

Body-Mind Unity as a Dominant Design Philosophy of Traditional Japanese Tea-House

KO, Young-lan

Hansung University, Division of Media Design Contents

ylko@hansung.ac.kr

Abstract: Despite a current fascination with East Asian iconography such as Zen Style among contemporary designers, there is a lack of genuine cross-cultural discourse that could enable us to share essential design experiences. To bring the discussion a deeper level, traditional Japanese tea-house in its design philosophy of body-mind interplay is explored. Tea-house is a superb manifestation to reveal a holistic understanding of the world. Nondualistic realization is generally associated with the dominant tendency of traditional East Asian philosophy, namely the view that the self and environment, and that the mind and the body exist in unity. The essence of tea-house is not in its poetic style or meticulous details, but in its unmistakably monistic approach of creating inseparable form, function and meaning. Tea-house bestows dignity upon restraint, imperfection, discomfort, poverty, and even humility. This concept offers a tremendous insight since it implies that the rational and effective design solution to the greatest degree is not sufficient. Perhaps the most challenging question about tea-house is: How does our experience with human-made 'design' in the broadest sense help both our body and mind attain a full harmony of being? It is the heading which this research inquires.

Keywords: *Body-Mind Unity, Design Philosophy, Tea-House*

1. Introduction

The tendency to view self and universe, body and mind, process and effect, means and ends as existing in unity is frequently found in East Asian philosophy. This indigenous mode of body-mind unity is generally associated with Taoism and Zen Buddhism, whose major intellectual concerns are absolute egalitarianism among phenomena and sense experience. As Zen Buddhism became established in Japan, its influence permeated various cultural realms outside religion and philosophy. Zen exerted a formative

influence on the art of the tea-ceremony of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Japan that produced “an unparalleled outpouring of creativity in the decorative arts and aesthetic theory, in architecture and gardening, and in a manners and social behaviors.”¹

Tea-ceremony illustrates East Asian holistic world-view is not merely a theoretical speculation but a tangible methodological experimentation to understand the true nature of existential relationship between human and environment (macro-universe), and between body and mind (micro-universe). It promotes the syncretism of seemingly opposite qualities --realistic and symbolic, performing and contemplative, spatial and temporal, and subjective and objective-- to form an entity. Tea-house is admired for its distinct style, called *sukiya*, creating pleasure in abstinence, richness in poverty, and sensibility in simplicity. The designers adopt vernacular elements of peasant house in their deliberate striving for the “cult of the humble,”² yet neither as the result of shortage of materials, nor negligence. Tadao Ando, one of the most creative modern Japanese Architects, writes: “To resuscitate the aesthetic of the *sukiya* style today, it is necessary to employ its spirit, not necessarily its physical forms, in the creation of a new theory of totality, allowing architecture to conform to its environment.”³ The design philosophy of tea-house is, most important of all, body-mind unity, in which the duality of body and mind, religion and practice, self and other, and above all, philosophy and design transcends into one holistic experience.

1.1. Research Objective

Tea-house is a reflection of Zen Buddhism representing one of the most fundamental East Asian religio-aesthetic tendencies, a holistic world-view. This phenomenon has been called, ‘body-mind unity,’ ‘radical empiricism’,⁴ and even ‘absolute phenomenalism.’ The objective of this research is an inquiry into the design philosophy of Japanese tea-house relating an inner identity of the human with the surrounding environment, and mind with body through its somatopsychic approach, as well as tea-ceremony that celebrates holistic realization of life.

1.2. Research Scope

This archival study involves a two-part literature search. It explores the philosophical position of Japanese tea-ceremony, which gives a human a chance to cultivate both body and mind; and identifies its equivalent design philosophy of tea-house, in which the function of design is regarded not as a vehicle for fulfilling one’s endless needs, but as enlightening medium to liberate human from them. What is missing in the existing design theories is inviting users to find their own meaning of existence. On the other hand, the

¹ Fujioka, Ryoichi (1973). *Tea Ceremony Utensils* (p. 9). New York: Weatherhill / Shibundo.

² Evans, Helen Marie. *Man the Designer* (p. 131). New York: The Macmillan Company.

³ Ando, Tadao (1984). *Tadao Ando: Building, Projects, Writings* (p. 141). New York: Rizzoli.

