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### **Oneness, Aspects, and the Neo-Confucians**

Confucius gave counsel that is notoriously hard to follow: "What you do not wish for yourself, do not impose on others" (Huang 1997: 15.24).<sup>1</sup> People tend to be concerned with themselves and to be indifferent to most others. We are distinct from others so our self-concern does not include them, or so it seems. Were we to realize this distinctness is merely apparent--that our true self includes others--Confucius's counsel would be easier to follow. Concern for our true self would extend concern beyond the narrow selves we appear to be.<sup>2</sup>

The neo-Confucians held just such a view. They espoused an identity with the universe and everything in it, arguing that this identity explains a natural concern for everyone and everything, not just for our narrow selves. I will summarize their universal identity view as an example of the kind of oneness I am concerned with. The theme of the identity of the self with everything else is common among some adherents of many other religious traditions: Daoist, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Jewish, and Christian.<sup>3</sup> A claim so widespread must be taken seriously, yet there is an obvious objection.

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<sup>1</sup> According to Karen Armstrong, "Confucius was the first to promulgate the Golden Rule." Further, "The Axial sages put the abandonment of selfishness and the spirituality of compassion at the top of their agenda. For them, religion *was* the Golden Rule" (2006: 208, 392).

<sup>2</sup> For a related approach to the same sort of issue see Baxter 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Zhuangzi in Watson 1996: 39, 42. From the Isa Upanishad and the Chandogya Upanishad in Mascaró 1965: 49, 120. Samkara quoted in Deutsch and van Buitenen 1971: 63. Huayan Buddhism as characterized in Cook 1977: 2. Ibn Arabi quoted in Kakaie 2007: 185, 188. Moses Cordovera quoted in Matt 1995: 24. Meister Eckhart quoted in Kakaie 2007: 186-7. The numerous cultural differences between various

Many things in the universe differ from each other, that is, some have qualities others lack. If they are all one and the same thing then that one thing differs from itself. But this seems to be a contradiction.<sup>4</sup> How then can such an identity in difference be made sense of? Unless the metaphysical problem can be resolved the neo-Confucian-type view is disproven and our distinctness from others remains a barrier to concern that must be overcome some other way.<sup>5</sup>

I will suggest that the objection can be answered with some metaphysical innovation. I will sketch a theory--call it the theory of aspects--that explains how numerically identical things can differ qualitatively (see Baxter 1999). I motivate the theory by examining the sort of internal conflicts that led Plato to divide the self into parts, while emphasizing the unity of the self found in Sartre and Descartes. One is the same self on both sides of the conflicts. One does not have numerically distinct parts; one has numerically identical but qualitatively differing "aspects." I defend the theory by arguing that Leibniz's Law (the Indiscernibility of Identicals) applies only to complete entities such as individuals, not to incomplete entities such as aspects. Given the theory of aspects, the oneness entailed by views like that of the neo-Confucians has the following consequence: there is only one individual--the One, the universe itself. Everyone and everything else, including oneself, are aspects of the One.

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mystical experiences emphasized by Katz cannot be denied (1983: 32-43). Nonetheless as James says, "there is about mystical utterances an eternal unanimity which ought to make a critic stop and think. . . ." (1982: 419).

<sup>4</sup> Bayle makes the same criticism of Spinoza's monism (1991: 306-7).

<sup>5</sup> One might wonder whether merely *perceived* identity with the universe would be enough to overcome the barrier. Perhaps. However the same metaphysical problem would attend the oneness perceived, requiring the same solution to make sense of what is being perceived. I'm grateful to Toby Napoletano for the question.

Note that I am not attributing belief in aspects to the neo-Confucians. I am rather suggesting a way to augment any such theory of universal identity to save it from the otherwise decisive objection against it.

