

Preface

Why am I living now and here in this way?

This question concerns the reality, history and culture in which we are living with each other, and it is a point to which I have returned many times in my philosophical life. This book is a collection of my various attempts to wander along the path of this question, mostly in the light of phenomenology.

Phenomenology has made it one of its own tasks to counter the natural sciences and has tried to characterize itself in contrast to them. While natural science clarifies objective aspects of the world and human being, phenomenology explores its subjective aspects as the structure of our experience or our “being-in-the-world”. Subjectivity, which enables experience to be realized as ascribed to a specific person, is the alpha and omega of phenomenology.

In spite of this fundamental difference, natural science and phenomenology have one thing in common: both seek universal validity. For example, biology and medicine grasp the human body as a material physical object accessible to everyone, on the contrary, phenomenology inquires about the subjective body lived by each of us. However, both concepts of body are assumed to be valid to anyone, anytime, anywhere. Universalism selects only general factors from our experiences, focuses its concern on them and forms them into a generally valid conception of the world and human being. Even phenomenology seems to restrict its investigation to something general in the human body or to claim that the human body is always everywhere the same, at least on a basic level. Such a Universalism is presupposed by the structure of “life-world” and “being-

in-the-world” which Husserl and Heidegger discovered as the fundamental dimension of human existence.

However, our body is different according to culture, period, society, gender, age, and so on, and difference and diversity are certainly discussed in phenomenology, but merely as a general principle, so that they are ignored or regarded as secondary to the result. It could rightly be said that philosophy should seek for general theory, not just specific concreteness. Nevertheless we must ask as follows:

Is what is considered and chosen as a general factor really general and without any conditions?

Isn't such a consideration or choice in itself historically and culturally determined?

Are difference and diversity merely the opposite of generality? Or, can they prove to be another essential aspect of generality, if they are examined from other perspectives?

In order to address these issues, the phenomenology of Hermann Schmitz (1928-) that I explored in my dissertation, provides us with a broader ground and a flexible system of concepts. Although Schmitz also aims at a general theory, it is based on such concrete, detailed and comprehensive considerations that it can cover the investigation of historical and cultural difference and variation. Most of my articles intend to apply and examine Schmitz's philosophy with various materials and issues, and this is an attempt to concretize the theory of “life-world” and “being-in-the-world” in terms of history and culture.

This book is divided into two parts: the first concerns medicine, illness and health (articles 1-6), while the second explores religion and community (articles 7-10).

I. Medicine, Illness and Health

In order to comprehend the traditional Asian view of body, mind, human life and world, comparing it with the modern, European one, I have worked on Chinese or Japanese medical — not philosophical — texts, especially enlightening books on practical issues like “nurturing life (yôjyô)” and “child-rearing”. Philosophy often provides those concepts that are probably profound, but abstract, often unusual and difficult to access, and also unrealistic for many people. On the contrary, medicine

has to be concrete and realistic because it involves the practice of treating illness and promoting health. Moreover, medicine in a broader sense of “attitudes toward illness and health” contains ordinary, hence common and widespread ideas, and although these are often unreflected, inconsistent and confused, but for precisely this reason, they reflect the reality of our life.

Such ordinary ideas about how people understood and experienced body, mind and circumstances are well expressed in enlightening texts on nurturing life or child-rearing. By analyzing and comparing them with contemporary works that address the same topics, we can get to know more concretely how differently (or similarly) we grasp our bodily existence in this world.

The articles 1 to 3 discuss the conception of the nurture of life in reference to the texts of old Chinese medicine, which were compiled in *Ishimpô*, the oldest medical work in Japan that was edited by Yasuyori Tamba (912-995). This is an encyclopedic work with thirty volumes, and my articles address the 27th volume on the topic of nurturing life.

In the article 4, the understanding of body and mind on the more popular, folk level and its change in modern society are treated through an investigation of specific instructions in child-rearing books of the middle and the end of the Edo-period (18th and 19th century).

My basic insight is that the old Chinese and Japanese view of the human being is not rooted in the concept of an objective body, but in the experience of subjective body we can feel. The theory of Chinese medicine is as complicated as modern Western medicine, or might be more difficult or even strange, because it is less familiar to us today. But it will be more understandable to us when we consider the contents of the instructions for nurturing life, which also seem strange today, from the perspective of my insight.

Another source for my consideration is medical anthropology, above all, the American psychiatrist and anthropologist Arthur Kleinman (1941-). Inspired by his work, I recognized the question of the multidimensional structure of knowledge and reality expressively as my theme. Examining a number of concrete and remarkable facts, Kleinman gives a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding the cultural variation of “being-in-the-world”. Article 5 addresses this issue, especially in terms of the difference, relation and connectedness of medical care and religious healing, both of which, though theoretically incompatible, form the reality which people are living in and experience differently according

to the standpoint of patient, his family, doctor, religious healer, etc.

The Chinese article 6 addresses the historical change of Japanese Kampo medicine that descended from Chinese medicine and became established in the middle of the Edo period. Kampo has been changing itself to adapt to the age by criticizing firstly Chinese and then European medicine. It shows that even in traditional medicine the understanding of body, illness and health varies according to the times.

II. Religion and Community

Schmitz defines religion as behavior derived from being affected by a divine atmosphere that strikes people with an irresistible emotional power. So in his phenomenology, religion is not primarily a thought or belief, but rather a mode of experience. This perspective has some advantages: it is easily and equally adaptable to every kind of religion, i.e. Shintoism and folk religion, too. Furthermore, religion can be grasped in its uniqueness with a direct connection to other human activities.

Articles 6 to 9 consider religion with respect to a community, and discuss religious practices such as ceremony, ritual, festival, and folklore so as to explain the formation and change of the collective consciousness, divine images in Japanese folk religion, the relation between the appearance of nature and festival performance, and so on. Article 10, which is not directly concerned with religion, explores the contemporary problem of community crisis in the globalized world, and a possible avenue of its reconstruction.

When I look back on where I have been and how I have arrived where I am now, I feel a little confused and unsure about I have done with this research. Yet, I am firmly convinced that I have asked more significant questions and learned a lot by trying to answer them.

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Shinji Kajitani