⁴ Nakamura, Hajime (1964). *Ways of Thinking of Eastern People: India-China-Tibet-Japan* (pp. 531-71). Honolulu: East-West Press.

most thought-provoking idea of tea-house is its relatedness to human potential and dignity without self-indulgence.⁵

2. Philosophy of Tea-Ceremony

2.1. Personal Cultivation

The tea-drinking that is known as *cha-no-yu* or *cha-do* in Japanese, *da-do* in Korean, and 'tea-ceremony' or 'tea cult' in the West is considered a way of enlightenment, not a mere pastime or entertainment. This must be the reason why it is translated as tea-ceremony rather than tea drinking. Like other Zen inspired design, it is a 'way' of attaining a genuine Zen experience via a real life setting as the very name of *cha-do*, 'the way of tea,' indicates. *Do (tao)* means a path or road to be followed to attain enlightenment. The early tea-master, Murata Shuko (1422-1502), attempted to introduce the spirit of Zen into the actual event of the tea-ceremony:

One who enters this (tea) room should free himself from the differentiation between "self" and others, and cultivate in his heart the virtue of subtle harmony. Indeed, to begin with the mutual reception and communication between friends that will eventually lead to the ideal of universal peace, one must be reverent, sincere, pure and quiet.⁶

As Shuko implies above, the tea ceremony is a form of personal 'cultivation'.⁷ It is raised to the level of discipline for self-actualization and ultimately for enlightenment since its "goal is not technical but is the human pursuit of the true way to live, a strongly ethical sense of personal perfection."⁸ Yasuo Yuasa defines the cultivation in the context of Zen Buddhism:

From the Buddhist standpoint, it is the search for *satori*, but enlightenment can not be attained simply by intellectual speculation or theoretical thinking. To attain it, cultivation is necessary for the discipline of mind and body. Put it differently, cultivation is a method to reach the wisdom of *satori*, a passage to it. Here, we have a serious methodological issue for Eastern metaphysics.⁹

Although the concept of cultivation obviously belongs to the world of religion, it has had a broad

⁵ Such phenomenologist as M. Marcel, J. P. Sartre, E. Husserl, Merleau-Ponty postulate that the body is a dynamic entity. It is regarded as a subjective medium in the state of potentiality. For a discussion of this topic, see Zaner, Richard M. (1993). *The Problems of Embodiment*. Choi, Kyung-ho (Trans.). Seoul: Ingan-sarang.

⁶ Re-quoted in Lee, Sherman E. (Ed.) (1963). *Tea Taste in Japanese Art* (p. 28). New York: The Asia Society. There is an intriguing connection between tea-ceremony and the experimental method of environmental psychology, especially the 'Experimental Workshop.' Both promote voluntary user participation, shared experience and energizing inter-actionable commitment.

⁷ *Shugyo* in Japanese; *Suhaeng* in Korean.

⁸ Yuasa, Yasuo (1987). *The Body: Toward an Eastern Mind-body Theory* (p. 26). Albany: State University of New York Press.

⁹ *Ibid.* (p. 27).

influence on various cultural realms outside religions in Japanese artistic and intellectual history. Tea-ceremony manifests that the notion of personal cultivation is the fundamental concept in understanding the East Asian aesthetics.

2.2. Somatopsychic Experience

It is important to remind that the relationship of cultivation and enlightenment is not linked in a necessarily causal relationship as method and goal. In this perspective, it is proper to say that the tea ceremony is not simply a methodological performance, but a meaningful experience in itself, in which as experience of entertainment turns into an experience of enlightenment, or vice versa. For instance, when tea master, Sen-no-Rikyu (1521-91)¹⁰ was asked the essence of tea ceremony, he said without a moment's hesitation:

Tea is nought but this.
First you make the water boil,
Then infuse the tea.
Then you drink it property.
That is all you need to know.¹¹

His message is, just experience it; no one can explain or understand the teaism intellectually; we can only know it by doing it. The significance of the tea-ceremony is found in the experiential process, not in the purpose of enlightenment nor tea drinking itself. The tea-ceremony consists of unhurried sequential movements. The gestures are neither awkward nor bold. The ritual itself is rather simple and subtle, but ironically, the effect of the ceremony becomes more enhanced because of its subtlety. The basic principle of the tea-ceremony is the stimulation of the natural capacity of the body, independent of intellectual power, with the ultimate goal of providing a consequential integration of body and mind.

