

You Are the World

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World, as a common word people use in a variety of scenarios, has different meanings in several dimensions. However, people usually would not be aware of the process of selecting a particular prospective of interpreting this word. In a broad sense, the “ world ” refers to the Earth, on which planet we human beings are living and counted as an element of the world consisting of materials. If narrowing the scale down to a personal level, a spiritual world could be defined due to the unique way of integrating memories into imagination and analysis of current situation in order to navigate through the life, which tells humans from the other species of organisms (Suddendorf, 2013). Moreover, based on the interactions between individuals possessing their own spiritual worlds, each conscious person would be also establishing the third dimension, the life world. Beyond the three dimensions of the “ world ”, if viewing whichever dimension as an object, then a subjectivity is supposed to be there. The subject, truly existing in fact, is the person that every individual would be most familiar with – “ you ”. It is intended to be presented in this essay that “ you ”, the “ self ”, is the one to depend on the living foundation provided by the material dimension, construct the spiritual dimension, and finally navigate the “ self ” through the relationships with “ others ” by designing and establishing the third dimension of the “ world ”.

From the broadest point of view, the “ world ” may refer to the physical world in which people can either zoom in to figure out the material construction of every substance or zoom out to have a full picture of whatever scale that would be preferred of the planet. On this planet where 8.7 million of species are living, human beings are merely a cluster of members among them possessing the largest population (BBC News, 2011). To make sense in this material dimension, the “ self ” represents a single individual of human beings made up by cells, tissues and several physiological systems. In essence, the life process is bound to the exchange of materials between organisms and the nature to meet the basic requirements for oxygen, water and organics to maintain the normal work of the living body. In order to achieve this, the physical nature of body drives each human individual to seek for all these essential nutrients to elongate the life. To further explain, behind all the behaviour for survival and the so-called “ nature ”, there seems to be an origin for them called desire, by fulfilling which a person could satisfy the sense of winning objects by identifying the self as the subject (Russon, 2011). However, the desire for survival at this material level is shared by every living creature and seems not to be a unique characteristic of the “ self ” to be differentiated from any species other than human beings. Moreover, according to Maslow ’ s (1943) hierarchy of needs, this desire is the most basic one for human, which lies in the bottom of the pyramid of needs. In a pyramid, only if there exists the element that is easiest to achieve but serves as the foundation stone, can the upper levels be established on this solid basis. In the case discussed in this paragraph of the material world and the “ self ”, the desire for seeking materials to survive is exactly what acts as the basis and prerequisite but not the limitation for a person living in the world. Further, based upon this indispensable material level of the world, a person can develop other levels of life.

In essence, beyond the material dimension such a uniqueness which could tell the human beings from all the other species on this planet does exist on the basis of a “ subsystem of the system of the whole

organism ” called brain that draws a line between the previous physical world and a brand new one – the spiritual world (Spirkin, 1983). By mentioning the brain, another concept named consciousness, an exact and clear definition of which is still difficult to be given by anyone, would inevitably be associated with it. Generally, consciousness is supposed impossible to exist without a living brain. Nevertheless, the existence of it seems far more complicated than the pure material and biological conformation of brain. As described in Spirkin ’ s (1983) book, the mental activities are originated in and generated from material processes whereas the contents of consciousness cannot be identified with those processes. Even if it is not clear what the substances that make consciousness based on but developed beyond brain are, the differences made by consciousness can still be detected from the description that it endows an individual the capability of being aware of his “ unique thoughts, memories, feelings, sensations, and environment ” (Cherry, 2017), in which every mentioned element seems essential for the second dimension of the “ world ” . By considering the “ self ” as the subject, each element stated by Cherry to be aware of needs an object, and the uniqueness seem to be the most important characteristic of them all. As explained about the desire for objects, at this level, not only materials and non-conscious creatures, but the other individuals of human beings called the “ others ” can be included in the objects. However, the “ others ” are exactly those by desiring to know about and comparing whom with the “ self ” would uncover the uniqueness of the thoughts, memories as well as the rest of elements pointed out by Cherry of a particular individual – the “ self ” . According to the awareness of these unique elements, the “ self ” could further evaluate them by regarding his own existence in the material dimension as the basis and constructing the skeleton of the second dimension of the world. This spiritual skeleton would also play the role as a guidance for coping with any new objects he encounters in a broader scale of the “ world ” during the following period of lifetime.

