Possibilities of Comparative Studies: A Critique of the Ontological Turn

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1. Cultures and Anthropologists as Cyborg

The purpose of this paper is to reconsider, from the perspective of comparison, the ontological turn that has recently been a major theory in anthropology(1).

The range of discourse covered by the term "ontological turn" is too wide to be summarized. However, Henare and her colleagues have mentioned the work of Strathern, Gell, Latour, Viveiros de Castro, and Wagner as the standard-bearer of ontological turn (Henare et al. 2007: 7). Furthermore, discussions by Descola, Ingold, and others have been referred to many times. In Japan, this theory has attracted so much attention that "*La revue de la pensée d'aujourd'hui* (*Gendai Shiso*)" ran a succession of feature articles.

Henare et al. explains that the concept's distinguishing feature is its aim to regard different cultures not as those with a difference in "worldviews" but as ontologically different "worlds" (Henare et al. 2007: 10-12). That is, according to their discourse, it is not that multiple comparable cultures exist; rather, worlds that are completely different. Anthropologists must inquire how these completely different worlds are connectable to one another, instead of stuffing multiple commensurable cultures into the traditional anthropological framework. Ishii has correctly summarized the opinion of Henare et al. as "accepting the things in the fields as they are" (Ishii 2017: 20).

The ground on which the advocates of ontological turn stand is Strathern's "*Partial Connections.*" In this book, Strathern focuses on the comparisons that the Melanesians make. According to her explanation, the Melanesians would not compare things by any bird's-eye or objective standard, but would establish a standard for comparison on each occasion, amplify the image of the thing, cross it, cut it, reverse it, and sometimes borrow some new standards, to entrust a new symbolic image to the thing. In the words of Holbraad and Pedersen, this is a way of thinking called "thing-cum-scale" to switch "vertical comparison" to "horizontal comparison" (Holbraad and Pedersen 2009). Things (such as bamboo flutes or trees in Mel-

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anesia) and their associated images would spread with the help of these comparisons; in the New Guinea highlands, similar elements can be seen occasionally in neighboring areas. To this Strathern suggests, "(t)he connections are partial to say the least. And they are partial because there is no base line for analogy in the way they are used" (Strathern 2004: 75).

This argument of "comparison" by Strathern allows the advocates of ontological turn describe how people imagine "thing-cum-scale," and create a "comparison" based on each occasion. Morita, for example, has paid attention to the comparison of farmers in Thailand. They purchased previously owned Japanese cultivators and ran them in their paddy fields. However, the blades of the cultivators became entangled in the weeds and were stuck. After some trial and error, they determined that the angle of the blades was not correct and bent them at a 90-degree angle. As a result, the cultivators re-started without a hitch.

Morita pointed out that the farmers inspected the cultivators, evoking the far Japanese surroundings (such as rice fields, soil, a quantity of weeds, or the rotation speed of rotaries) to horizontally compare Thailand and Japan.

> Rotary cultivators in Thailand is another example of the "thing-cum-scale" they discuss. In this case, the comparison was embedded in the things which involved the relation and their transference. This virtual environment implanted in the machine will be imagined in combination with the actual environment during the trouble of test operations. This imaginary combination is a visible indication of a trouble and gets clarified through the blades entangled by weeds which symbolizes the difference of two environments. Here the rotary cultivators act as a window through which they see Japanese environment far from the garage in Thailand, by revealing their own background. And the two environments of Thailand and Japan become visualized by the things" exposure of relationship which constitute the things themselves and by the revelation of virtual perspective. The comparison here is embedded in the things, not in the viewpoints of the agents, anthropologists. (Morita 2011: 113-114)

Through the horizontal comparison made by these people, the cultures become partially connected. Strathern referred to these multiple cultures that are partially connected as "cyborg," quoting Haraway's feminism theory.