The notion of direct experience is linked with the idea of somatopsychic experience. Research has also disclosed that Oriental systems of concentration can result in 'altered state of consciousness' in which unconscious functions of both psyche and soma can be brought to consciousness, and that such processes are two aspects of a single process. The stimulation of somatic awareness can clearly elicit psychic awareness, which may prove to be a more powerful process than the reverse process, commonly known as 'psychosomatics.'¹²

Somatopsychic experience is, yet, different from mere sensation. The former is awakening; the latter is not. For instance, tea ceremony is performed at various times of the day with different names and

¹⁰ He is known as a father of the Zen tea-ceremony.

¹¹ Re-quoted in Sadler, Arthur Lindsay (1962). *Cha-No-Yu: The Japanese Tea Ceremony* (p. 102). Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Company, Inc.

¹² Ikemi, Yujiro & Ishikawa, Hitoshi (1979). 'Integration of Occidental and Oriental Psychosomatic Treatments', *Psychother. Psychosom* 31: 326.

meanings. The so-called ‘dawn-tea (*akatsuki no chaji*)’ begins at 4:00 a.m. in the winter. Going against the natural human tendency to avoid physical discomfort, it is deliberately set up in the coldest time of the day and season. Participating at a dawn tea-ceremony is a radical somatopsychic as well as sensory experience, but obviously not one of simple sensory pleasure.

3. Design Philosophy of Tea-house

3.1. Sensory and Kinesthetic Stimulation

Since the tea ceremony is intended for somatopsychic awareness through direct participation rather than the actual effect of tea drinking, the tea-house (*sukiya*) is designed for giving prominence to the passage and sequence through which people evoke the sense of particular time and space. In this respect, tea-ceremony is an almost sensory experience, although it is the internalized pleasure of the senses.¹³ In fact, the term *sukiya* is a direct equivalent of English ‘pleasure-house’ or “abode of fancy,”¹⁴ where the human being is treated as having various sense avenues of kinesthetic, tactile, auditory, olfactory, and thermal as well as visual capacities. Kakuzo Okakura poignantly points out this aspect:

The *roji*¹⁵ was intended to ... produce a fresh sensation conducive to the full enjoyment of aestheticism in the tearoom itself. One who has trodden this garden path can not fail to remember how his spirit, as he walked in the twilight of evergreens over the regular irregularities of the stepping stones, beneath which lay dried pine needles, and passed beside the moss-covered granite lanterns, became uplifted above ordinary thoughts.¹⁶

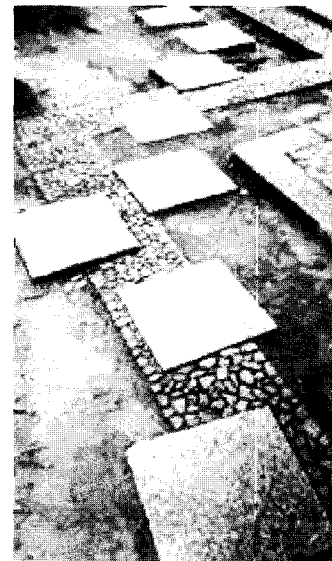


Fig.1 Stepping-stones

The design of stepping-stones is deliberately asymmetrical since vista and changes of direction are considered to be more important than getting to the house in the shortest possible time (Fig.1). If the vantage point were changed, the spaces would be changed too. “The magic of these spaces is that the accidents of change continually become part of the design and the experience.”¹⁷

Even the height of stones are selected with variety, so that as a person passes over the stones one can

¹³ Kato, Shuichi (1981) expresses paradoxically in his book, *Form, Style, Tradition: Reflections on Japanese Art and Society* (p. 159). Bester, John (Trans.). New York: Kodansha International: “Tea is the sensuous expression of the denial of the senses.”

¹⁴ Barrie, Thomas (1996). *Spiritual Path, Sacred Place: Myth, Ritual, and Meaning in Architecture* (p. 192). Boston: Shambhala Publications Inc.

