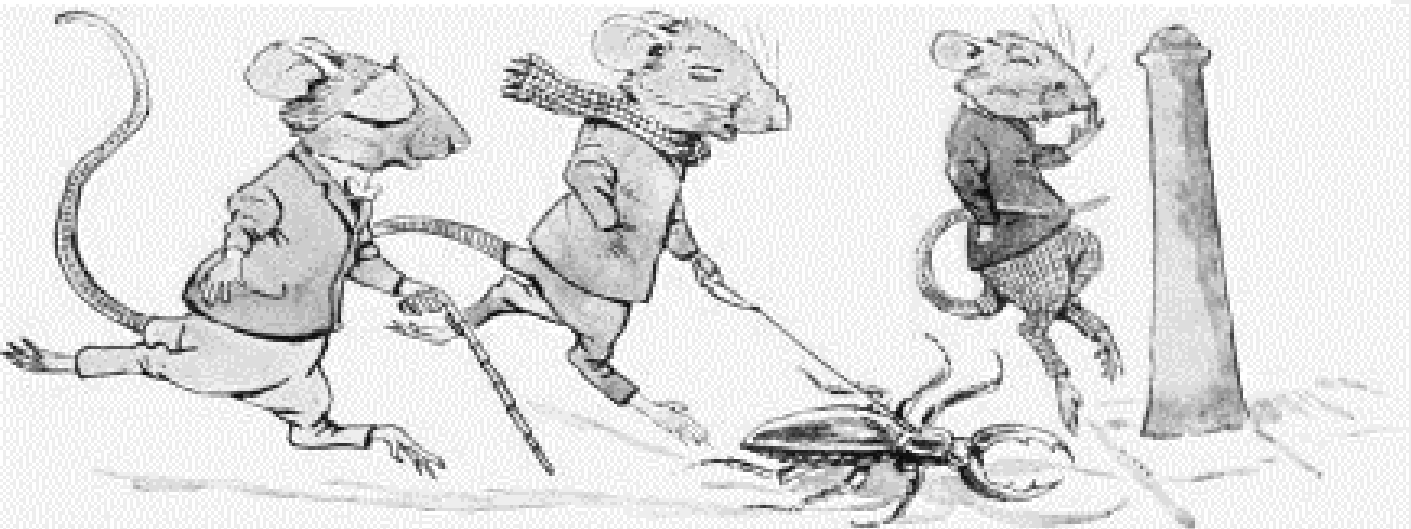
# multicultural influences on creativity

## **Obstacles to Creativity**

Close-mindedness is an obstacle to creativity, and an instinctive one. When overwhelmed by uncertainty, it is a natural defence mechanism to stick to the familiar mental models rather than entertain the possibility of a new one.

This can happen even to individuals who have had multicultural experiences.

One can also go to different countries and cultures but insist on seeing it through just the one they know.



*Source: Walton Corbould, Complete Version of Ye Three Blind Mice 1904*

# (negative) emotions

VS

# creativity

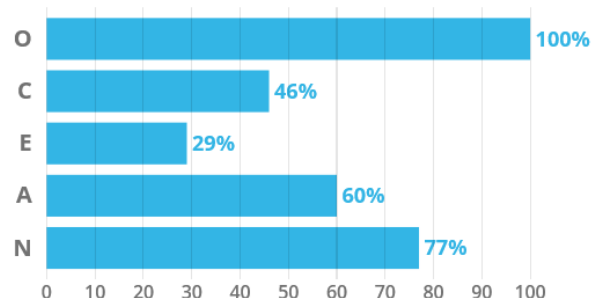
Much research have been done on emotions and its effects on creativity. However, majority of the research are on positive emotions. There is growing evidence that negative moods (compared to positive or neutral moods) foster creative performance - for certain personality dispositions.

Of the Big 5, *Neuroticism* is often considered as a negative trait - but what if it can be an indicator of creativity? An experiment showed that neurotic individuals outperform peers in creativity tasks, esp when induced to recall worrisome (rather than pleasant) memories. In fact, highly neurotic people are found to have a greater *preference* for recalling negative events in anticipation of a creative task.

Perhaps this is linked to failure in past tasks, and neurotic individuals *want* to do better or have learnt from past mistakes on some level. Or perhaps it's because neurotic individuals feel on a deeper level and are more invested in solving said task.

Try the Big 5 test here.