> I dwelt on the cyborg insofar as that humanoid figure confronts the sense of proportion. The cyborg observes no scale: it is neither singular nor plural, neither one nor many, a circuit of connections that joins parts that cannot be compare insofar as they are not isomorphic with one another. It cannot be approached holistically or atomistically, as an entity or as a multiplication of entities. It replicates an interesting com-

plexity. (Strathern 2004: 54)

What is important here is that Strathern has proposed that anthropologists be "cyborgs." She orders this reform, so that anthropologists become beings with multiple perspectives within (Strathern 2004: 45-48). The purpose of "*Partial Connections*" might be rooted in this point, and not only in trying to clarify the Melanesians' unlimited way of thinking. She compares and explores how anthropologists and others would be accessible to one another by becoming partially connected, and she tries to break a unit of consolidated "culture" into pieces; this was her answer to Orientalism. Additionally, her discourse surely suggests a certain path for tackling the important subject of how anthropologists commit to other they meet in the field.

However, "how anthropologists commit to the fields" and "how anthropologists grasp different cultures and describe them" are actually issues of different levels. That is, she has generalized a matter of personal commitment uncritically or excessively.

In order to tackle the matter of commitment, it is essential to take the diversity of anthropologists into consideration. It relies heavily on the anthropologist' capability and characteristics: whether the anthropologists are males or females, if they can speak the local language or not, if they are alone or with their families when in the field, whether their fieldwork is being conducted in their home culture or different culture, and the like. Different characteristics will lead to varying methodologies regarding interaction in the field: one anthropologist may collect different data in my field from another. These are the subjects that we have argued many times since Orientalism. Certainly, as Strathern has stated, the different culture an anthropologist describes is partial, limited, and deficient. However, the proposition she made that anthropologists act as cyborgs indicates resignation or a "so-what" attitude toward objectivity or wholeness.

With regard to this point, she depends largely on Tyler's concept of "ethnography as evocation." For Tyler, "evocation" is the antonym for "representation." "Ethnography works, Tyler suggests, by evoking in the reader responses that cannot be commensurate with the writer's — there is no "object" that they both grasp, for the writer cannot "represent" another society or culture; rather s/he provides the reader with a connection to it. Ethnography makes available what can be conceived but not presented. The connection is perceptible as the reader's realization of an experience (what the ethnographer has evoked for him or her)" (Strathern 2004: 7).

Since the dawn of postmodern anthropology, as represented by Tyler and Clifford, master narratives have not been required. Ethnography is now written as personal business, and is not meant to deepen anthropological theories. Ontological turn therefore lies as an extension of this. In order to "evoke" readers, different cultures should probably be more different from Western cultures than they are alike. This is why Henare et al. describe the ontological ap-

proach as "radical essentialist" (Henare et al. 2007: 2). Apart from the horizontal comparison made by the people, is it really acceptable that the comparison by anthropologists be a tool to evoke readers?

2. (Im) possibility of Comparison

Surely it is important how anthropologists commit to the field, as pointed out by Strathern and the advocates of ontological turn. However, when dyadic interaction is paid too much attention, a vertical comparative study becomes impossible. Actually, the advocates of ontological turn seem to be abandoning comparative studies on purpose (Henare et al. 2007: 10-12).

When thinking of this point, what Hamamoto has pointed out is highly suggestive.

> The point lies within the structural outline of comparison. Comparing something is not to indicate it just as a different being. The difference found there is to be indicated on a tacitly consented common scale to measure the difference. Dogs and coffee cups are different, but the difference does not dispose us to discuss it. This is because their difference is beyond comparison. In many cases, to describe "a difference" needs the framework of "contrast." The targets of comparison require the difference suitable to be compared of all things, like dogs and cats for example. It is of some significance to declare dogs and cats are the polar opposites, while it gets nonsense to compare dogs and coffee cups, though these two have much larger difference. The manner of comparison should be the one that needs an assumption the difference holds a certain homogeneity. (Hamamoto 2001: 207)

When describing different cultures, the degree of difference between them is left to anthropologists to determine; for example, "dogs and cats" or "dogs and coffee cups." It is true that traditional anthropology has assumed the cultures around the world to be dogs and cats. Since the 1950s, comparative studies and kinship studies using HRAF have become possible because of the anthropological cognition of cultures as a unit of components that are different but comparable. At the same time, however, singularities of individual cultures have been omitted and distorted (Holy (ed.) 1987). It is suggestive that Needham, who has always lead comparative studies, criticized by stating: "There really is no such thing as an Omaha terminology, except that of the Omaha themselves, and it leads only to confusion and wrong conclusions to suppose that there is" (Needham 1971: 15). Then, after the 1970s, cross cultural studies — or "holocultural studies" as Fox and Gingrich described (Fox and Gingrich 2002) — waned.