Having the basis of living by being supported by materials as well as the skeleton of personal spiritual world, the “ others ” that have guided the previous process of mapping the “ world ” now seem to be assigned a more important role to play in the next dimension – the life world. In the second dimension of view, every single person who has been building up his or her spiritual world are collecting and interpreting information from the material world. Nevertheless, most of the time human beings interact with each other for exchanging ideas and stimulating the brains to do new works rather than stay in the lonely private world. Taking a particular person ’ s angle of view, to navigate the “ self ” through the life on the planet with other 7.5 billion humans living altogether (BBC News, 2011), the interactions between the “ self ” and the “ others ” would indispensably become the driving force. Right behind this kind of interactions, there still stands the desire not for materials, but for the second sort of objectives – the “ others ” . As claimed by Russon (2011), when self-consciousness is faced by another self-consciousness, there arises the desire to be recognized by the other, to have a place in other ’ s life world. In other words, while fulfilling the desire for interacting with “ others ” , the “ others ” would be reversibly considered as another “ self ” with subjectivity while the “ self ” would be assigned an “ otherness ” for being recognized by the opposing “ self ” . That is to say, in this third dimension of world, there would be a variety of independent spiritual worlds interacting and reshaping each other to further establish the new dimension of the world, in which every individual ’ s spirit could be still independent whereas what is underlying is that they are also interdependent in real life in order to continuously refine the private inner spiritual dimension of world.

As mentioned before, the “ others ” are indeed playing crucial roles throughout the process establishing the third dimension of world for each individual. However, before a single individual finally being admitted as a part of the life world of the self, a selecting process is necessary. It was stated by Bauman (1990) that once another “ subject like the self ” which means one of the “ others ” is admitted into the life-world of the “ self ”, then the recognized “ other ” become an object to be categorized into either friends or enemies according to the subjectivity of the “ self ”. Bauman also mentioned that every “ otherness ” appears with a dangerous identity called stranger, of which there is not sufficient information for evaluating whether he or she could be admitted as a friend or be ruled out as an enemy. Moreover, during the process evaluating a person as “ otherness ”, there are also inferences that would cause the possibility of leading the “ self ” to a wrong direction. For instance, as explained by Ames (2007), stereotype is a typical kind of inference which is invoked by assuming the mental states of a target associated with those of a particular category of people. Thus, it seems that the selection and evaluation of strangers are not simple processes and also hold the possibilities to be misled by the behaviour of the “ otherness ” or the unrealistic interpretation by the “ self ”. The risk suggested by Bauman and the inferences pointed out by Ames do exist, nevertheless, people still need to have courage of stepping out of the private world and seeking for friends as well as taking all possible consequences. Those persons called friends would play different roles in the life world of the “ self ”, at the same time the “ self ” would also serve as a positive role in those ones of the “ others ” according to the friendship. Therefore, the life world dimension is subject to the selection and evaluation of the “ others ” as well as and construction based on the selected persons and relationships by the “ self ”.

To sum up, the “ world ” could be interpreted in three dimensions of view, which are the material dimension, the spiritual dimension and the life-world dimension. The material world is the basis of living, upon which the “ self ” can construct the spiritual world according to his or her awareness of unique feelings, memories and sensations. However, on this planet, billions of individuals with independent second dimension construction of the “ world ” would inevitably meet and interact with each other. Based on these interactions, the “ self ” would select, evaluate and categorize the “ others ” appearing as strangers into friends or enemies. Those individuals admitted to each other ’ s life world would finally become important part of the construction of the world and establish the relation called friendship. In conclusion, in whichever dimension of the “ world ”, the “ self ” is actually who decides what the world should be like. Therefore, the “ self ”, you, are exactly the “ world ”.

Reference list