

“In and Out of *Kokoro*”: Highlights from the First Series of Kyoto Kokoro Initiative Workshops

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The Kyoto Kokoro Initiative’s first symposium took place September 2015 featuring five presentations. We have since hosted four workshops, which I will attempt to summarize in relation to today's theme — “In and Out of *Kokoro*”.

The first KKI workshop featured a lecture by Dr Takashi Ikegami, a professor at the University of Tokyo Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, and expert on complex systems, including artificial life.

Titled “Artificial Minds and Biological Brains: Self-Organization, Algorithms, and Massive Data Flows”, Dr Ikegami’s talk investigated the idea of life as a self-organizing process, referring to computer simulations showing life-like phenomena emerging out of a simple set of rules, and seemingly random movements collectively forming coherent patterns. He also delved into the nature of the mind and memories, a topic addressed by his interactive art installation, the *Mind Time Machine*.

His examples seemed to suggest that life, whether real or artificial, requires an algorithm in order to emerge and develop, just as psychological transformation appears to follow a certain design in addition to the *kokoro*’s own self-organizing process.

Another important insight Dr Ikegami offered, I believe, is that if we were to create something with life-like feeling, we would need to do more than to merely imitate nature as closely as possible; we must make sure that there is a certain sense of complexity or “messiness” to whatever we aim to create.

He also suggested that life-like feelings arise not in extremes but somewhere in between in terms of size or number.

The featured speaker for the second workshop was Dr Harald Atmanspacher, a theoretical physicist at Collegium Helveticum, Switzerland, who discussed the “Status of the Mind in Dual-Aspect Monism”.

Dual-aspect monism sees mind and matter as two aspects of *unus mundus*, a psychophysically neutral whole, and explains that a perceived split between the two results from “symmetry breaking” of the underlying oneness. Dr Atmanspacher suggested that *unus mundus* is reflected in the non-causal psychophysical correlations that manifest as synchronicities when emphasized, and as dissociative phenomena when underemphasized.

It has actually been my observation that psychotherapy patients often experience synchronistic events as part of their recovery, indicating possibly that the loss and subsequent restoration of wholeness is crucial to the process of one’s inner and outer realities reconnecting with each other.

In the third workshop, Shinichi Nakazawa, a professor of anthropology and religious studies and director of Meiji University’s Institut pour la Science Sauvage, discussed kokoro from the perspective of “lemma science”, which seeks to intuitively grasp the totality of experience, instead of “logos science”, which searches for order in all phenomena.

The subject of his talk was the “realm of non-obstruction of principle and phenomena”, one of the “four realms of reality” described in the Avatamsaka Sutra. This realm seems to correspond to that of psychophysical correlations discussed in Dr Atmanspacher’s presentation, and addressed by Sigmund Freud in the late 19th century, when he as a neurophysiologist discovered a gap between perception and the preconscious, and embarked on an investigation of the mind itself using an approach he termed metapsychology. Later, French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan built on Freud’s discovery and devised his own model of the mind highlighting this gap, which may well be the realm of the kokoro, a rich source of fantasies and artistic inspirations, a fertile space that gives rise to both symptoms and solutions.

The fourth workshop featured Graduate School of Education Associate Professor Yasuhiro Tanaka, an expert on Jungian psychology, speaking on “Japanese Landscapes and the Subject: an Old and New Mode of Consciousness”.

He explained that in the West, the concept of “landscape” only emerged during the 16th century, to be followed by the establishment of the linear perspective technique as an invention of the modern self, and then by the development of multi-point perspective

amid the crisis of Western modernity. In Chinese landscape painting, meanwhile, a more intricate form of the latter system of depiction was already in use during the 10th and 11th centuries.

Whereas Western painters have traditionally highlighted the separation of the artist as the subject and the environment as the object, their Eastern counterparts seem to have placed greater emphasis on the unity and inter-beingness of the two.

Traditional Japanese landscape paintings and drawings, meanwhile, typically have a centerless composition, where none of the constituent elements stand out more than the rest. This approach recalls the way people with autism spectrum disorders often seem to interact with the world, a tendency shared by an increasing proportion of the Japanese population.

While the West has traditionally identified the mind with individual consciousness and a sense of subjectivity, *kokoro* seems to have always belonged in nature, deep in the mountains or far out at sea, both closed and open to the inside and the outside. Japanese may, in fact, have accessed the world of reality by remaining in, and going deeper into, nature, instead of emerging out of it, as seems to have been the case in the West.