Under these circumstances, Leach was, for example, one of those who had groped for comparative studies. He, as well as Needham, insisted on the impossibility of holocultural comparative studies, but at the same time mentioned "generalization as topology," as their alternative.

> If I have a piece of rubber sheet and draw a series of lines on it to symbolize the functional interconnections of some set of social phenomena and I then start stretching the rubber sheet, I can change the manifest shape of my original geometrical figure out of all recognition and yet clearly there is a sense in which it is the same figure all the time. The constancy of pattern is not manifest as an objective empirical fact it is there as mathematical generalization. By analogy, generalized structural patterns in anthropology are not restricted to societies of any one manifest structural type. (Leach 1961: 7)

Leach thought that by recognizing cultural differences as "assemblage of variables," more objective generalizations could be achieved. Indeed no longer employing "value-loaded terms" would spare the confusion that may result from the definition of such terms. Additionally, the generalization of multiple cultures highlights certain characteristics, but does not aim at discrete typology.

The process of generalization from the perspective of comparison, without the intention of typology, can occasionally be found. For example, Shimizu proposed a triangle of descent form, with patrilineal and matrilineal (as opposed to unilineal and cognatic), plus bilineal as the three poles (Shimizu 1985). In addition, Yoshioka argued about the diversity of affiliation, with poles of "lineality" and "laterality" (Yoshioka 1989). Both of these belong to the category of comparative study, but do not aim at typology. They indicate some "polars" in cultural diversity and try to allocate cultures among them.

Still, these studies may hold holocultural characteristics. They share some characteristics with the HRAF way of thinking based on the premise that designing "poles" or "formulae" adequately could mean the success of allocating all the cultures in the world among them. In other words, it is because every culture has common universal characteristics that allocating, or mapping can be possible.

However, does every culture really have common universal characteristics? Nagashima declared that the universality which anthropologists had assumed is actually a "prejudice."

> Needham had cited Wittgenstein to point out that prejudices result not only from the usage of everyday vocabulary as academic terms but from the concepts of "academic studies" or of "science" themselves. It is the prejudice derived from "excessive inclination to universalization." The idea of Gough or Nakane that comparative studies require "definition" is an example. It is the prejudice derived from doctrinaire scientism that behind the "seeming" diversity of the phenomena expressed by some "term" (such as "marriage" or "family" or anything else) "must be" a shared "essence""

> (Nagashima 1985: 156). And he also said that "when the preconception that the existence of the word "kinship" must mean some "essence" in kinship was abandoned, then it would lead to the easy and better understanding of societies. (Nagashima 1974: 46)

On the other hand, Strathern stated that "(t)he cyborg supposes what it could be like to make connections without assumptions of comparability" (Strathern 2004: 38). This is exactly the being that connect dogs and coffee cups. Anthropologists as cyborgs can connect the incomparable; it is possible because they do not accept the comparability, or anthropological concepts.

Ontologists, too, object to the easy application of existing anthropological terms or concepts to the local realities. They also insist that there is no universality that is common to every culture. For example, Holbraad cited an example of powder that Cuban diviners use. Cuban diviners explain that divinatory power dwells within this powder known as *aché*. Some anthropologists may analyze this example, using a concept of *mana* and relying on the theory of Lévi-Strauss, Mauss, or Marett; they will state that a power from *mana* is added to the powder. However, what informants explain is that the powder itself is the power. There is no way to separate the two from each other, which exposes the limitation of anthropological concepts (Holbraad 2007).

As we have seen, comparative studies have been denied not only by modern anthropology but also by postmodern anthropology; this leaves two supposable ways for the future of comparative studies. One way is to abandon (vertical) comparative studies, as the advocates of ontological turn insist. What readers expect is "evocation" through ethnography described by anthropologists who are cyborgs partially connected to the field. The second way is to keep groping for a new modality of comparative studies. Here, we would like to proceed with the latter.