¹⁵ The *roji* is a garden path that connects a patio (*machiai*), in which the guests wait until they receive the summons to enter to the tea-room.

¹⁶ Okakura, Kakuzo (1964). *The Book of Tea* (p. 34). New York: Dover Publications.

¹⁷ Greenbie, Barrie B. (1988). ‘Caring for Japan’s Temples, Shrines and Gardens,’ *Landscape Architecture* Sep.-Oct.: 85.

enjoy a series of subtle physical experiences as well as the changing view around him or her. One is moved, elevated, transported through the changes of the directions, intervals, and height of stones in what appears to be a random manner. In order to intensify these subtle kinesthetic stimulations, stepping-stones often continues into an elevated arch bridge or a pond so that the body and the environment participate to learn of each other. The designer of the tea-house seems to be especially aware of kinesthetic stimulation through which the body is directly engaged. The experiential process of walking through the Zen garden relates space to time causing the discovery of the dynamic evolution of spatial experience.

3.2. Enlightenment with Body

Holistic design philosophy of tea-house is best exemplified by the small square entry used by guests. This ubiquitous low entrance is called *nijiri-guchi* meaning ‘the entrance one crawls through’ (Fig.2). The ideal entrance is only about two-feet square, so that guests have to bend low and crawl through. One is supposed to leave everything outside --social status as well as shoes and sword-- and enter as a humble human.¹⁸ Theoretically, all become equal by passing through *nijiri-guchi*. “Bending down to enter through this door is an act of physical humility, and visitors cross the threshold as different people.”¹⁹ This eccentric design is extremely inconvenient and



Fig.2 *Nijiri-guchi*

un-functional, deliberately intended to provide the user with the experience of somatic humiliation. It cannot be fully explained by the rational approach of design, which tries to find an answer in utilitarian directions.

The empirical function of *nijiri-guchi* can be explained in the context of the body-mind relationship. The East Asian philosophy of body-mind unity insists that it is an illusion to regard them as fundamentally separate. So does the design of *nijiri-guchi* through its radical experimentation of breaking the illusion of mind-body dualism. When entering *nijiri-guchi*, if only momentarily, the mind submits to the body since the body dominates the mind. In other words, through the humiliating somatic experience of *nijiri-guchi*, the self overcomes the subjectivity of the mind, and the body in turn goes beyond being an object. Here we find the very notion of ‘enlightenment with body’²⁰ is actualized in the tangible form of *nijiri-guchi* through its stunning effect by reversing the usual hierarchy of mind over body.²¹

This ‘anti-design’ underlines the Zen abhorrence of any sort of instrumentalism as well as its

¹⁸ Barrie states (p. 193): “Humility was encouraged by the architecture of the teahouse, most pointedly by the *nijiri-guchi*, or ‘wriggling through entrance.’ This entrance not only forced one to stoop before entering, but required the samurai to leave their swords outside. (Often sword racks were placed adjacent to the entrance for this purpose.)”

¹⁹ Bring, Mitchell & Wayembergh, Josse (1981). *Japanese Gardens: Design and Meaning* (p. 174). New York: McGraw Hill. Re-quoted in *ibid*.

²⁰ *Sokushin jobutsu* in Japanese; *Seuk-shin seung-bul* in Korean.

²¹ According to Jung, Hwa-Yol (1999). *Body Politics* (p. 267). Seoul: Mineum-sa: Body takes ontological priority of mind.

emphasis on a direct collision with reality in order to experience mental awakening. It is neither a mere functional instrument by which one passes into a tea-room, nor an exclusive work of art for its own sake. It is rather a creative, yet, calculated design that has the didactic effect of conceiving human as an undivided unity of body-mind. The very realization of having a body in the humbling *nijiri-guchi* causes the sudden awakening of an existential aspect of reality --awareness of being a physical human mortal.²² This realization leads the way, paradoxically, to the desire for transcending ourselves and also for coming into touch with a being who stands to us in every possible form of opposition. This is perhaps one of the great human ironies, or human dignities in a more positive sense.

