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Beyond the Body/Mind? Japanese Contemporary Thinkers on Alternative Sociologies of the Body

CHIKAKO OZAWA-DE SILVA

Western sociology has for a long time been dominated by a rationalistic concept of the human actor, whereby it is assumed that people are essentially thinking subjects. Social action in such a model is carried out by individuals behaving on the basis of rational choice and without reference to their feelings or physical qualities. Such a view is also often associated with the Cartesian assumption of the distinction between, and separation of, the mind and the body. Although there have been a few, mainly continental, philosophers (Merleau-Ponty is a conspicuous example) who have stressed the embodied nature of human subjects who interact in significant ways with space (we move, occupy physical space, bump into one another) and time (we think constantly about the past and the future, we age and have a finite lifespan), until recently few sociologists thought to incorporate this perspective directly into their work.

Beginning with Bryan Turner's *The Body and Society* (1984), however, there has been a major turn to incorporating the image of the social actor as an embodied being into social analysis. This has inspired fresh approaches to such topics as the sociology of medicine (Turner, 1987, 1992), the constitution of the self in late capitalist Western societies (Giddens, 1991), and the re-examination of aspects of popular culture as diverse as body-building, dieting, sports and dancing (Scott and Morgan, 1993).

But at the same time as these British theorists have created the field of the sociology of the body, they have, when seen from a broader comparative perspective,

done so within limitations stemming from their cultural background and philosophical heritage. For all its merits and innovations, British sociology of the body is still characterized by ethnocentrism and by the not fully recognized or addressed limitations of its Cartesian-rationalist philosophical ancestry. Here space precludes a fully developed critique of this lingering Cartesianism. Rather, my objective is to examine an altogether alternative discourse on human embodiment that has arisen in Japan. I do this with two purposes: first, to introduce some fresh ideas and some of the key examples of the related literature to an English-reading audience, and, second, to contrast the fundamentally non-Cartesian assumptions of Japanese thinkers (who have mostly emerged from an intellectual environment deeply permeated by Buddhism) with those of Western sociologies of the body. Insofar as these Western sociologies offer themselves as universal theories, it is necessary not to undercut them, but to show that in actuality they only offer one version to human embodiment and social instrumentality among others.

Western sociology of the body is a diverse and varied field as even the now slightly dated surveys of the subject indicate (Frank, 1991). It nevertheless tends to share certain common characteristics. These include the idea that the Cartesian mind/body split is indeed a problem, and as such one that must still be struggled with; the assumption of the unitary and persisting self as the basis of human personality; the view that a dialogue with biology provides the most serious non-sociological account of embodiment; and the assumption that a weak social constructivist model of the body is the only appropriate one. A close reading of the major texts in Western sociology of the body (Falk, 1994; Featherstone et al., 1991; Shilling, 1993; Synnott, 1993; Turner, 1984, 1987, 1992) indicates that the major fault line within the field is between the 'strong' and 'weak' versions of social constructivism, rather than between social constructivists and those who maintain a 'biological' perspective, or some alternative perspective that might transcend constructivism altogether. It is precisely in dialogue with these assumptions that Japanese approaches to the body reveal the most contrasts and provide some interesting alternatives, the implications of which might point to the potential restructuring of the sociology of the body as a field.

Contemporary Japanese Theories of the Body: Introducing Yuasa and Ichikawa

In contrast to these main structuring assumptions of Western sociologies of the body, I will now introduce some theories of the body offered by two contemporary Japanese philosophers, Ichikawa Hiroshi and Yuasa Yasuo, who raise similar questions to those of Turner but deal with the concept of 'lived body' from

a very different cultural background. Both are philosophers, although in Japan disciplinary boundaries are less rigidly drawn than in Britain, and both thinkers are read widely by sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, cultural theorists, and communications and media analysts, as well as by professional philosophers. Unlike most Western thinkers, Ichikawa and Yuasa draw freely from religious traditions as living forces which shape the organization and perspectives of Japanese culture. Recalling Japanese traditional ideas, they have also been instrumental in shaping contemporary cultural debate in Japan, where the question of the body has also become a live issue. Yuasa's celebrated book *The Body: Toward an Eastern Mind-Body Theory*, originally published in 1977, was edited and translated into English in 1987. In addition, several books, such as *Science and Comparative Philosophy: Introducing Yuasa Yasuo* (Shaner et al., 1989), *Attunement through the Body* (Nagatomo, 1992), and *Self as Body in Asian Theory and Practice* (Kasulis et al., 1993), have appeared introducing Yuasa's concepts of the body and body-mind. Ichikawa's prominent works *Seishin toshite no Shintai* (The Body as Spirit) (1991), originally published in 1975, and *Mi no Kôzô: Shintairon wo koete* (Structure of the Body: Overcoming the Theory of the Body) (1993) have not yet been translated into English, but some of his theories of the body have been introduced to an English-reading audience in Nagatomo's *Attunement Through the Body* (1992).