3. Polythetic Classification and Polythetic Typology

Nagashima implicated the "polythetic classification" proposed by Needham when criticizing the comparative studies mentioned above, though he did not make a direct reference (cf. Nagashima 1982, 1985).

Polythetic classification and its partner concept, monothetic classification, were introduced to anthropology by Needham (Needham 1975), with reference to "family resemblance" by Wittgenstein and the discussion on numerical taxonomy by Sokal and Sneath (Sneath and Sokal 1973). Monothetic classification is a way to classify the subjects with the necessary and sufficient condition that all characteristics are shared by all of the individuals so that every member is substitutable. On the contrary, polythetic does not necessarily require any charac-

teristics or conditions to be shared by all of the individuals, though many of them share some common attributes (Nagashima 1982; Yoshioka 2010; Fukui 2016: 30). In the case of Figure 1, individuals e and *f*, both of which have characters 5 and 6, are classified into the same group (monothetic); individuals *a* through *d* may be classified into another group by their similarities, though their characteristics vary and they do not have a necessary and sufficient condition (polythetic).

characters	individuals					
	a	b	c	d	e	f
1	+	−	+	+	−	−
2	+	+	+	−	−	−
3	+	+	−	+	−	−
4	−	+	+	+	−	−
5	−	+	−	−	+	+
6	−	−	+	−	+	+

Figure 1　Polythetic and Monothetic Classification (Sneath and Sokal 1973: 22)

Wittgenstein, who Needham and Sokal relied on, had explained "family resemblance" using an example of "games."

> Consider for example the proceedings that we call "games." I mean board-games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic games, and so on. What is common to them all? — Don't say: "There *must* be something common, or they would not be called "games"" — but *look and see* whether there is anything common to all. — For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to *all*, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that. (Wittgenstein 1953: 31, emphasis in original)

Needham thought that the terminological inexactitude in anthropology was the obstructive factor for comparative studies. He criticized that it was because of the polythetic construction of the concepts for "descent," "patrilineal," and even "kinship" itself that comparative studies did not go well (Needham 1971, 1975). Kinship studies had been confused, as Leach denounced as "butterfly collecting," and the critiques by Leach, Needham and Schneider suggested the impossibility of comparative studies in anthropology (Leach 1961; Needham 1971; Schneider 1984).

Needham has left significant uncertainties about how to reconstruct the kinship studies after he criticized the comparative studies using the theory of polythetic. He insisted on reorganizing anthropological terms from the polythetic perspective and promoting comparative studies (Needham 1975: 358), but did not initiate any new comparative study of kinship. He may have

thought that academic terms should be constructed in a monothetic way in the first place. Furthermore, comparative studies peaked around these days but have become less common, and the idea of polythetic classification that Needham introduced has not had a major impact on anthropology in general.

What is important here is that Needham changed his position. That is, he had initially emphasized that "anthropological terms were organized in a polythetic way," but later began to stress that "the reality which anthropology deals with is polythetic" (cf. Yoshioka 2010: 86). These are not inconsistent with each other. When the diversity of the cultures around the world is squeezed into academic terms, it would necessarily become polythetic; however, aside from the issue of terminology, it could be the tipping point where the viewpoint shift to the practices of the people.

It was Yoshioka who recognized this tipping point. He analyzed the possessive markers (1998), zootaxy (2005), and the concepts of their identity and ethnicity (2016: 207-234), the three of which people use in North Raga (Pentecost Island), Vanuatu; through these analyses he also revealed how they were constructed in a polythetic way. However, it was not only polythetic. To him, it would be positioned as antithetical to the monothetic, scientific, and objective "modern thinking." It could be said that the "polythetic classification" which had originally been coined as an academic term now shifted to a "polythetic way of thinking" of the people. Yoshioka's ability to revalue Needham's concept is remarkable. However, when the polythetic ideas came to be "the principle of obscure knowledge" of the people, the perspective of "cross cultural comparison" which Needham had originally intended was lost.