Hence, we arrive at the radical challenge to the entire ground of functionalism and even ergonomics advocated in modern design theory. Their ultimate concerns are to give human beings maximum utility and efficiency so as to enhance the quality of life. But the question remains: How much is the maximum, and at what cost? What does quality mean? Most important of all, why do we think of our present life as “a series of unsatisfactory moments”²³ wherein fulfillment can only be reached through everlasting addition? Concerning this, Alan Watts writes:

Our attitude to experience seems to be one of perpetual hunger, for even when we are satisfied and delighted to be alive we keep calling for more. The cry “Encore!” is the highest mark of approval. Obviously, this is because no moment of life is true fulfillment.²⁴

It is never an easy answer, but perhaps one of the potential answers for benign design is illuminated by the East Asian monistic approach to the problem, in which we find a superb example of creating richness in poverty, sensibility in simplicity, and above all, of overcoming the constant temptation of the dualistic tendency inside us.

3.3. Celebration of Poverty

The typical tea-house was a rustic thatched shack with single introverted room, reached by a path, the *roji*, through Zen garden (Fig.3). Tea-house does not pretend to be other than a mere cottage, a straw hut. The materials used in its construction are intended to celebrate the virtues of poverty. The notion of poverty in East Asian tradition is often synonymous with dignity, nobility, humanity and liberation because of its ethical courage to resist the temptation of material excessiveness. The idealization of poverty in East Asian culture in general is not the same concept as Western Romanticism. Despite their similarities, the East Asian counterpart can not be categorized as mere idealistic Romanticism, as many mistakenly understand it.²⁵

²² *Nijiri-guchi* could be a visual form of *koan* practice. Their methodological similarity is found in the recognition that a sudden event could assist in awakening a true realization.

²³ Watts, Alan (1970). *Nature, Man and Woman* (p. 65). New York: Random House Inc.

²⁴ *Ibid.* (p. 104).

²⁵ For instance, it flourished even in the most economically unstable and troubled society of the Muromachi age. Usually,

Instead, the notion of poverty reveals a passive²⁶ but definitely positive traditional East Asian aesthetic concept: An attitude of non-violence or hesitation to interrupt the infinitely subtle system of natural harmony because of an appreciation, affection and reverence for nature. What we are here referring to as ‘aesthetic poverty’²⁷ suggests a minimal use of materials, space, and in short, resources. There is a keen ecological standpoint reflected in the East Asian tendency of holistic attitude toward nature: Nature and Humanity are complementary parts of the same living process and can not be separated.

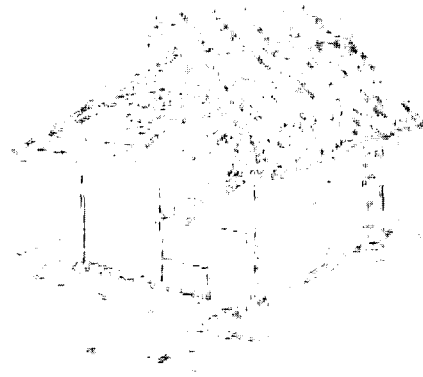


Fig.3 Teahouse

From this perspective, the design philosophy of the tea-house is obvious. The more insignificant the house looks, the less rivalry exists between the house and the universe, as reflected in the concept of inseparability or non-duality. Here the tea-house design passes beyond the plastic level of Mies van der Rohe’s ‘Less is More’ to a comprehensive level: Expressing the most with the least is an act of ‘existential humility.’

3.4. Maximum Minimalism

When the concept of aesthetic poverty is applied to the scale of room, the result is a very small room. The classic tearoom of four and a half *tatami* mats (according to the Japanese method of room measurement) is a room of about nine square yards. Tea-master Rikyu's ideal room size was only two *tatami* mats or 36 square feet.²⁸ Despite the tiny size, however, the intention is to create a sense of spaciousness. Ando is perfectly correct when he writes: “One can immediately feel the infinite expansion of space while completely retaining a sense of profound spatial tension.”²⁹ As the Japanese proverb, ‘small house, broad mind’ indicates, the tiny space of the room does not hinder its ability to capture a sense of expansiveness in its minimal dimension.³⁰ It is possible, for the sake of this discussion, to contrast this pronounced tendency of minimalism in tea-house with an equally typical notion of the maximum of welfare, from the maximum use of resources. Concerning this, E. F. Schumacher in his book, *Small is Beautiful* writes:

materially affluent ages yield romanticism, since only after the primary human needs are fulfilled can human beings begin to romanticize poverty.