I will end by discussing two apparent ethical problems with the view. The universal identity view seems to have trouble accommodating altruistic concern. Apparently there would be no others to receive altruistic concern, or if there were then our universal concern would extend even to the undeserving. I will argue first that altruism just is concern for other aspects of the One beyond the aspect which is the narrow self. I will argue second that concern for everyone and everything as aspects of the One need not entail equal concern for each of these aspects. The deserving may deserve more than the undeserving. Such hierarchy by no means suggests, however, that the narrow self is especially deserving. Far from it.

### I. Neo-Confucians and Oneness

Under the influence of Buddhism, neo-Confucians came to regard the universe as a system of principles (*li*), such that each thing in the world contained all the principles of the universe, differently manifested depending on each thing's *qi*. Neo-Confucians then augmented this view of oneness with an elaboration that helped explain our natural concern with the well-being of everything. For Zhou Dunyi, Zhang Zai, and Wang Yangming, the self or mind was "coextensive with the universe" (Ivanhoe mss: 8-10; 2002: 34). Note that the oneness here is something more than just connection with other people, creatures, and things. It is "something like" oneness in "the strongest sense in which two things can be 'one'," namely "by being identical, the way Bruce Wayne and

Batman are one" (1998: 64). It is "a more robust and dramatic sense of oneness as a kind of identity between self and world" (mss: 8).

It is important to be clear about the claim of being one body with the universe. The claim is not just that the universe is a body of which oneself is an organic part. Such a view would be a variation on a theme of being distinct from and connected to everything else in the universe--all its other parts--to jointly compose something distinct from each--the universe as a whole.<sup>6</sup> Such a view would not capture a key element of the neo-Confucian view, namely, that it provides "an expanded view of the self" (Ivanhoe mss: 14):

The moral life involves realizing one's fundamental identity with all existence.

However, rather than wearing away and eliminating the self, Wang's ideal was to expand one's sense of self until it embraced all of reality. (Ivanhoe 2002: 29)

On the neo-Confucian view, the universe is somehow identical with the self while yet being beyond the narrow self of normal, everyday concern. The universe is not a whole distinct from the self, a whole of which the self is a part. Rather, the universe is one's broader self, one's true self.

Granted, the neo-Confucian view contains the claim that the narrow self is connected with everything else. Wang takes the narrow self's connections to other things in the universe to be like the connections between parts of a human body (Ivanhoe mss: 10-11). "Wang's moral paragon was to see the entire universe as his body or, more precisely, to see himself as part of the universal body" (Ivanhoe 2002: 35; see also 24, 30). However, this claim about being connected does not exhaust the view that the

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<sup>6</sup> This view is closer to the one Paul expresses in 1 Corinthians 12:12-31.

narrow self is one with the universe. To see this point requires distinguishing two senses of being-one-with: what I'll call the "unitedness sense" and what I'll call the "identity sense."

*Unitedness sense:* x is one with y when x and y are two distinct things that are united by some connecting relations.

In this sense of being one with, the things that are one with each other are still distinct things.

*Identity sense:* x is one with y when x and y are numerically identical.

This sense is not compatible with their distinctness.<sup>7</sup> Oneness in the unitedness sense is not literally oneness because the things connected are two or more, not one. It is part of the neo-Confucian view that the self is one with the universe in the identity sense as well.

If one part of the universe--namely, oneself--is identical with the universe, then presumably its other parts would be as well. That would suggest that according to the neo-Confucian view the parts of the universe are identical with each other. This interpretation is confirmed by Zhou Dunyi's refusal to cut some grass saying, "I regard it in the same way I regard myself," and Zhang Zai's similar regard of a braying donkey (Ivanhoe mss: 10). For Wang Yangming, "There was no distinction between the self and the other, or between the self and things" (Chan 1963: sec. 142). In the identity sense of oneness, being one with the universe entails being identical not just with the universe, but also with each of its parts.