Is it possible to escape from this holocultural way of thinking that seeks universalization and proceed to comparative studies which express cultural diversity? I doubt if there is any good example in anthropology, but a typology proposed by Esping-Andersen, a social welfare scholar, known as "welfare-state regimes," is quite thought-provoking (Esping-Andersen 1990). This is a well-known theory in social welfare studies, the context of which is as follows: in the late 1980s, when the Cold-War structure started collapsing, Western countries were all insisting that they were "welfare-states," the situations of which were diverse. Social welfare studies faced an urgent need to grasp the diversifying situation of welfare-states. Then Esping-Andersen focused not on how the states produced and supplied welfare services but how the services were produced and allocated among the states, markets, and families. When analyzing it, he adopted the indexes of "de-commodification" and "stratification." De-commodification is an index that indicates how an individual can keep a certain quality of life without depending on markets or economy; to have a high index of de-commodification means to have a certain income guaranteed by systems such as social insurance, even if they are unable to work due to old age, unhealthiness, disability, unemployment and the like. Stratification is an index of whether the disparity would be stratified as a result of welfare services granted ac-

cording to occupations or classes.

Base on these concepts, Esping-Andersen has abstracted three regimes: 1) liberal regime, 2) socialist (social democratic) regime, and 3) conservative regime. The liberal regime includes Anglo-Saxon countries such as America and Canada. The socialist regime includes the Nordic countries such as Sweden and Denmark. The conservative regime includes countries on the Eurasian Continent such as Germany and France. As shown in Table 1 below, as the characteristics of the liberal regime reveal, markets play an important role and the welfare system is supported by the self-help concept. In the social regime, on the contrary, states play larger roles (public-help) to realize high welfare rates, but with high burden rates on the people. Lastly, in the conservative regime, families and occupations play large roles. Esping-Andersen classified countries into one of these three regimes according to their characteristics.

Regime (Countries)	Major Players	Redistribution of Incomes	Recipients of Benefit	Cooperation with Job Assistance
Liberal (Anglo-Saxon)	Markets	Littele (Small Government)	Low-Income (Selective)	Close Workfare (Require Being Hired)
Socialist (Nordic)	States	Large (Big Government)	Working Generation, Senior Citizen (Universal)	Moderate Activation (Enhance Work Opportunities)
Conservative (European)	Families, Occupations	Medium to Large	Senior Citizen	Moderate to Close (Intesifying)

Table 1 The Characteristics of Welfare Regimes by Esping-Andersen (source: created by author and based on (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2012: 84))

This welfare-state regime theory received much criticism soon after its release due to its powerful influence[(2)]. Take his consideration of Japan for example; in the preface for the Japanese version Esping-Andersen described Japan's status quo as "much like a mixture of conservative "Bismarckian" regime and liberal residualism" (Esping-Andersen 2001: viii). In fact, the present system in Japan has an inclination toward conservatism, close to that in Germany in terms of stratification, and a close relation to the liberal regime when considering the indexes of de-commodification; furthermore, there are similar characteristics to the socialist regime regarding the employment system. This indicates that Japan is ambiguous enough to be classified into any of these three regimes, even though Esping-Andersen has clear gauges, based on which standard is examined. As is known well, the United Kingdom, which is classified as a "liberal regime," has "National Health Service" established in 1848 when they advocated "from the cradle to the grave," and the people have access to medical services with no charge in principle. Therefore, the UK has a similar characteristic with Nordic countries.

There are other countries that do not settle completely in one regime. It has been pointed out that Switzerland, Belgium, France, and the Netherlands are also not able to be classified

distinctively into any one regime, which Esping-Andersen himself agreed on (cf. Osawa 2013). In fact, countries other than America, Sweden and Germany — which are ranked as ""the ideal typical" representative" of the three regimes (Esping-Andersen 1990: 222) — cannot be classified unambiguously once their welfare systems are closely examined.

Esping-Andersen himself presented this regime as a monothetic typology; however, these classifications are exactly polythetic. Observing precisely each one of the regimes reveals that countries with no shared characteristics have been classified into the same categories through similarity. It is logical that countries whose establishing processes of welfare systems, cultural backgrounds, and forms of governments are different could not be substituted for one another. Still it is possible to categorize them to some extent by ambiguous similarities. Countries in each category are different but homogeneous, and categories are disjunctive and overlapping at the same time.