Both Yuasa's and Ichikawa's works deal with many issues relevant to the sociology of the body, which in its Western form has welcomed eclectic approaches and contrasting epistemologies. Here I will introduce some of their key concepts of the body and compare them to those of British sociologies of the body. Nagatomo, Kasulis and Ames have introduced those parts of Ichikawa and Yuasa's work which are beneficial for their philosophical projects, but there are many themes they do not take up, some of which I will treat here. The result, I hope, will be to benefit and challenge Western sociologies of the body.

Ichikawa's Theory of the Body

Ichikawa's main thesis is a bold counter to Cartesian dualism: 'the body is spirit'. He employs the phenomenological method of Husserl and is heavily influenced by the French phenomenologists Marcel, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty (Nagatomo, 1992: 3–4). Inspired by Descartes' insightful notion of the 'mind-body union', mentioned in his famous letter to Elisabeth, Ichikawa writes that the mind has two functions: one is that the mind thinks, and the other is that the mind is both active and passive toward the body, since the mind is unified with the body. In his book *Seishin toshite no Shintai* (The Body as Spirit), first published in 1975,

Ichikawa explains the concept of mind-body unity. He stresses that human beings are physical existence, and cannot exist apart from the 'lived body'. He starts with the difficulty of understanding what the body is, and how we tend to understand our body by the word 'body':

Since our bodies are so close to us, it is difficult to grasp what the body actually is. Medical approaches such as the measurement of blood pressure and heart beat are one way to get close to our bodies, but such approaches keep us from understanding our lived body. (1991: 3)

What we understand by the word 'body', he argues, is something material that carries out various physiological functions such as metabolism, and serves as a tool for the spirit to act upon reality – dominated by the spirit, yet sometimes resisting it. 'However, if we can grasp the body in the situation we live in every day, we will realize that the body is much closer to what we understand by the word "spirit"' (1991: 3). This notion makes an interesting contrast to the current tendency in the sociology of the body to treat the lived body as only 'material' or 'biological'. Ichikawa continues:

Both the concepts 'spirit' and 'body' are kinds of extremes (i.e. concepts abstracted) used as clues for understanding life. For the most part our concrete life is spent within a structure that cannot be reduced either to the spirit or the body. Hence it is wrong to see the spirit and the body as two existential principles, and to grasp reality in their intersection and separation. Rather, we should consider this unique structure as itself fundamental, and regard the spirit and the body as aspects abstracted from it. (1991: 4)

In pursuing his thesis that 'the body is spirit', Ichikawa develops a systematic approach by analysing: (1) the body as phenomena, (2) the body as structure. Ichikawa divides 'the body as phenomena' into five categories: 'the subject-body', 'the object-body', 'the body I perceive as my body perceived by another', 'the body of the other' and 'the body as *Implexe*' (the body as a potential whole, or the 'intricate body'), each of which I will deal with in turn. He divides 'the body as structure' into seven categories: 'structure as functioning', 'orientational structure', 'intentional structure', 'the mine-ness of the body', 'the self and the other', 'the formation of structure' and 'the body as spirit'. Of these, I will focus only on 'orientational structure', 'intentional structure' and 'the body as spirit'.

'The body as phenomena' is the body as it appears to everyday consciousness. Ichikawa stipulates that 'the subject-body is the body which we encounter at first' (1991: 8). Before discussing what the subject-body is, Nagatomo's explanation about the term *shutai* is important to understand Ichikawa's usage of this word in his theory:

It is important to recognize that the expression 'subject' as it is used in the above phrase is not a felicitous English rendition of the Japanese term, *shutai*. Far from carrying the sense of a

disembodied subject with its primary focus on intellect and rationality, *shutai* carries the sense of the subject being incarnate or embodied, while, nevertheless, simultaneously being an epistemological center of consciousness. (Nagatomo, 1992: 5)

Ichikawa writes of the 'subject-body':

Although it is not quite an appropriate expression, we live it from within, grasping it immediately. This body is a basis for our action. . . . It is always present in front of, or rather *with* us. In spite of this, or because of this, it in itself remains without being brought to awareness. In this sense, we should say that we do not *have* the body, but we *are* the body. (1991: 8)

The loss of this body is a loss of the concretely functioning *cogito* since the subject-body is a necessary condition for the *cogito* to function.

In the object-body, however, 'we *have* the body' (1991: 22). That is, as long as I remain the subject-body, the separation between myself and my body is only potentially present, because my body is not objectified. The object-body, however, divides myself and my body by giving my body a sense of exteriority; I am therefore both the subject that is doing the touching as well as the object that is being touched (Ichikawa, 1991: 23 in Nagatomo, 1992: 19–20). As Nagatomo writes, the fact that 'I am able to turn into an object that is capable of being touched means that I am a thing among the shaped things in the world, and therefore acquire a contingency by virtue of the fact that I *have* the body *qua* object' (1992: 20).

