

# Body Thinking: From Chinese to Global

Kuang-Ming Wu

Philosophy Department, University of Denver, Colorado, USA  
Email: [Kmwu2002@yahoo.com](mailto:Kmwu2002@yahoo.com)

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This essay is devoted to calling global attention to body thinking neglected yet routinely practiced by us all, especially in China for millennia. This essay, *one*, responds to the feature, universality, of disembodied thinking, by *paralleling* it with Chinese body thinking, *two*, shows how *basic* body thinking is to disembodied thinking, and *three*, shows how body thinking in China elucidates bodily matters, time, contingency, and bodily death, what Western disembodied cannot handle.

**Keywords:** Body Thinking; Disembodied Thinking; Story-Thinking; Universality; Time; Contingency; Bodily Death

## Introduction

1) This essay would have been an exercise in obvious futility, were it not for the mysterious fact today that thinking is usually taken as something bodiless. We had better, then, explain how obvious body thinking is. Obviously, no human being is without a body, a unique body per a unique person, every person thinks, and so no human thinking is not “body thinking” concrete and actual.

As human life is body living integral and holistic, so human thinking is body thinking, pure and spontaneous. Our body thinks as we eat and breathe. We breathe thinking in and out in mutual dialogues with things and matters, as well as among bodily persons, as we eat and drink not in reflex but humanly aware, as we think spontaneously.

By the same token, seen from thinking, thinking is not bodily thinking, as if thinking independently exists, and just happens to have bodily aspect. Actually, however, our human thinking is not at all appended with a haphazard body. Instead, thinking body-thinks. It is body itself that thinks; thinking is a feature of the body behaving-as-body. Thinking is our body thinking, actually, in shifting time and concrete places, and in our deep feelings quite intelligent. Examples from China the body-thinking culture help explain this natural fact.

Mencius of 2500 years ago passionately mentions our “heart” inherently sensitive “unbearable to people 不忍人之心,” alarmed at a baby crawling into a well, and so much unbearably sensitive to an ox in mortal jitters, being dragged to sacrificial slaughter, as to release it. Five centuries later, Jesus was “σπλαγγνιζομαι, in viscera-agony,” at seeing persons in pain. This word is used exclusively of Jesus and by Jesus in acts of mercy.<sup>1</sup> Heartless cruelties directly incense us heartfelt, and we spontaneously wish to be the Good Samaritan helping those beaten half dead, in Buddha’s “mahakaruna, great mercy.”

Pain incites co-pain, co-pathos in com-passion. My son told me of being pricked himself as his baby was drawn blood for a test, crying in pain. I was in tears hearing the story. Now, don’t we see all such heartfelt co-pain—in China, in Buddha, in Jesus,

in my family—as body thinking com-passionately at work?

How could any one dare deny body thinking here total, reasonable, and life-moving? As we live to think, we constantly body think as we constantly breathe; we do not mind-think, not brain-think. Our whole body, our whole being, is directly involved in this body thinking as our body feels to live on. Our body lives feeling in body thinking. Body thinking is naturally heartfelt.

A reverse side of pain-co-pain complex in body thinking is imposing pain without co-pain. This pain-no-pain link shows our irrational passion, body un-thinking. Still, heartless cruelty incites our wholehearted indignation, and such incitement and indignation are body thinking at work. Our anger over Nero, Hitler, and Ch’in’s 秦始皇 First Emperor produces floods of literature to wail out our human body thinking, tragically.

Unfortunately, we cannot prove that our tendency to violence is unreason. Reason cannot prove no-reason; reason cannot tell an absence of reason. We just see that violence is irrational impatience, but of course “seeing” is part of body thinking, and so in this direct seeing, perhaps body thinking “demonstrates-proves” the existence of violence as no-reason.

In the West, Arendt<sup>2</sup> straightly considers violence in her turgid style, while China handles this strange unreason of ubiquitous violence by constantly describing it in history, in essays, and in fiction and dramas, but seldom thinks about violence as such. This situation is part of China completely dipping itself in history but never asking what history is. To think of it, though, doesn’t violence so disastrous of China’s Legalism and German Nazism stem from the preset regimen stoutly “disrobed” from people-actuality? With this notice, we leave this ugly theme of violence.

2) All such bodily situation heartfelt, thought-full, is so obvious so actual, as China honestly recognizes it to innocently and naturally practices body thinking for several millennia. The

<sup>1</sup>See Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*, NY: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1969, 1970. In pp. 63-66, Arendt asserts that violence against injustice and hypocrisy is justified. I differ, taking violence to be an irrational ineffective affect, to be replaced with flexuous tactics of a tiger tamer, as Chang Tzu’s Chapter 4 proposes. But developing this theme would take us too far afield from our context. Arendt is mentioned in Ted Honderich’s wider *Political Violence*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1976.

<sup>2</sup>Mencius 1A1, 2A6: “σπλαγγνιζομαι,” #5072 in *The Greek-English Concordance to the New Testament*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997, p. 693. Buddha’s “mahakaruna” is all over, in need of no citation.

# On Chinese Body Thinking

**RS Peters**



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## Unveiling the Energy of Verbal Art: An Mental Sojourn through **On Chinese Body Thinking**

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