²⁶ Moore, Charles A. (Ed.) (1967) states in *The Japanese Mind: Essentials of Japanese Philosophy and Culture* (p. 289). Honolulu: East-West Center Press.: “The Japanese simply accept life as it is, with all its confusion, incompatibilities, [and] contradiction.”

²⁷ Perhaps an approximate translation of the powerful Japanese aesthetic principle of *wabi* and *sabi*.

²⁸ It is said that a two-mat room can accommodate up to six people for a tea-ceremony.

²⁹ Ando, Tadao (1984). *Tadao Ando: The Yale Studio & Current Works* (p. 119). New York: Rizzoli.

³⁰ Hashimoto, Fumio (1981) writes in *Architecture in the Shoin Style: Japanese Feudal Residences* (p. 45). H. Mack Horton (Trans.). New York: Kodansha International: “It symbolized that physical and material austerities were no impediment to spiritual riches and spoke about the Zen path to enlightenment by means of imposed limitations.” Re-quoted in Barrie. (p. 211).

Expansion of needs is the antithesis of wisdom. It is also the antithesis of freedom and peace. Every increase of needs tends to increase one's dependence on outside forces over which one cannot have control, and therefore increases existential fear.³¹

It is remarkable how Schumacher understands the relative concepts of luxury and poverty, which parallel to one of the central issues of Buddhism: 'Desire' is the ultimate source of the misery in life. Thus, only by freeing oneself from never-ending cycle of desire does one become fully human and regain one's original Buddha nature.

3.5. Restraint of Designer's Ego

Holistic experience is encouraged by the intimate communication of the self and the others, including not only other human beings, but also other sentient beings. In order to appreciate one's surroundings --artificial as well as natural-- the way it is, designers need to yield up their ego and let the object provide its own meaning. The Zen concept of simplicity and the celebration of the ordinary are strongly expressed by every object in the tea-room.

For example, "the tea-master deems his duty ended with the selection of the flowers, and leaves them to tell their own story"³² (Fig.4).



Fig.5 Tea-bowl

George Nelson interprets it this way: "It suggests that we can get attention by whispering as well as shouting, that simplicity is not the same as bare emptiness."³³

The similar concept is applied to the tea-bowl (Fig.5). The tea-bowl is "the worship of imperfect, purposely leaving something unfinished for the play of the imagination to complete."³⁴ The expression of the designer's non-assertive, non-violent attitude toward the environment results in suppressing the self-conscious formalism.

Another case is found in the handling of the bare wooden framework in the interior of a typical tea-house when one of the posts is deliberately left in its original rough-hewn (Fig.6). The bare, stripped-down character of tea-room represents the design principle greatly influenced by religio-philosophic aesthetics, not by a shortage of materials or ignorance of the designer. Faith in poverty



Fig.4 Flower Arrangement

³¹ Schumacher, E. F. (1981). *Small is Beautiful* (p. 33). New York: Harper & Row Publishers.

³² Okakura. (p. 59).

³³ Nelson, George (1965). *Problem of Design* (p. 129). New York: Whitney Publications.

³⁴ Okakura. (pp. 30-31).

does not cause the alteration of environment according to designer's will, rather it leads to allowing of the imperfect structural member to be exposed by its own right.

Whereas the post is deliberately natural and asymmetrical, the floor design of *tatami* mats is ordered, symmetrical, and modular. The relationship of the asymmetrical and the symmetrical ---the masculine strength of floor, contrasted with feminine, mysterious, and un-designed post growing out of earth--- suggests the cosmic interplay of opposites, the yin and yang of Taoist philosophy.³⁵ Thomas Barrie writes: "In the dynamic interplay of the built and the natural, . . . the Taoist as well as Buddhist conception of the world as self forming and constantly evolving is expressed."³⁶ Ambience of tea-room is refining of interplay, ambiguity, and tension which is apposite to demanding attention but similar to speak about ultimate unity.