Ichikawa sees 'the body I perceive as my body perceived by another' as one form of grasping the body through the mediation of others (1991: 35). He uses the case of Narcissus to explain what he means: 'As long as Narcissus sees himself in the mirror of the water, he is a subject-body, but when he is seen by another Narcissus in the mirror, he is a body that perceives itself as a body perceived by another' (1991: 31). A further example might be that of a person taking a shower who suddenly realizes that someone else is watching; that person then perceives his or her own body differently, because it is being perceived by another. For Ichikawa, then, the body is not an entity, but a relational existence between the other and the self.

This leads Ichikawa to examine 'the body of the other'. Here the duality of the body becomes even more obvious, since the body of the other, which is objectified, is always expressive and has a subjective character as well. Ichikawa uses the illustration of Mona Lisa's smile: it is clearly an object, but has an expressive, subjective character which provokes a subjective reaction, be it positive or negative (1991: 38). Another illustration might be how a nervous expression tends to elicit nervousness, while laughter can trigger others to laugh.

Ichikawa's last stage in treating the body as phenomena is 'the body as *Implexe*', which he bases on Paul Valéry's thought. This can be called the 'real

body' or the 'imaginary body'; it makes no difference, since this intricate (*Implexe*) body does not appear on the level of phenomenology (1991: 47–53). For Ichikawa, all the previous bodies (the subject-body, the object-body, etc.) function as an inseparable unity, but this 'intricate' (*Implexe*) body does not fit into any of these bodies; it is rather a potential unity.

Studying 'the body as phenomena' therefore enables one to perceive the body as it appears on a conscious level, but not the subconscious body that supports it (Ichikawa, 1993: 186). To transcend this limitation, Ichikawa develops the idea of 'the body as structure'. This focuses on 'the relation of dependence between the subject-body and the object-body and shows that the subject-body is functionally regulated and controlled by the object-body' (Nagatomo, 1992: xvii–xviii).

To explain Ichikawa's 'body as structure', I will focus on the 'the orientational structure' and 'the intentional structure'. Ichikawa uses these terms to explain the two ways in which the body directs itself with regard to its environment or ambience. The orientational structure is that aspect of the body not consciously directed towards the environment, such as heartbeat, habits and learned skills. The intentional structure is that aspect of the body which consciously engages the environment, such as picking up an object or using a skill. The orientational structure can attain unity at the unconscious level as the reflection of pre-conscious functions influencing the conscious level. The orientational structure directs the 'way' of the intentional structure, while not actually determining it. On the other hand, the intentional structure attains unity at the conscious level. It controls the orientational structure, but it does not decide it in detail. So, for example, Ichikawa sees feelings or moods (*kibun*) as being at the level of the orientational structure, being biologically conditioned and unable easily to distance the object from the self. Emotions directed at something, on the other hand, rise to the level of the intentional structure (1991: 66–7). Such duality of the body creates the mind and the body in the sense that it makes the freedom of the conscious possible while not completely controlling it (1993: 100–4). Thus, what is unique and creative about Ichikawa's thought is that, unlike those who see the body and the mind as ontologically separate entities, he views mind-body separation as the gap between the function of the orientational structure and the intentional structure (1993: 104).

The last category of 'the body as structure' is 'the body as spirit'. Ichikawa again argues that the ambiguity and the disagreement of opinions in the commonly understood notions of the body and the mind are due to the kind of extremes (i.e. concepts abstracted) used as clues for understanding our life depending on our immediate interest about the structure of our lived existence as a whole (1991: 117). He explains:

When the degree of unity is high and we are emancipated from environmental control and can make the possible world our own world, we are conscious of the spirit. However, such an intentional structure unifies the orientational structure in itself. On the other hand, when the degree of unity is low and we are controlled by the environment and have less freedom, we feel the body. The ultimate situation is that of a corpse. (1991: 117)

The notion of ‘unity’ is Ichikawa’s major concern in defining the body as spirit. This unity has various levels: when we are sleeping or being sick (especially when we have a mental disorder), we experience bodily existence since the level of unity is low, while when the level of unity is high, we experience spiritual existence and feel ourselves as the centre of freedom (1991: 117). In short, actual human beings get close to or far from the spirit and the body as abstract objects. Ichikawa illustrates how what we call or believe to be spiritual things cannot exist without their physical aspects, and vice versa, and he claims that our existence itself unifies the spiritual and physical level. He concludes that the body is spirit: spirit and mind are nothing but two names given to the same reality (1991: 118). When we achieve a certain level of unity ‘the body truly becomes the human body’ (1991: 119), and the distinction between spirit and mind disappears.