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<sup>7</sup> It might seem that there is a middle sort of oneness between unitedness and identity, namely interpenetration in Priest's (2015) very special sense. As Priest puts it, things x and y interpenetrate just in case each just is the structure of relations it stand in, and each structure is a substructure of the other. A more general notion of interpenetration would presumably be that each is a proper part of the other. However, the structures are either distinct from the substructures or not. The wholes are either distinct from the proper parts or they are not. If they are, the same impediment to universal concern exists. If they are not then the oneness is oneness in the identity sense.

There is a temptation to read the neo-Confucian view in the unitedness sense nonetheless, because they emphasize a hierarchy of concerns about the parts of the universe. Just as we use the hands and feet to protect the head, we can tolerate differences in relative importance (Ivanhoe mss: 11-12). So, for example, Wang says we can butcher animals to feed our parents, or prefer our parents over a stranger to mete out life-giving food (Chan 1963: sec. 276).

The differences underlying a hierarchy of concerns push against the literal identity of the different things. Any account of the literal identity of narrow self with the universe and with each of its parts must somehow also be able to accommodate the fact that there are differences between each of these. A defense of the neo-Confucian-type metaphysical view must therefore make sense of the identity of the narrow self with the universe and of the identity of the narrow self with each thing in the universe, and yet also of the fact that what is true of the narrow self can differ from what is true of the universe and what is true of each thing in the universe.<sup>8</sup>

## II. The Objection from Leibniz's Law

There is thus an obvious objection to the neo-Confucian type view of universal identity:

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<sup>8</sup> Given these constraints, none of the senses of 'oneness' that Ivanhoe lists fully capture the neo-Confucian view, as he notes (mss. 4-5. 1998: 63-5). All but the first are of oneness in the unitedness sense. The first is standard numerical identity without the possibility that something true of one be false of the other. Psychologists have also discussed various ways to characterize oneness; Tien summarizes these (2012: 64). Yet none of these ways are fully apt for capturing the oneness of the neo-Confucians. "Identity and psychological indistinguishability," "expansion of the self to include the other," and "merging" would each be a reduction of the ways the narrow self and the universe differ; "confusion between self and other" would be failing to see the ways that the narrow self and the universe differ; "union" would not distinguish between the unitedness sense and the identity sense of oneness; "seeing part of oneself in the other" is either metaphorical or does not acknowledge the identity of the self and the other.

1. The narrow self is narrow.
2. The broader self is not narrow.
3. The narrow self is identical with the broader self.
4. If two things are identical then all the same things are true of them.<sup>9</sup>
5. Therefore, the narrow self is narrow and not narrow.

Leibniz's Law, as expressed by 4, seems to render the neo-Confucian view contradictory.<sup>10</sup>

I will argue, however, that 4 is ambiguous. It is true if 'things' refers just to individuals, but false if 'things' also includes what I will call "aspects". First, then, I will argue that there are aspects. The aspects of an individual are numerically identical with each other and the individual, yet not all the same things are true of them. With the theory of aspects in hand, we can answer the objection by saying that the universe is the only individual, whereas oneself is an aspect of the universe, numerically identical with it and with its other aspects. Since Leibniz's Law does not extend to aspects, the contradictory conclusion does not follow.

### III. Motivating Aspects

It will take a while to motivate and explain the theory of aspects. I will eventually return to talk of neo-Confucian-type oneness. To begin, let me motivate the idea that there are numerically identical things such that different things are true of them, in other words, that there is "qualitative self-differing." Consider cases in which someone is torn

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<sup>9</sup> Or, perhaps more carefully but harder to understand: if something and something are identical then anything true of either one is true of the other one.

<sup>10</sup> That may be why in an earlier essay Ivanhoe says, "Clearly it is contrary to reality for me to think of myself as one with the world in the sense of an *identity* between self and world (i.e. in the way that Batman is "one" with Bruce Wayne)" (1997: 113).

about what to do or how to feel. A dramatic case is that of Euridipes' Medea who struggles with herself whether to kill her children to punish their father Jason who has abandoned her.