<https://www.truity.com/test/big-five-personality-test>



Source: LEUNG, Angela K.-Y., LIOU, Shyhnan, QIU, Lin, KWAN, Letty Y. Y., CHIU, Chi-Yue, & YONG, Jose C..(2014). *The Role of Instrumental Emotion Regulation in the Emotions-Creativity Link: How Worries Render Individuals with High Neuroticism more Creative. Emotion, 14(5), 846-856.*

# quick glossary on creativity

## *Fluency*

sheer number of ideas generated

## *Flexibility*

the extent which ideas differ from another

## *Originality*

how novel vs. previously known ideas



# how future-thinking facilitates creativity

When was the last time you had a truly radical idea?

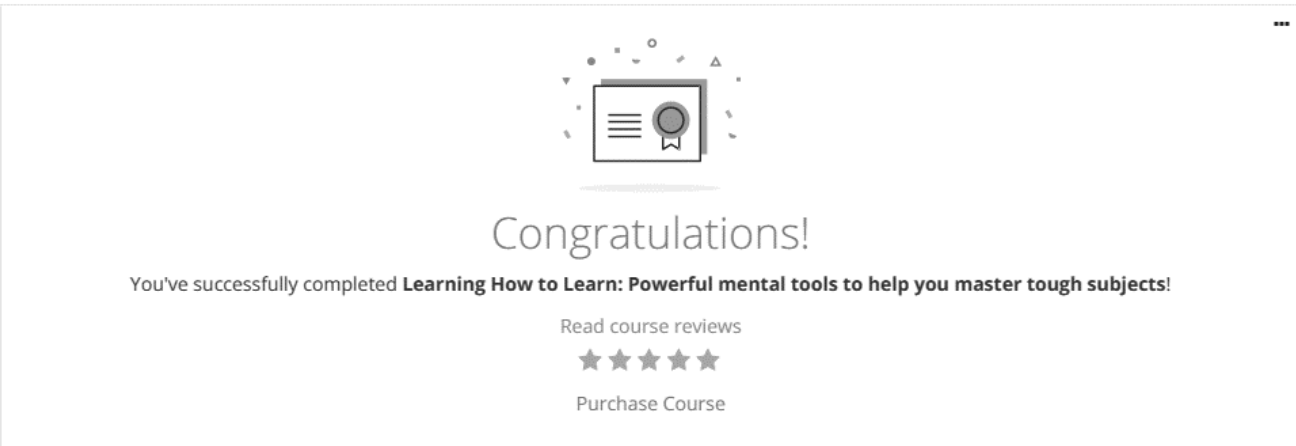
Every person is creative, but how are some more creative than others, even within the creative industries?

The process by which we generate ideas tend to be the same, often building on pre-existing frameworks and schemas. Generalised knowledge and heuristics help, but the reliance of schemas (consciously or otherwise) keeps individuals within a rather localised field.

By being deliberate in deviation, we can start to imagine what doesn't yet exist. In doing so we can abstract the essence of which we seek, rather than have a immediate and seemingly 'good enough' idea for the subject at hand.

# sporadic notes on learning

I've always been fascinated by learning, and learning about learning.



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Learning through exploration

Learning through imitation

Learning through repetition

Learning through interrogation

Learning through immersion

Learning through genetic manipulation

The above were *not* covered by the course, but I felt were worth exploring in my own time.

# learning and interference

What we previously know *can* interfere with learning. Based on the *scaffolding theory*, our knowledge is built upon basic foundations that become increasingly adaptive and complex.

When we study novel things, such as a new language, we tend to use existing knowledge (e.g. English speaker learning to speak Japanese will think in English and translate to Japanese) to build upon our learning. As there are many things that don't translate well (sentence structure, grammar), it is often harder to pick up a new language.

This is why children are better at learning new languages, as they are a 'blank slate' (*tabula rasa*). It's difficult to achieve a truly blank slate as you accumulate more knowledge, but it helps to at least be aware of the effects of prior knowledge.

# learning what we know

In the realm of pseudo-science:

## **Anamnesi**

We already know all that we can possibly know innately, and learning is rediscovery of that knowledge within ourselves.

## **Morphogenetic field theory**

A hypothetical biological (and possibly social) field containing genetic information required to form a living thing, including its behaviour and interaction with other beings.

There was an experiment where a group of rats learned to run a maze 165 times before being able to do a perfect run each time thereafter.

Interestingly, their offspring could run the same maze at a faster rate after a few generations – dropping to as low as 20 attempts.

Biologist Rupert Sheldrake posited that this was due to morphogenetic fields, while others suggested the new generation followed scent left by predecessors.