In his *Mi no Kôzô: Shintairon wo koete* (Structure of the Body: Overcoming the Theory of the Body) (1993), Ichikawa develops the concept of ‘the body as a potential whole’ further by getting rid of the fixed idea that the body is enclosed within skin and by pursuing the idea of *mi* (the body as a potential whole). Ichikawa argues that the Japanese word *mi* is an equivalent of the body except that *mi* has more layers than the word ‘body’. First, *mi* expresses our lived body’s dynamics. Second, *mi* has the possibility of overcoming the mind/body dichotomy. Though superficially sounding like ‘Japanology’ – the approach to Japan which stresses Japanese uniqueness and total difference, and which frequently appeals to the Japanese language in its attempt to establish the complete ‘otherness’ and incommensurability of Japanese concepts – Ichikawa’s concern is for semantic and conceptual clarification, and in fact promotes universal applicability. He sees *mi* as a concept which expresses our actual lived body explicitly, and which, far from being restricted to the culture in which it arose, can give some insights into Western theories of the body. In contrast, Ichikawa sees the word ‘body’ as limited to a single-stratum meaning as an object or the objective body (1993: 78–84).

Ichikawa examines the 14 different meanings of the word *mi* (1993: 81–2):

1. *Mi* as fruit (e.g. a living plant)
2. *Mi* as dead flesh (e.g. a dead animal)
3. *Mi* as living flesh (e.g. a living animal)
4. *Mi* as a whole body (of a person)
5. *Mi* as the way of the body

6. *Mi* as garments on the body (e.g. all the belongings of a person)
7. *Mi* as life
8. *Mi* as the meaning of the existence of social life
9. *Mi* as self
10. *Mi* as multiple individual selves (e.g. myself, yourself, ourselves)
11. *Mi* as socialized self
12. *Mi* as social status, social position
13. *Mi* as heart
14. *Mi* as whole existence

The key here is Ichikawa's gradual outward shift from *mi* as mere flesh to *mi* as the self, the heart, and lastly whole existence.

In the sense that *mi* includes the body, mind, heart and self, it is clearly related to the Japanese concept of *ki*, often translated as 'spiritual energy', but which suggests an underlying unity to phenomena, not simply as a passive principle, but as an organizing force-field: a 'dynamic unity'. *Ki* pervades nature, and illness is understood to be caused by an imbalance of *ki* brought about by bad habits, wrong diet, failure in relationships or moral deficiencies (Lock, 1980; Ohnuki-Tierney, 1984; Picone, 1989; Yuasa, 1993). *Ki* can also be understood as 'atmosphere', 'air', 'feelings', 'intention', 'will', 'mind' and 'heart'. Ichikawa draws this connection between *ki*, 'heart' and *mi* (Ichikawa, 1993: 83), and this *ki* theory has been developed by Yuasa, as we shall see below.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the body as 'the structure of bones, flesh, etc. of a human being or animal, living or dead', indicating that people do indeed tend to treat the body as a material object, underlining the notion of the body/mind dichotomy. But why should the body only mean the single-stratum objective entity? If we can shift our epistemology and perception of the body, then what is the body or what could *be* the body? There is awareness within the sociology of the body that there are many kinds of different bodies, such as multiple bodies, spiritual bodies, corporeal bodies. Turner writes, 'The body is at once the most solid, the most elusive, illusory, concrete, metaphorical, ever present and ever distant thing – a site, an instrument, an environment, a singularity and a multiplicity' (1984: 8). Ichikawa's discussion of *mi* could possibly provide some alternative approaches and concepts to the current discourse of the sociology of the body. Ichikawa understands *mi* as 'natural existence' and 'spiritual existence' at the same time, and also as 'self existence' and 'social existence' at the same time. Therefore, *mi* expresses our actual living way explicitly (1993: 211). What Ichikawa describes with the word *mi* resembles what the sociology of the body calls our 'lived body'.

Ichikawa's discussion leads him to challenge views that limit the body only to that which is enclosed by skin, and thus he develops the concept of the 'meta-body' (1993: 211–16). He explains that the body has the potential to expand vertically and horizontally beyond the limitations of skin, giving the notion of 'meta-' to the body itself. He describes three 'meta-bodies', depending on the direction of the expansion:

1. *Super-meta-body*: The body expands itself upwards externally by the mediation of tools, signs and systems. This external expansion is accompanied by an internal expansion, creating a higher level of consciousness.
2. *Trans-meta-body*: The super-meta-body returns to itself and produces the internal and individual self, which is also a social body involved in social relations, such as production-consumption relations.
3. *Infra-meta-body*: This internal and individual self deepens self-intuition and delves into the collective unconscious, which he calls the foundation of the individual. This goes back to the pre-conscious self and the origin of the self (1993: 212–13).

Since meta-bodiness is beyond the limits of consciousness, its attainment requires an expansion of the conscious through body practices, that is, a meta-consciousness. To achieve such an expansion of the conscious, Ichikawa recommends autonomous Eastern body practices rather than Western psychoanalysis, which he sees as creating dependence on the therapists. Ichikawa's discussion of the possibility of the lived body is more advanced and persuasive than the current approaches of the sociology of the body. However, his discussion of the 'meta-body' in 1993 is rather short and possibly underdeveloped; he himself calls it a preliminary work (1993: 215). What is interesting in this discussion is his attention to the body as expanding beyond the limits of the skin.