Ah, Ah! Why do you gaze at me with your eyes, children? Why do you smile your last smile? Oh, what shall I do? My courage has gone, women now that I've seen the shining eyes of the children. I couldn't do it. Goodbye to my former plans! I'll take my children from this land. Why should I, in harming them to give their father pain, make myself suffer twice as much? I cannot. Goodbye plans!

But what is happening to me? Do I want to make myself ridiculous, letting my enemies go unpunished? I must go through with this. What a coward I am-- even to admit soft words into my mind! . . . I shall not weaken my hand.

Ah, Ah! Don't, my heart, don't you do this! Leave them alone, wretched heart, spare the children! Living there with me they will give you joy.

By the avenging furies down in Hades, I swear I'll never leave these children for my enemies to insult and torture! They must certainly die; and since they must, then I who gave birth to them shall kill them. (Excerpted and translated in Annas 2001: 111-12)

Insofar as Medea is enraged at the father, she wants to kill the children. Insofar as she loves them, she has no desire to kill them. She is torn. She is in conflict with herself. She differs from herself. Medea's struggle is between two aspects of her: Medea insofar as she is enraged at Jason *versus* Medea insofar as she loves her children.

There may seem to be a simple argument that no-one can differ from herself. Here it is: there is no respect in which someone differs from herself.<sup>11</sup> This is true if it means there is no respect such that someone in that respect differs from herself in the same respect. However, it is false if it means that there is no respect such that someone in that respect differs from herself in some other respect. It is this latter formulation that is needed to capture what it is to be torn.

Such struggles with ourselves are all too common, even if less fevered than Medea's. Who has not been moved in opposite ways by love and anger in a custody dispute, or in child rearing, or in a close relationship? Self-differing is something we all experience.

But is this literal self-differing? Many will say that we merely have opposing desires--ones that cannot both be satisfied. The conflict is between them, not between one and oneself. However, this way to make theoretical sense of the self-differing is not true to the phenomenon.

First, the relevant conflict here is not just desiring to do incompatible things. The conflict is that one has a desire and lacks it. Though Medea insofar as she is enraged at Jason has a desire to kill her children, Medea insofar as she loves her children lacks all desire to do so. It is not that Medea insofar as she loves her children is moved to oppose another desire she has. Insofar as she loves her children she is not moved by the murderous desire at all.

Second, desires are not like quarrelsome children in being opponents one is merely related to. To have internal conflict like Medea's is like trying to move in opposite

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<sup>11</sup> I'm grateful to Jonathan Schaffer for the objection.

directions. Or it is "to take something to oneself and to cast it off" as Plato puts it. This internal opposition indicates a complexity in oneself, as argued in the *Republic* (1974: 435c-441c, esp. 437b).

The reality of the conflict has led a number of important authors to downplay the unitariness of the self. The operative principle seems to be that of Plato's:

It is clear that one thing cannot act in opposite ways or be in opposite states at the same time and in the same part of itself in relation to the same other thing; so if we find this happening we shall know that we are not dealing with one thing but with several. (Plato 1974: 436b)

In consequence, after noting some conflicts, Plato concludes that there are three parts of the soul (Plato 1974: 439d-e).

Other important examples are St. Paul's distinction between flesh and spirit (Romans 7:14-25; Galatians 5:17), Goethe's Faust saying "Two souls, alas! reside within my breast" (Goethe 1994: I, 1112-1117), DuBois's talk of double-consciousness (1903: 3), and Fanon's talk of self-division (1967: 17).