What is interesting here is that Esping-Andersen has considered only several Western countries in this typology. In Asia, only Japan and not South Korea, China, Singapore, nor India was subject to the analysis, which means that he did not assume that these countries employed "welfare capitalism." In terms of comparative studies, it would be readily understood that a more profound theory could be constructed with these developing countries included. However, the fact that there are countries that are not included could suggest the diversity of nations and welfare systems. Integrating a category (regime) polythetically is one way to guarantee diversity, while admitting "there are things this classification system cannot capture" would be more eloquent of the diversity.

Based on Hamamoto's quotation mentioned above, it is to have only dogs and cats as objects, which share certain similarities or common characteristics, and leave out the coffee cups, rather than invent a "nonsense" structure to comparatively examine the three. By doing so, it could be possible to grasp the limitation of the "scale" of comparison and imagine the diversity that cannot be squeezed into the scale. Ontology guides "evocation" by comparing dogs and coffee cups. However, that is to admit the arbitrary scale of anthropologists, which may lead to a no-holds-barred discourse. On the other hand, typology by Esping-Andersen can fix the scale and exactly classify the comparable and the incomparable to prevent anarchic discourse.

The comparative studies of welfare states have progressed dramatically with Esping-Andersen's regime theory as the beginning. The concept of "welfare diamond" has arisen by adding "community" to "the welfare triangle" of states, markets, and families. And with regard to Japan, by considering its unfitness into any one of the regimes, the characteristics of the "Japanese style of welfare state" were revealed. These were made possible by Esping-Andersen's comparative study. It is easy to dismiss his theory as an incomplete typology with many flaws. However, we should notice that is a criticism only possible from the monothetic perspective. Nagashima stated that "forms can be constructed arbitrarily as long as they have possibility

to bring revelations on comparative study" (Nagashima 1974: 53). What matters is not to build a perfect structure for comparison but to let something new loom into view by comparison, and furthermore, to inquire the meaning of the things outside the structure.

The typology by Esping-Andersen is just an example, and I am not recommending only these typologies, but at the same time there is no need to flinch from moving on with comparative studies. It is of course important to collect data and conduct "thick description" by getting involved in individual societies. However, it is impossible to appreciate the meaning of the data without the perspective of comparison. Many anthropologists (are supposed to) remain in "a different culture" for a long time in order to professionals who know everything out there. However, the professionalism of anthropologists lies not in the close familiarity with the culture, but in the ability to understand the differences with other cultures.

4. Anthropologists' Positions

The polythetic classification of "connecting cultures by similarities" is similar in fact with the cyborg discourse by Strathern, which I have previously pointed out (Fukui 2016). However, these two have a crucial difference: the position of researcher.

With regard to this point, Furuya, who shows a positive attitude towards ontology, has made an interesting argument. He has reflected his own field experiences about the possession by spirits in the Amazon, Brazil.

> The believers (of the possession by spirits) explained to me that "the spirits that take possession exist in our world, though we cannot see them." They also said that "the trained eyes could see the spirits about to take possession." There existed firmly a world I could not see because of the lack of my physical ability. Anthropologists have coped with the things like this by reporting that "Afro-Amazonian devotees *believe* in the existence of spirits that take possession of people." These statements imply that "I, a researcher, of course do not agree with these unscientific opinions." Otherwise, I would be considered as "gone native" and judged as a failure in making an appropriate anthropologist. However, the seemingly appropriate common sense that "the spirits that take possession of people are only unscientific and unreal fantasy" may be irrelevant. Rather, things that cannot be seen but exist, not limited to the spirits, might be pressing us to rethink our understanding of the material world. (Furuya 2017: 6, emphasis in original)

For Furuya, it is indispensable to stand exactly where the indigenous people stand and see what they see, in order to grasp their religion. Are his fieldworks failures, which fail to see the spirits because of the lack of his physical ability? Psychiatrists, for example, would treat

patients who complain of visual/auditory hallucination even though they cannot share the symptoms with their patients on the premise that the symptoms do exist. Psychiatrists would never say, "we don't agree with the unscientific insistence of hallucination, but patients *believe* it." Though it is not that they "lack in physical ability," they can still treat patients (because they cannot experience hallucinations). As in this case, it would be possible that anthropologists describe the spirits even though they cannot see them. The slogan anthropologists often use, "from the native's point of view" does not mean for anthropologists to be identified with natives.