Meditation, a practice central to both Japanese Buddhism (especially the Zen schools) and indigenous Japanese therapeutic systems such as the Morita and Naikan techniques, is one such means of freeing the true self from the bonds of the ego. This connects directly to the work of Yuasa, who suggests that self-cultivation through meditation is the chief means of enhancing the personality and training the spirit through the body (Yuasa, 1987: 85).

Ichikawa concludes that once we grasp the actual embodied nature of human beings' existence, the nature/culture dichotomy dissolves and nature can no longer be seen as outside culture, as merely a tool, or as something to be overcome or dominated. This supports Clammer's statement that 'a problem which has in practice remained at the fringes of Western cultural theory – the relationship of

nature and culture and society – returns, through the medium of Japanese social thought, to the very centre of debate’ (Clammer, 1995: 80).

Yuasa’s Concept of the Body-Mind

Compared with Ichikawa, who developed Western-originated phenomenological theories, Yuasa’s approach is more eclectic in the sense that he combines the Western and Asian philosophical traditions with the intention of radically breaking down the barriers separating the way they understand our somatic lived body. He also combines depth-psychology (especially Jungian notions), physiology, Eastern meditation methods, Eastern philosophy and religion, and Western philosophy to develop the concept of the body-scheme of the living and lived body. His somatic theories have been developed with an in-depth knowledge of the *ki*-meridian system of Chinese acupuncture and Western neurology and medicine.

Yuasa’s *The Body: Toward an Eastern Mind-Body Theory* (1987) seeks an alternative theory of the somatic body that overcomes Cartesian dualism. In keeping with Asian traditions, Yuasa begins from the starting point of seeing no clear ontological distinction between body and mind; the boundary between the two is a fluid one. His contribution, however, is to move beyond this by postulating that mind-body unity is not a natural state, but rather something to be achieved. To illustrate this, he examines body practices existing in Japanese traditional religious practice and art, such as Zen meditation. Yuasa stresses the importance of the inseparable nature of Eastern philosophy and meditation due to the fact that our bodily existence is included in the mode of being in the world. This notion of the inseparability of thinking and meditation might be a suggestion for understanding the lived body in social theories, considering the ambiguous nature of the body. In this section I wish to discuss some aspects of Yuasa’s thoughts, which if applied to Western sociology of the body might offer some key insights into the nature of the body, the mind and the body-mind relationship.

Yuasa begins his argument by noting that what is distinctive in Eastern theories of the body is ‘the oneness of body-mind’ (*shinshin ichinyo*), a phrase also used in Japanese theatrical arts, such as Nô theatre, and martial arts like Jûdô and Kendô (1987: 24). The oneness of body-mind is thus a goal or ‘an ideal for inward meditation as well as for outward activities’ (1987: 24). Yuasa is critical of Western traditional views of the body, which tend to separate analytically the mental from the somatic mode, but he acknowledges that many Western thinkers, such as Merleau-Ponty, have been aware of the inseparability of the body and the mind. Yuasa’s thought at times seems very similar to Turner’s epistemological position on the sociology of the body, such as when he writes:

... the theory of the body not only pertains to the philosophical investigation of the mind-body relationship; it also opens the way to a wider set of problems. Inquiring what the body is, or what the relationship between the mind and body is, relates to the nature of being human. (Yuasa, 1987: 25)

Both Yuasa and Turner approach the issue of the body eclectically, yet while Turner concentrates on the nature of embodiment, Yuasa seeks to understand how the inseparability of mind and body can be achieved and maintained.

In so doing, Yuasa comes across a fundamental difference in the philosophies and metaphysics of Eastern and Western intellectual traditions, leading in his eyes to a 'marked difference in the methodological foundations of the theoretical organization of Eastern and Western philosophy' (1987: 25). Making reference to *satori* (spiritual enlightenment), he explains:

Western thought, at least in the modern period, has maintained a logical difference between philosophy and the empirical sciences. Modern epistemology insists that philosophy clarifies the presuppositions, methods, and logic by which positivistic, empirical, scientific knowledge is established. Contemporary ontology also insists that philosophy is the science elucidating the modes of human conduct and that it is operative on the groundwork of scientific research. In the terminology of Heideggerian ontology, science is an 'ontical' (*ontisch*) endeavor, unreflective of the ground upon which it exists. In contrast, philosophy is an 'ontological' (*ontologisch*) endeavor which questions reflexively its own ground. . . . In contrast to this Western tradition, Eastern philosophical speculation and empirical verification must essentially be one. The wisdom of *satori* is empirically verified in the process of cultivation by means of the body-mind. Based on this experience, one then expresses enlightenment in the form of theoretical speculation. From the traditional standpoint of Eastern thought, philosophical speculation and empirical research are not two distinct dimensions. The two stand, as it were, in a cooperative relation that subtly merges them. Consequently, the Eastern philosophical theory of the body does not present any objection whatsoever to the attempt to clarify its meaning from the positivistic or empirical, scientific standpoint. (1987: 28-9)