As these authors convey, the internal conflicts are real and deep. Nonetheless, the talk of distinct parts of the soul or of distinct, co-habiting souls neglects the unitariness of the conscious self, the subject of thought. Sartre emphasizes this unitariness in his criticism of the Freudian interpretation of bad faith. "By the distinction between the 'id' and the 'ego,' Freud has cut the psychic whole into two" (Sartre 1956: 50) and would have it that self-deception is a case of one part deceiving another. However, when someone lies to himself, if there is a lying part conscious of the lying and a lied-to part that is not conscious of the lying, then the lying part is simply an Other to the lied-to part. This is

not self-deception. Further, Sartre argues, on the Freudian scheme the lying could only happen by the operation of a censor that decides what is allowed into consciousness and what stays unconscious. The censor "must be the consciousness (of) being conscious of the drive to be repressed, but precisely in order *not be* conscious of it." (Sartre 1956: 53)

The very essence of the reflexive idea of hiding something from oneself implies the unity of one and the same psychic mechanism and consequently a double activity in the heart of unity, tending on the one hand to maintain and locate the thing to be concealed and on the other hand to repress and disguise it. (Sartre 1956: 53)

In other words there must be a "single consciousness", such that "I must know in my capacity as deceiver the truth which is hidden from me in my capacity as the one deceived" (Sartre 1956: 49).

Sartre's talk of a single consciousness captures the unitariness of the self overshadowed by the previous dramatic appeals to two-ness. The subjects in these cases would say that it is I who desire to do something yet lack all desire to do so. It is I who move toward the pleasures of the world yet also move away from them. It is I who am attracted and repelled by the values of white America. It is I who am aware of the truth and who is not. The fact that it is me, even when I am in conflict with myself, must not be overlooked. It is I who am conscious on either side of these divides. Descartes brings our attention to this fact when he says in the Sixth Meditation that the mind, unlike the body, is "utterly indivisible."

For when I consider the mind, that is, myself insofar as I am only a thinking thing, I cannot distinguish any parts within me; rather, I understand myself to be

manifestly one complete thing. . . Nor can the faculties of willing, sensing, understanding, and so on be called "parts" of the mind, since it is one and the same mind that wills, senses, and understands. (1984: 89)

The appeal to Descartes and the other talk of soul should not mislead about the point. I am not arguing for a unitary immaterial entity that inhabits the body. I am simply arguing that the self on one side of the conflict is numerically identical with the self on the other side. The unitariness of the mind is the identity of the mind in one conscious action with itself in another. That is why, as Descartes says, "For we cannot conceive of half of a mind, as we can half of any body whatever, no matter how small" (1984: 13). If any remnant of your mind is you, then it is you and not half of you. If any party to an internal conflict is you, then it is you and not just part of you.

To conclude, I am taking such cases of internal conflict, of being torn, as cases of qualitative self-differing. It is easiest to capture the conflict by writing in terms of two distinct parts of a soul or two distinct souls. However there are not two numerically distinct things in conflict. There is just one self in conflict with itself.

In such a case of qualitative self-differing, call what differ the "aspects" of the individual that self-differs. For the case to be one of *differing*, one aspect must have a quality that somehow the other aspect lacks. For it to be a case of *self-differing*, the aspects must be numerically identical with the individual that self-differs. Noun phrases that include qualifiers such as 'insofar as' and 'to the extent that' will have the special semantic role of referring to aspects. So, for example, 'Medea insofar as she loves her children' refers to one aspect of her and 'Medea insofar as she is enraged at their father' refers to another. I think that these qualifier phrases sometimes work this way in natural

language, but for now I am just stipulating how I will refer to aspects. I will call qualifiers used in noun phrases when referring to aspects, "nominal qualifiers."

It is hard to distinguish aspects from other entities. Aspects are not qualities; they *have* qualities. They are not the individuals they are aspects of, even though numerically identical to those individuals, because they lack some of the qualities the individuals have. Aspects are not mereological parts of the individual because each aspect is numerically identical with the individual it is an aspect of; aspects of the same individual are therefore numerically identical with each other. Aspects of the same individual differ qualitatively but not numerically.