In other words, one of the greatest features of ontology is that it does not assume "the outside of culture." Strathern said, "(p)artial connections require images other than those taxonomies or configurations that compel one to look for overarching principles or for core or central features. Clearly, such imagery is not going to take the form of genealogy or map" (Strathern 2004: xx).

On the other hand, Shimizu assumed the position of "fundamental nature," upon which anthropologists should stand when considering comparative studies of kinship. It is a scientific, objective, and neutral position. Of course, it has been criticized as imaginary, or a Western modern fantasy (MacCormack and Strathern(eds.)1980). Strathern herself severely criticized the position where anthropologists had stood — wherefrom they can take a broad view of the situation.

> Cross-cultural comparison then proceeded as a higher order integration — either connections between societies or between independent variables across many societies — and on the basis of communication with other scholars, persons otherwise alike except in being able to share the uniqueness of their own experiences. Other anthropologists could see the connections, but not claim that experience; each was presumed to speak, however, on the authority of their own one-to-one relationships. (Strathern 2004: 9-10)

What is important to her is the experience of fieldwork, which is unsubstitutable for anything else.

Of course Shimizu himself stated that the position of "fundamental nature" was "just a natural phenomenon, and hence, just a cultural outcome in the same level with peoples' cultural self-portraits which anthropology has treated as an object" (Shimizu 1989: 23). However, he supports the position[(3)].

> Still I would like to give fundamental nature a privileged position for its power to relativize natural images in a culture. At least to have this fundamental nature as a

> postulate for comparison would equip anthropologists to recognize and point out the distortion, emphasis, and choice which each society causes when describing nature. The objective recognition found only when broken through the restriction of cultural subjectivity by individual societies should not be identified with the recognition limited within subjective extent. (Shimizu 1989: 23)

These debates on the position of anthropologists peaked in the Orientalism of the 1990s. In those days, anthropologists tried to bridge the gap between "Self" and "Others" to overcome the critique of Orientalism. In the course of the debate, the way for anthropologists to become "adjacent" to the subalterns (Sekine 1997: 312) or "the way to be subalterns themselves" (Oda 1998: 466) had been sought. But Yoshioka severely criticized these arguments. "How can those who are trying to describe turn themselves into subalterns? [...] In order to stand the same ground as the unmarked people who are to be analyzed, it is the only way for analysts to stop being analysts who have scientific opinions and be nobody in the same living environments as them. And that is impossible to conduct. [...] This (Oda's opinion) is, in other words, suggesting that describers should do bricolage to be subalterns who do bricolage. However, Levi-Strauses needed structural analysis to decode bricolage. Who would decode the bricolage of describers themselves subalterns have described?" (Yoshioka 2005: 176-177)

The same thing is applied here. That is, it is not essentially required for anthropologists to have "partial connections" with people in order to analyze their "partial connections." Of course, as Strathern (or the postmodern anthropologists before her) pointed out, it is impossible for anthropologists to grasp the whole society. Perspectives of anthropologists are extremely restrictive and cannot make "the whole" no matter how many pieces of them are collected. Furthermore, there is no "outside" for these perspectives. However, when Needham or Yoshioka discussed the concept of polythetic, when Levi-Strauses proposed bricolage, or when Esping-Andersen constructed a welfare regime, they took their grounds on the outside of individual societies. They needed to stand outside of individual societies in order to grasp what tend to slip away from monothetic and modern frameworks. It is not to be obtained by anthropologists being cyborgs and being connected partially with the fields.

Now, it has become easy to keep up with the trend of ontological turn. However, we have to pay attention to what we have to give up when we turn. The price we have to pay may be bigger than we expect. We must grope again for comparative studies and a position anthropologists stand.