Through a detailed historical analysis, Yuasa shows that Western metaphysics lies behind the experience of 'nature' (*physis*), while Eastern metaphysics might be better called 'metapsychics', since it aims beyond the experiences of the human 'soul' (*psyche*); alternatively, the *psyche* may be called 'inner nature' as opposed to 'outer nature' (1987: 79). He states that 'A first issue in Eastern metaphysics is how the "soul" is the "inner nature" buried in the corporeal body. The point of departure is to investigate this in light of the *inseparability* of the mind and body' (1987: 79). Thus, while the mainstream Western tradition sought the most fundamental mode of being within the physical, that is, within nature as the material universe, Eastern tradition sought it in the true character of the human being:

At the foundation of this way of thinking, cultivation is presupposed in some form. That is, they sought the basis of human nature by investigating practically (experientially) one's own body-mind as transformed in the lived experience of cultivation. After this investigation, they went on to question the significance of human 'being-in-the-world'. It is after this stage that

cosmology entered their philosophical speculations. Accordingly, even if we might call these Eastern philosophies *metaphysics*, they are really more like *metapsychics* or *metapsychophysics*, that is, the metathery of the body-mind. In contemporary terms, their mind-body theory is the fundamental science, the entrance into metaphysics. (1987: 217)

Therefore, there is 'no sharp demarcation between the metaphysical and physical dimensions. They are two mutually permeating regions in a continuum; cultivation is a process in which one's soul progresses gradually from the physical to the metaphysical dimension' (1987: 217). Bodily practices such as meditation and self-cultivation have always been considered the way toward reaching the metaphysical insight of *satori*. This explains why Yuasa considers the issue of self-cultivation as crucial in understanding the body and the relationship between the mind and the body.

Besides enabling one to achieve 'the oneness of body-mind', self-cultivation can also free the individual from the dominance or control of mental forces commonly experienced in everyday life. Yuasa draws on Japanese Esoteric Buddhist thought to develop this notion. Looking back to the Japanese Buddhist monk Kūkai, he notes:

In *satori*, there is no distinction between the body of oneself and others, between the body of a person and the Buddha. The body is changed into, as it were, a metaphysical body, and it loses all its objective characteristics found in the everyday dimension. . . . The everyday self as a being-in-the-world does not stop being a subject that grasps things in the world by objectifying them. Cultivation, however, overcomes this subjectivity so that the self becomes no longer a subject (*shutai*). When the mind thoroughly rejects the subjectivity of the self, the body in turn goes beyond its being an object. No longer a being in the everyday life-space, the body will no longer be an *object*. The distinction between one's own and others' bodies, between being a self and the being of others, completely disappears. . . . In this respect, Kūkai's philosophy may be characterized as a metaphysics or, in our new terminology, *metapsychics*, which has a theory of the body as its pivotal point. (1987: 156)

In his discussion Yuasa further compares self-cultivation to Western (Freudian) psychotherapy. Self-cultivation was not originally designed as therapy, but it can be applied in the context of clinical medicine: 'Meditation brings to the surface the complexes and emotions sunk in the unconscious region, freeing them and ultimately dissolving them by slowing the conscious activities connected with the cerebral functions. This is the same principle behind techniques like hypnosis' (1987: 207). While therapy is designed to cure an illness and guides the patient 'from an abnormal to a normal state', self-cultivation techniques attempt to go 'beyond the standards of normality in its everyday (ontic) sense' (1987: 208). Yuasa gives a critical view of the concepts of 'normality', 'abnormality' and 'healthy' by explicating Fromm and the idea of supernormality, and writes that 'cultivation means pursuing a way of life that is *more than* the average way of life' (1987: 208).

I would now like to turn to Yuasa's notions of consciousness, unconsciousness,

emotion and intuition. These, I believe, can provide insights for the sociology of the body, which has now also started talking about emotions. Yuasa suggests that consciousness is not an undifferentiated whole, but can be better understood as two levels or aspects:

The surface and base structures of the mind-body relationship are psychologically distinguished into the bright and dark consciousness; physiologically, as the functions of the cerebral and the autonomic nerves. Not completely separate from each other, the poles in each pair are connected through the emotions. Accordingly, we should be able to enter deeply into the base structure, controlling the emotional or sentimental capacity through training. (1987: 209)

In short, the bright consciousness is capable of self-conscious awareness, but it is merely the surface of the deeper and murkier 'dark consciousness'. The bright consciousness is only the tip of the huge iceberg of the dark, and in that sense the dark consciousness resembles the unconscious of the Freudian psychoanalytic view. The bright consciousness is the layer of the thought which can be 'abstractly imagined to be disembodied' (Kasulis, 1987: 4).