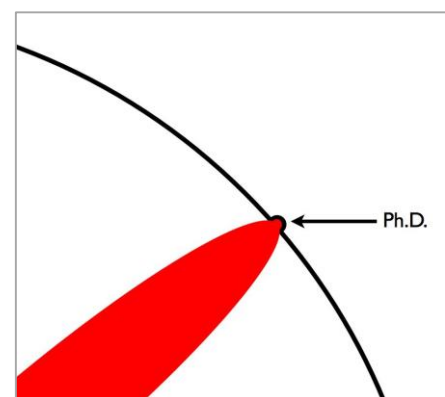
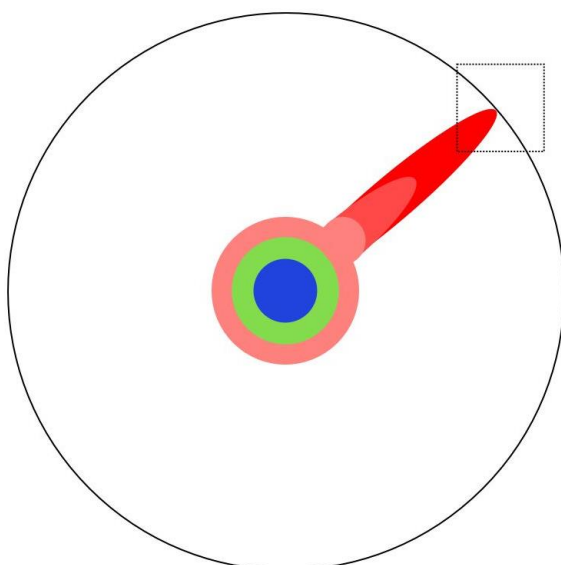
# pushing boundaries in learning

## zone of proximal development

A good mentor makes all the difference. Vygotsky (1987) believes that in the zone of proximal development (ZPD), skills that are just out of reach for a learner can be acquired with three important components:

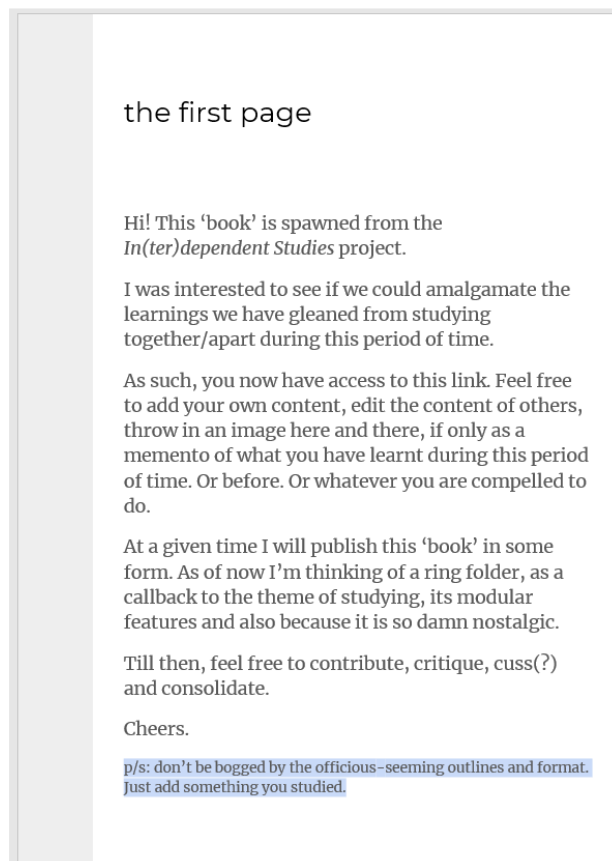
1. Presence of a more knowledgeable other
2. Interaction with tutor who observes and guides
3. Supporting activities (*scaffolding*) provided by the educator as they go through the ZPD onto competence

## adding a blip to human knowledge



# appendix A: an attempt at collaboration

As an experiment, I wanted to see if it was possible to consolidate other 'students' notes and publish it as an archival of the hours spent on *in(ter)dependent studies*.



The experiment failed, but here are some of the responses:

## Just some thoughts not exactly for publishing:

- Just some thoughts here on 18 Sept 2019
- The content seems to be organised quite like a text or guidebook on the different kinds of learning that's seemingly theoretical but yet anecdotal. Are there books and existing texts that summarises all these types of learning thus far?
  - A quick search on the internet yields several models.
  - <https://www.learning-styles-online.com/overview/>

input

I think it's primarily an archival of our time spent studying, a record of what we learnt individually/together. Having books and existing texts verbatim is easy to google and cut-and-paste, but that wasn't the intent.

The intent, for me at least, was to have gone through the materials and filter/transpose it. This can be notes, your own summaries, memes, and what nots.

The outline 'organisation' are written for myself primarily as a framework (which I am discarding as I write), and any participant can edit/add/reduce as they wish. I might take them out myself if I do not have any thing to add to them.

- Not sure about how to value add at this juncture
- Maybe for me to present myself as a case study, some questions will be useful.
- Added them near the front

input

Just add something. L.