Aspects are abstract particulars in somewhat the same way that tropes were meant to be. Aspects are particulars in that they are numerically identical with particular individuals. They are abstract in the sense of not having all the properties that the particular individuals they are aspects of have. For instance, a lollipop may be round and sweet, but insofar as it is round it is not sweet and insofar as it is sweet it is not round. If an individual has a property then one of its aspects has it, but not necessarily vice-versa.<sup>12</sup> This sense of "abstract" as "pared down" was emphasized by D.C. Williams (1953: 6-7). However something's tropes are numerically distinct from it and each other. Not so with aspects. For the same reason, aspects should not be confused with Casteneda's guises (1975), or Fine's qua-objects (1982), or other such attenuated entities.

The difference between two different aspects of the same individual, therefore, is a less-than-numerical distinction but more than a mere distinction of reason, as for

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<sup>12</sup> In some cases, though, what is true of an aspect is true of the individual. If an aspect of Socrates is human then Socrates is human. If an aspect of Socrates earns money then Socrates earns money. It is an interesting question which predications work this way. For some discussion see Szabo on "persistent predication" (2003: 400-1).

example Scotus's formal distinction and Suarez's modal distinction are supposed to be (Suarez 1947: 24, 27). The aspects are "two" only loosely speaking since they are not numerically distinct; strictly speaking they are one. Call the distinction between them an "aspectival" distinction.

Self-differing is not confined to the conflicts of conscious minds. I focus on them because considering such conflicts is the best way to motivate the concept of aspect. Cases of being torn give us the experiences by which we know that there are numerically identical, qualitatively differing aspects. We feel them.

#### IV. Aspects and Leibniz's Law

Saying that there is self-differing sounds contradictory. This is the powerful and enduring objection to any proposal of a less-than-numerical distinction. For instance Ockham rejects Scotus' formal distinction with these words, "But among creatures the same thing cannot be truly affirmed and truly denied of the same thing."<sup>13</sup> Likewise Bayle rejects Spinoza's monism, which he interprets as an existence monism, saying "When one can affirm of a thing . . . what one cannot affirm of another, they are distinct" (1991: 306).

However, the use of nominal qualifiers such as 'insofar as' removes explicit contradiction. I am not saying that Medea does and does not want to spare her children. Nor am I saying that Medea in one respect wants to spare her children and in no respect wants to spare her children. Either of those would be contradictory. I am saying that Medea insofar as she loves her children wants to spare them, but Medea insofar as she is

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<sup>13</sup> William of Ockham, *Ordinatio* I, distinction ii, qu. 6, in Spade 1994: 156.

enraged at their father does not want to spare them. The negation is internal, that is, has short-scope relative to the nominal qualifier and so there is no contradiction.

Even if I am not saying something explicitly contradictory, aren't I still violating Leibniz's Law--the principle that for any x and y, if they are numerically identical then all the same things are true of them? After all, I am suggesting that the nominally qualified phrases refer to aspects, where aspects qualitatively differ but are numerically identical. My response to this objection is that Leibniz's Law is silent about aspects.

Why would we think that Leibniz's Law applies to any entity whatsoever? My only guess is that we think that it captures the truth that nothing both has and lacks a property. There are no contradictions in the world.<sup>14</sup> However what is true is that nothing both has and lacks a property in the same respect at the same time, as Aristotle says in *Metaphysics* IV.3 (1941: 1005b19–20). That truth leaves open the possibility that something in one respect has a property that it in another respect lacks. I'm not yet able to think of another reason for unqualified allegiance to Leibniz's Law. Certainly Leibniz's own reason cannot be what is motivating us: that a substance has a complete concept containing all its predicates such that being the same substance is a matter of having the same complete concept (1989: sec. 8). It is apparently part of this view that things that differ have different complete concepts and so are distinct substances.<sup>15</sup> However, we nowadays do not hold this view of substances. And aspects are supposed to differ from substances anyway. So we lack a reason to believe that Leibniz's Law applies to every entity whatsoever.

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<sup>14</sup> Wiggins 1967: 4.