Considering that this book was originally published in 1977, Yuasa's insight that the modern view of humanity is based on ignorance of the role of emotion is a major innovation. Using physiological research into Yoga and Zen, he explains that psychotherapy and cultivation are both influenced by the emotions of the body-mind relation:

Since the emotions are closely related to the function of the autonomic nerves, and if the psychological aspect of cultivation is to control and overcome emotions, meditation should naturally have a physiological impact on the function of the automatic nervous system. (1987: 215)

The important function of intuition lies in 'judging *the place of one's being* by grasping holistically and synthetically the ontological relationship between the self and world' (1987: 227). Yuasa uses Jung's division of the human psychological functions into thinking, feeling, sensation and intuition: sensation and intuition are called 'irrational' (meaning that one cannot give any explanation for one's acts), while thinking and feeling are 'rational' (1987: 224). Using the example of 'primitive' or 'uncivilized' people who allegedly relied more on intuition than did 'civilized' peoples, Yuasa takes up Jung's interest in the nature of knowledge achieved through extrasensory perception. In an ordinary situation, we only need the functions of sensation, feeling and thinking, but in boundary situations with which these functions cannot deal, we must respond with intuition (1987: 226–8).

The issue of the body is definitely one such 'boundary' situation, and this may explain why the sociology of the body has been struggling with this issue for the last ten years and is still trapped in its self-created labyrinth. Partly this has been a result of the failure to develop any notion of the importance of intuition, or by trying to deal with topics such as emotion without any clear way to approach

them. Whether sociologists can listen to Jungian notions that challenge rationality, or whether they must reject such a possibility on the grounds that it is unsociological remains a moot point. What, then, is being 'sociological'? If sociology is the study of friendship, as Turner suggests, it should be able to include a notion such as intuition. But if that is admitted, the body issue could be out of the range of classical conceptions of sociology, because by necessity it involves questions that are not properly 'sociological'.

Beyond the Sociology of the Body?

In his introduction to Yuasa's *The Body*, Kasulis notes how we rely on conceptual grids for understanding, which then require reorientation to correct for 'critical blindspots':

To understand a phenomenon, we superimpose a conceptual grid by which we relate it to the known and define what must be investigated further. But the grid itself always conceals a bit of reality. When the study's focal point is not hidden by the lines of the grid, there is generally no problem, but when that obfuscation does occur, there is a critical blindspot. The more intently we look for the answer in terms of the grid, the more impossible the task becomes. In such instances the only solution is to readjust the grid, to alter the categories through which we understand the world and our experience. Such an alteration may eventually involve a full-scale reorientation in our ways of knowing. (Kasulis, 1987: 1)

This may be exactly what is required in the sociology of the body. It may be that sociologists of the body have succeeded in posing the relevant questions, yet lacked the methodological tools necessary to answer them. The writings of Yuasa and Ichikawa suggest that these difficulties may have their roots in the Western philosophical foundations of the 'conceptual grid' used. Incorporating the thoughts of non-Western thinkers may radically transform the sociology of the body and extend its boundaries in unexpected directions.

In the modern Western tradition, mind-body theory is primarily concerned with the empirically observable correlations between mental and somatic phenomena. In the Japanese tradition, however, mind-body theories focus on how a disciplined practice allows one to attain mind-body unity. In studying the mind-body problem in the Western tradition, it is appropriate to investigate the act of raising one's arm, and to inquire as to the relation between mental intention and somatic movement. In Japanese theories, however, learning to hit a baseball would be a more appropriate example. What is the relationship between the intellectual *theory* of the swing, the somatic *practice* of the swing and the integrated achievement of the skill? In this contrast, we again see the difference between concentrating on an intrinsic mind-body connection as opposed to an acquired mind-body unity. Given this difference in perspective, it is not surprising that Western mind-body

theories typically discuss the will, for example by asking whether it is free or determined, mental or somatic. In Eastern thought, on the other hand, the will is seldom analysed. Eastern mind-body theories frequently discuss how creativity is expressed within a standardized style or form, whereas Western philosophers believe such issues fall outside the domain of the mind-body problem. Yet aesthetics, seldom part of the Western approach to mind-body issues, also needs to find a place within an extended account of embodiment in its social and cultural dimensions.

Our discussion up to this point has highlighted several interesting contrasts between two culturally very different approaches to the incorporation of human embodiment into the social sciences and philosophy. This suggests a number of issues that confront any attempt to construct a comprehensive sociology of the body. These include, as we have seen, the body as potential actualized through practices of self-cultivation, the place of emotions in relation to embodiment, and the epistemological consequences of overcoming or bypassing the Western mind-body 'problem'. These issues must be taken together with a very different vocabulary for speaking about the body, Ichikawa's notion of the 'meta-body' and Yuasa's notion of cultivation being prime examples. Bringing such ideas into dialogue with contemporary sociology of the body may yield interesting results. For example, when Frank speaks of his fourth 'kind' of body as the 'communicative body' (Frank, 1991: 79), he is referring to a potential or hypothetical one, whereas practices of meditation and self-cultivation are not hypothetical, but experienced realizations of that potential.