5. Conclusion

In the arguments built up by Strathern and other ontologists, the contrast of "We/They" appears many times. Osugi, who wrote the notes on the Japanese edition of "*Partial Connections,*" commented on her work as follows: "Strathern, who stated after Haraway that "Objectivity, then, she argues turn out to be about particular and specific embodiments, not transcendence,"[(4)] looks over Melanesia based on the West, and at the same time looks back over the West based on Melanesia. [...] To Strathern, the West (Melanesia) is a figure which is drawn on Melanesia (the West) as a ground, and these two make two and, at the same time, one" (Osugi 2015: 341).

To ontology, "the difference" that multiple cultures hold is, after all, only "the difference" from the Western societies. Therefore, the critique of Vigh and Sausdal that "the Euro-American" is the essential reference point in ontology has hit the mark (Vigh and Sausdal 2014: 64-66). If "such ontology [...] aims to remain *as it is as an essential otherness,*" as Ishii has pointed out (Ishii 2017: 14, emphasis added), then it cannot escape the charge of intellectual negligence.

The ontology which utilizes different cultures as "tools" to measure how different from "the West" should be called Orientalism, or distorted ethnocentrism. On this point, Maniglier mentioned, "(i)t is not a question of accepting that whatever someone or other declares exists does, indeed, exist, but of better understanding what actually exists in *our* world by *contrast* with what exists in others" (Maniglier 2014: 38, emphasis in original). Different cultures are nothing less than mirror images of own cultures here. Although Kubo recognized this statement as "one of the most sophisticated sentence at the present time as a summary of ontological turn" (Kubo 2016: 195), I cannot help feeling that this is one of the sentences that most clearly shows the aspect of ontology being criticized.

"While the social classification and the norm are the frameworks offered by actors, or the people living in individual societies, the translation to sort out them and the classification to understand the observed activities in order are the domain of observers. Here arises a mutually complementary relationship of indigenous concepts and analytical concepts" (Nagashima 1974: 48). This is a sentence Nagashima has written in a textbook of anthropology. Herein lies the essence of anthropological activities. In short, to use a hackneyed phrase, it is a back and forth activity between etic and emic. Have we anthropologists not continued moving back and forth between "the inside" and "the outside" of individual societies in order to obtain both of these perspectives ?

In postmodern anthropology, the master narrative has been declared as holding no value. However, it must be possible to re-imagine "the fundamental nature" as a fiction, not as a real-

ity. It is often said that the work of anthropologists is to "translate cultures." Then, into what are we anthropologists expected to translate the local or vernacular things we observe in the field? Into something academic? Or into another vernacular form? The problem of comparison is always inseparably linked to the issue of the position of anthropologists.

In ontological debates, some anthropologists abandon the perspective of comparison and discuss the otherness of the other arbitrarily. As we have seen in this paper, it brings us back to the problem of positions that anthropologists stand. It seems that the ghost of Orientalism will not vanish easily. Does anthropology have no choice but to confront this hard-to-handle ghost to the bitter end.

Footnotes

(1) This paper is based on a lecture presented at Kobe Anthropological Seminar held on May 2017. I would like to thank Dr. Akinori Hamada (Kansai University), Dr. Shinichi Fujii (National Museum of Ethnology) and Dr. Shou Morishita (Osaka University) for useful comments.

(2) For example, feminism criticized this regime as lacking the relation between female and family. There are also criticism that this regime is static and does not resonate well with national changes, and an opinion that the analysis of the influence of non-governmental organizations is not accurate. For details, please refer to the commentary for Japanese version by Miyamoto (Miyamoto 2001).

(3) In the 1960s and 1970s when comparative studies of kinship had reached a peak, a series of discussions on where to put the base of kinship, or what kinship is at all, had been held. Gellner and Barnes sought its base in "nature." They tried to define kinship in the universality of human beings, or biological objectivity, such as reproduction, pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding, and the like (Gellner 1957, 1960, 1963; Barnes 1961).

On the other hand, Needham was directly opposed to the assertions of Gellner and Barnes. For Needham, kinship is thoroughly cultural or social. It appears in anthropological discourses, not in individual societies (Needham 1960: 97, 1971: 4). Therefore, the arguments over "the essence of kinship" by both parties were parallel with each other basically, but shared the standpoint of "the outside of individual societies," or "fundamental nature" to use Shimizu's words, when considering the essence of kinship.

(4) (Strathern 2004: 32) in original text.

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