## learning through repetition

Building the neuron bridge

The 10,000 hour mastery myth  
(is it a myth? The tipping point?)

A sisyphian effort?

No. Refer to camus myth of Sisyphus or at least not specifically for repetition

input

## activating creativity through uncreative ideas

Click to add text

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input

**“Do unto others as you would  
have them do unto you”**

- the Golden Rule

***“Man is condemned to be free; because once thrown into the  
world, he is responsible for everything he does.” -  
Jean Paul Satre***

input

**“What you do not want done  
onto you, do not do to others.”**

- Confucius

*I don't know where I'm going, but I'm on my way.*

—Carl Sandburg

Omg i quoted this  
guy before. A long  
time ago and was  
just thinking of  
him a few days  
back.  
Still don't know  
where i'm going.

input



Give you another story.

There was a boy whose father was a michelin chef whose speciality was to cook eggs. Once, the boy was watching his father cooked a hardboiled egg from behind, and noticed that it involved a raw egg, a pot of water, some fire, a ladle that was put into the pot, and there's some cracking action, and then some thing that the father put into his mouth to eat.

Several days later the boy tried to copy the father's action but he couldn't remember exactly the order of things to do.

So the boy put a pot of water on the fire (chef's family encouraged young kids to experiment cooking early in life), and cracked the egg into the pot of water, then put the ladle into the pot and stirred, and then did not bring anything to boil and then showed it to the mother and the mother was like, "alright son, so what do you want me to say?" and she thought to herself maybe her poor son had unfortunately inherit the "cooking" gene from her side of the family.

The boy asked for his father's input. Not to completely dash the son's hopes, but also to fuck around with him, the father tore up a hardboiled egg (that he had always carried in his pocket because he famous egg chefs and eccentric like that) and dropped it into the warm egg water.

The boy ran to the mother, who said, okay, so this bit of powdery ball yolk thing or this white bits were made by your father right? And then the boy was amazed because, he thought like, wow, how she know siah? And he asked his mother "how could you tell, mummy?"

Then she (hid a deep sigh in her heart and remind herself that the boy was still very young) smiled encouragingly (as good mothers do) and tell him to work hard and cook smart and one day can be as good as his dad who was super at cooking egg.

So the boy thought like, wow, my mother smart siah, my father good at cooking egg siah. And then was resolved to become smart and study hard and work hard and learn how to cook properly, and became a good and famous chef eventually.

He became good at cooking asparagus, or rather, specifically, the hollandaise sauce that goes on asparagus.

# Many reflection questions

- What were some expectations I had of the group and of myself when I registered?
  - What is the difference between studying as part of the group or studying by myself?
  - Think along the lines of social goals, your personal and professional goals, or you didn't know what to expect.
  - Why?

Do you want me/us to answer here or in the questionnaire you will put up? :)

Dunno - maybe to just think about it.

input

- Collaboration? Is a word that we throw around a lot lately but...
  - What is the meaning of collaboration to me? What might it mean to others?
  - What is the difference between collaboration and participation?
  - Am I participating/initiating as much as I would like myself to or not? Why and what are some factors that enable this?
  - Who do I see myself collaborating with? Why? What have I done to advance this? How can I do this?
- What are some of my personal goals?
  - Do I want to collaborate with others to advance them? How? Who?
  - How can they help?
  - Why would others want to collaborate with me?

# Many reflection questions

- What does it feel like being in the Whatsapp group?
  - Do you mute the group and why? And how does it feel?
  - Do you initiate conversations and why? How does it feel like when I post something in the group or not?
  - Do you privately message members and why?
  
- What would I be doing if not for the time spent here?

input

# TOO FREE

- Some people have commented that the structure and everything here is too free.
  - What are your thoughts on it?
  - On a scale of 1-10,
    - how much structure did you think you need before joining this self-study group? (With 10 being very much a lot of structure.)
    - How much structure do you think you need after joining this self-study group?
    - how much did you think you take control of situations before joining this self-study group? (With 10 being very much a lot of control.)
    - how much did you think you take control of situations after joining this self-study group? (With 10 being very much a lot of control.)
    - how much did you think you need to connect with others before joining this self-study group? (With 10 being very much a lot of connect.)
    - how much did you think you need to connect with others after joining this self-study group? (With 10 being very much a lot of connect.)

I want to make a

google questionnaire for this



Too many things to do.

input

input

Which would you rather be?

**THE FALLEN LEAF ON THE  
RIVER DOES NOT CHOOSE TO  
FLOW DOWNSTREAM.**

**BUT THE FISH HAS SOME  
CHOICE ON WHERE IT IS  
GOING TO SWIM.**

input



一生勉強  
一生青春