A similar cultural difference can be seen in the agenda of Western and Japanese approaches to embodiment. In the West it is true to say that issues relating to the 'rationalization' of the body have been at the forefront – issues reflected in a preoccupation with questions such as diet, asceticism and in general the regulation, control and government of the body (Synnott, 1993: 27). In such approaches, even when the mind/body dichotomy is refined or played down, other oppositions largely alien to Japanese thought tend to appear: nature/culture, subject/object, sociology/biology, sacred/secular. The Japanese position, as reflected by our two representative writers, suggests an approach different in several vital respects: it transcends conventional social constructivism; allows the biological, the psychological and the social to be seen as a unity; and is non-dualistic, transcending the cruder forms of materialism by seeing embodiment as non-reducible to merely physical or visible phenomena.

It is for this reason that Ichikawa places the understanding of art in a provocative relationship to his work on embodiment. For Ichikawa, art is not to be seen merely as the production of artefacts, but rather as the organization of bodily

forces or energies that are manifest in various concrete dramatic, physical or material forms (Ichikawa, 1993: 186–7). He is suggesting here two important themes. The first is the integrated nature not only of mind and body, but equally of life and art, a view which itself arises from traditional Japanese aesthetics. The second is that, while Western thinkers tend to see ‘discipline’ as subjection and bodily control, which they link to asceticism, Japanese tend to see bodily practice as cultivation, seeking as its end not power, but the recognition of mind-body integration, the natural expression of which can be seen in activities such as Zen archery. Shilling (1993: 4) notes the Western tendency for the body to be seen as the site or object of choices or options rather than as a ‘given’, a perception that leads people to attempts to ‘control’ their bodies through diet and regimens of physical exercise, an attitude which reflects a contemporary non-religious asceticism. While dieting and exercise obviously occur in Japan, the cultural context in which they occur and the subjectivities associated with them are mostly expressed in idioms of art or consumption, which are themselves seen as being intimately linked, rather than of asceticism (Clammer, 1997).

Finally, then, we are forced to think about the ‘situation’ of the body in sociology. Despite the frequent usage of the term ‘the body’, sociologists are confused about what kind of body they are discussing, or indeed even what this body is. Under the influence of current Eurocentric epistemology, the sociology of the body is suffering from an unnecessary self-limitation. By defining the body as self, the sociology of the body is still struggling with the mind’s location within the body and the relationship of the mind to the body. But, increasingly, sociologists appear to be becoming aware of this, and are struggling to find a vocabulary to overcome it, lest ‘theory may admit the body but the theorist remains disembodied’ (Scott and Morgan, 1993: 12). Turner’s remark in 1984 that ‘The body is absent in theory’ (1984: 7) is certainly no longer true. But he goes on to say that:

... in writing this study of the body, I have become increasingly less sure of what the body is. The paradoxes illustrate the confusion. The body is a material organism, but also a metaphor; it is the trunk apart from needs and limbs, but is also the person. (1984: 7–8)

This situation has not fundamentally changed, and I find part of the reason for this to be sociology’s ambivalent attitude to what the Japanese thinkers cited here see as the ‘immaterial body’ beyond rationalization.

Such ideas are certainly difficult to assimilate into the vocabulary of the conventional social sciences, for as the Japanese anthropologist Nakazawa says, ‘anthropology grasps things at the level of the language of the world anthropologists live in, and focuses on taming them intellectually’ (Nakazawa, 1994: 15).

Western sociology of the body, in attempting to represent itself as universal, in fact reflects the theoretical 'language' that its practitioners speak. Turner may be correct in saying that:

... the notion of the sociology of the body may be somewhat misleading in suggesting a special area of sociological inquiry. It might be more appropriate to talk about a sociology of embodiment indicating that the question of the human body cannot be isolated to a particular field, subdiscipline or area of study. (Turner in Falk, 1994: xi-xii)

But even this is a limited view; it associates the problems of the study of embodiment as being problems of disciplinary boundaries. Here my argument has gone somewhat further to suggest the real problems exist at the level of the conceptual foundations on which those disciplines are based. If one shifts the boundaries and expands the conceptual possibilities, and indeed the possibilities that exist beyond concepts, as I believe both Ichikawa and Yuasa show can be done, the nature of the field itself changes, not necessarily to deconstruct its very real achievements, but to show other and fresh directions beyond those so far pioneered.

Note

All translations from the Japanese are mine unless cited in existing English translations. I have followed the standard convention in writing Japanese names (surname first) in all sources quoted from the Japanese.

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