<sup>15</sup> Feldman points out rightly that Leibniz does not state Leibniz's Law in the sense of the indiscernibility of identicals (1970: 511). However I think it follows from his view that substances have complete concepts.

Consider the domain of quantification for Leibniz's Law. It is a principle concerning single things. The quantifier is a singular quantifier. Does it hold of pluralities, that is, what one quantifies over with a plural quantifier? Maybe, but the original principle is silent about that. I suggest that the original principle is silent about aspects as well. And the non-contradictory internal negation in claims about self-differing suggests that Leibniz's Law does not apply to aspects. Here is an account that would explain why.

Distinguish complete entities from incomplete entities, to borrow terminology from Descartes.<sup>16</sup> Complete entities are individuals that can exist on their own. Incomplete entities are dependent on complete entities. They are incomplete in having fewer properties than it takes to exist on one's own.

Leibniz's Law is certainly applicable to complete entities like individuals. The same thing can't be true and false of the same individual without contradiction. However, I am proposing that there are incomplete entities numerically identical with individuals, namely, aspects. Phrases such as 'the white globe insofar as it is white' refer to aspects, not the individuals they are numerically identical with. Besides singular reference--reference to complete entities such as individuals--there is aspectival reference--reference to aspects. The former is not sensitive to the aspectival distinction; the latter is. The domain of quantification for Leibniz's Law includes all the complete entities, but does not include the incomplete entities numerically identical to some of them.

It follows that Leibniz's Law does not preclude a qualitative difference between aspects of the same individual, nor between an individual and one of its aspects.

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<sup>16</sup> Descartes 1984: Third and Fourth replies, in *Objections and Replies*, pp. 130, 156-57; AT 185, 222.

The distinction between singular and aspectival reference allows me to be more precise when I say that there is self-differing. When I say that something differs from itself, I am elliptically referring to some of its aspects. This can be interpreted three ways, all of which are intended. First, what I mean is that some individual has numerically identical aspects that qualitatively differ. By its having them, I mean its being numerically identical with them. In this case with 'something' and 'itself' I am singularly referring to the individual and 'differ' implicates the aspects. Second, what I mean is that something in one respect qualitatively differs from itself in another respect. That is, numerically identical aspects qualitatively differ. With 'something' and 'itself' I am not singularly referring to one individual, rather I am elliptically aspectivally referring to one of its differing aspects, then another. Third, I mean that some individual differs from one of its aspects.

#### V. One's Narrow Self as an Aspect of the Universe

The theory of aspects enables a solution to the metaphysical objection that the neo-Confucian-type view of oneness is contradictory. Recall the argument:

1. The narrow self is narrow.
2. The broader self is not narrow.
3. The narrow self is identical with the broader self.
4. If two things are identical then all the same things are true of them.
5. Therefore, the narrow self is both narrow and not narrow.

Reformulated with an eye to the theory of aspects the conclusion no longer follows:

- 1'. An aspect of the universe is narrow (namely, the universe insofar as it has all the characteristics of the narrow self).

- 2'. The universe (that is, the broader self) is not narrow.
- 3'. This aspect of the universe is numerically identical with the universe.
- 4'. If two individuals are identical then all the same things are true of them.
- 5'. An aspect of the universe (namely, the universe insofar as it has all the characteristics of the narrow self) is both narrow and not narrow.

Since Leibniz's Law, 4', is silent about aspects, the contradictory conclusion, 5', does not follow.