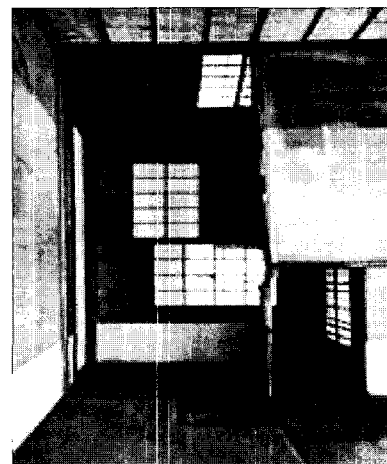


Fig.6 Interior of Tearoom

4. Implication

Since the development of modern design has rested on the foundation of Cartesian mind-body dualism, the body has been viewed as a mechanically functioning object. As a consequence, design tends to be confined to a highly isolated, reductionistic approach, despising 'the unity of body-mind.' As the West and the Non-West cultures have met, conflicted and blended, however, it would be reckless to propose that the design philosophy of body-mind unity have remained exclusive to Japan in particular, and East Asia in general. There has been a radical change in recent years as cultural tradition of East Asia has been under the powerful influence of Western ideals and East Asian ideas have taken root in the West. Regardless of whether in the West or the East, a typical characteristic of contemporary modern culture has been an estrangement, largely associated with technological development and scientific endeavor, from the natural world. Therefore, the philosophic and design tradition of body-mind unity represent neither topographic nor historic identity, but a paradigm, reflecting different attitudes toward environment and toward our body:

Less and less has the "wisdom of the East" anything to do with modern Asia, with the geographical and political boundaries of the world which such terms as East and West, Asia, Europe, and America, now represent. More and more "the East" as a source of wisdom stands for something not geographical but inward, for a perennial philosophy which, in varying forms, has been the possession of traditional nonhistoric cultures in all parts of the world. For the spiritual contrast of East and West is really a contrast between two styles of cultures, two

³⁵ In fact, the unity of opposites is a recurring theme reminiscent of Taoist philosophy.

³⁶ Barrie. Ibid.

radically different categories of social institutions, which never really corresponded to the contrast of Europe and Asia as geographical divisions.³⁷

In the past few decades, the design philosophy of modernism has been the target of severe criticism. Despite the rise of post-modernism, the duality of human and environment is unlikely to be resolved. Neither the theory of 'Less is More' nor 'Less is Bore' can go beyond the cultural prejudice of Cartesian mind-body dualism. No matter how hard humankind tries to conquer one's own body as well as nature, human beings are helplessly a part of them. Body-mind unity, in which the body and mind, or the object and subject are inseparable, has implication which can be applied to current approaches to design, in both the East and the West. The design philosophy of body-mind unity offers a promising alternative to the conventional dualistic perspective. It liberates design from 'effect' and 'function' in modern design theory, instead opens the door toward the new design discourses such as Emotion, Sensibility, Experience, Participation, Well-being, LOHAS, Slow Life, Environment, Ecology and Sustainability just naming a few.

These rather trendy design theories represent a significant shift in contemporary design thinking echoed in the concept of both tea-ceremony that the primary unit of life is found in the most mundane practical task and tea-house in its reverence to the commonplace and fidelity for the daily. Few are designers who can realize such a humble interplay of designer-user, human-environment, subject-object, and body-mind relationship. This is by no means to argue that a functionalistic approach is wrong; rather, this is to illustrate that the human being is a living organism that must be greater than its parts. The potential design philosophy of body-mind unity exists to integrate the seemingly incompatible duality between intellectual mind and sensual body, as well as between human and nature.

Today's restless pursuit of material affluence, physical comfort, efficient automation, and most of all, virtual reality deprives us to develop the potential 'wisdom of the body'. We rarely offer our body an opportunity to learn this wisdom in contrast with the common East Asian expression, 'understanding through the body.' On the other hand, the design of tea-house stimulates "the natural self-regulatory systems of the body."³⁸ It invites us to engage actively in our environment through these somatherapeutic approaches to realize richness and fullness inherent in human existence. Hence, the ultimate design philosophy is to extend its horizon from a passive affordance of 'material well-being' to enlightenment toward the state of 'existential well-being.'

³⁷ Watts. (p. 15).

³⁸ Ikemi and Ishikawa. (p. 325).

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