This solution brings out a consequence of the theory. Not everything true of an aspect of an individual is true of the individual. For instance, one aspect of Medea has desire to kill her children. However, having the desire is not true of Medea as an individual, that is, of Medea unqualifiedly. It is only true of "part" of her as we say when speaking like Plato. Nor is lacking all such desire true of Medea unqualifiedly. So there can be qualitative self-differing, not just between differing aspects of an individual, but also between the individual and an aspect of it. This qualitative difference between an individual and an aspect of it is just what is needed to solve the metaphysical problem with the neo-Confucian view of oneness. The narrow self is numerically identical with the universe, though differs from it. Similarly, the narrow self is numerically identical with each other part of the universe, though differs from it.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Thus the view I am suggesting is an Existence Monism that shares the advantage with Schaffer's Priority Monism that it "does not conflict with Moorean banalities" such as the existence of our hands (2010: 66). Thus the view also enables me to claim in a way consistent with having a "sound mind" that "my right foot is literally and numerically identical with my left" without claiming that they are the same foot, contrary to Priest's contention (2014: xv). I say that hands and feet are differing, numerically identical aspects of the One. Despite our differences there is a deep similarity between my project and Priest's. We both see oneness as identity. We differ in the ways we address the seeming contradictions in such a view and defend restrictions on the substitutivity of identicals. Priest appeals to paraconsistency. I appeal to aspects.

## VI. The Self and Altruism

The universal identity view seems to have trouble accommodating altruistic concern. Apparently, such concern would either be impossible, or if possible then it would extend too widely. I will show that neither of these alternatives is a successful objection to the universal identity view.

First, the view would seem to undermine the possibility of altruism by making selfless behavior impossible (Ivanhoe, mss: 20). Any behavior that benefits anyone or anything benefits one's broader self so is not selfless. However, the view has the resources to answer the objection. The objection can be put as an argument.

1. Altruism benefits another person and not oneself.
2. Given the universal identity view, any other person is numerically identical with oneself.
3. Therefore altruism does and does not benefit oneself.

The response is to make use of the distinction between the narrow self and the broader self, and the proposal that the narrow self and others are aspects of the One.

- 1'. Altruism benefits another aspect of the One and not the narrow self.
- 2'. Given the universal identity view, any other aspect of the One is numerically identical with one's narrow self.
- 3'. Therefore altruism benefits an aspect of the One that differs from one's narrow self and does not benefit one's narrow self.

Given the theory of aspects, 3' is not a contradiction.

What drives the objection, I think, is a worry that the universal identity view encourages a kind of self-centeredness. It would seem to encourage the idea that the

universe is just more you. Such an idea would militate against any appreciation of the reality and importance of others in their own right. Given the theory of aspects, the worry is that one would regard one's narrow self as encompassing the universe and would regard everything else in the universe as aspects of one's narrow self. The worry can be assuaged by noting that it is a misunderstanding of the universal identity view. On that view one's narrow self is merely an aspect of the universe, as is anything else in the universe. The One encompasses the universe; one's narrow self is just as far from being central as it deserves.

However, if altruism is possible then altruistic concern would seem to run amok. We apparently must have the same concern for an evil tyrant and even the Ebola virus as we have for ourselves and those we ought to love.<sup>18</sup> As Cheng, quoted in Angle, says, "[T]he fault of recognizing no distinctions is that there will be impartial love for all without appropriateness (yi)" (2009: 68-9). I think the proponent of universal identity ought to appeal to a neo-Confucian-type hierarchy of importance to correct this fault. Just as Wang says we can endanger our hands to protect our eyes, we can endanger tyrants or viruses when protecting potential victims. Being concerned for all does not prevent some from being more important than others. Universal concern need not entail universal impartiality.

Opening the door to partiality might seem to re-open the door to partiality for the narrow self. But why would it? Our apparent distinctness from others was the major reason for our overweening concern with the narrow self. Absent that reason, it is hard to find another.

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<sup>18</sup> Ivanhoe raised this second objection in comments on this paper.

So the objections are answered. The universal identity view is compatible both with altruism and with appropriate partiality.

## VII. Conclusion

The neo-Confucians hold that oneself is identical with the universe and everything in it in a way compatible with a hierarchy of importance. I have presented the theory of aspects--a theory of qualitative self-differing--in order to make literal sense of this view. On this interpretation I and everyone else and everything else are aspects of the One--the universe itself.<sup>19</sup>

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