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## Special Feature Article

### Kyohei Sakaguchi: Creation as Salutogenesis

Tamaki SAITO

Social Psychiatry and Mental Health Faculty of Medicine, University of Tsukuba

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#### Abstract

In this paper, we propose a new theory called "salutography", which analyzes the creative genius from the viewpoint of salutogenesis, opposite from the conventional method of pathography, which analyzes creation from the viewpoint of pathology. From this standpoint, we examined Kyohei Sakaguchi, an artist, writer, and architect who was actively engaged in creative activities while disclosing his bipolar disorder. Sakaguchi's creativity manifested mainly in the hypomanic phase, but during the depressive phase, his creativity declined and he denied all his achievements and existence, leading to suicidal ideation. Sakaguchi's partner "FOO" has consistently supported him. Her attitude, such as "hearing without serious attention" was desirable for Sakaguchi's recovery.

According to Sakaguchi, thought is "a nest of thought" in human beings, which is "space opposite to reality". Creation means connecting "a nest of thought" created by individuals on the stage for communication, "reality". Somatic existence is deeply involved in this process.

In "Open Dialogue (OD)" as a treatment, meanings and narratives are generated from the physical synchronization of participants. In this case, otherness means an inherent bodily property, and synchronization brings about polyphony, not fusion or identification ( $\approx$ Symphony).

Unlike individual psychotherapy, which is based on a bipartite relationship, OD requires treatment by a team. The introduction of the team and network activates the multilayered properties of an individual's body (vertical polyphony) by the presence of entire embodied persons in the OD meeting (horizontal polyphony), and the polyphonic synchronization exceeding the prediction by the participant is generated, which becomes a therapeutic momentum. The relationship between Sakaguchi and "FOO" is unique because, although it is a two-party relationship, there are many momentums that lead to polyphony.

**Keywords:** Kyohei Sakaguchi, salutogenesis, salutography, nest of thought, polyphony

### **Introduction - What is salutography?**

Pathology is essentially a psychiatric study of the creativity of geniuses and outstanding people. A typical application is to analyze the works and biographies of Soseki Natsume, for example, and try to diagnose him as schizophrenic or bipolar because of his psychological symptoms, and to examine how the pathology is projected in his works. Conventional pathology, however, often focuses only on "pathology".

In recent years, ideas, such as "resilience" and "sense of coherence (SOC)", have been attracting attention in various fields. According to Yamazaki 10), who has been actively introducing Antonovsky's concept of SOC to Japan, tectonic shifts are occurring in medicine as a whole such as "from cure to care", "from hospitals and institutions to communities", "from treatment to

prevention", and "from medicine to health and welfare".

Conventional medicine is based on the theory of pathogenesis, that is, it focuses on the risk factors of disease and aims to reduce or eliminate them, so to speak, to bring the negative back to zero. However, the mission of modern medicine is not only to cure diseases, but also to bring zero to plus, that is, to focus on factors that improve the quality of health, and to support and strengthen them. Medicine is not only aiming for a state of "not being sick", but is also becoming concerned with the "quality of health" of individuals. In this sense, modern medicine is entering an era of salutogenesis.

If we look at the lives of various geniuses from this perspective, what we see is not necessarily a landscape of pathology. Rather, what is striking is the aspect of "toughness" that enabled

them to display great creativity or achieve greatness even under exceptionally harsh conditions.

It is true that they may have had some pathology as a core motivator of their creative acts. On the other hand, they may have been extremely resilient. The possibility of the "theory of non-sickness", which Hisao Nakai described in his work on pathology, lies mainly on this side. In the sense that a genius who would normally have developed some kind of mental illness was able to avoid it by immersing himself in the act of creation.

The introduction of the perspective of "health generation" in pathology leads to a demand for a perspective that goes beyond mere individual pathology to include relational and systems theory. The notion of resilience includes many paradoxes, such as "one disease" homeostasis, in which some pathology stabilizes another, and the conflict between individual and organizational resilience.

Based on the above ideas, the author was the president of the 63rd Annual Meeting of the Japanese Society of Pathology held at Tsukuba University in 2016, and the theme of the meeting was Toward a salutogenetic Pathology. Toshiyuki Kobayashi has invented a novel name for the author's health-generating pathology, "salutography" instead of "pathography", and gave it to

the title of this special issue. The aim of salutography is not only to verify the high resilience of geniuses. Rather, through the perspectives of geniuses who live on the borderline between illness and health, we can redefine health by questioning the obviousness of "health" and rethinking the structure of health from a systems perspective, and draw hints for "treatment" from this. In particular, "Phenomenology of Healing" 1) seems to be possible only from this perspective.

From the perspective of salutography, this paper focuses on Kyohei Sakaguchi, an artist, writer, and architect who has disclosed his bipolar disorder and continues to engage in vigorous creative activities. In the sense that he seeks a constant balance through the constant struggle between illness and health, Sakaguchi's words represent the real process of health generation.

### I. Loss of "emotional continuity"

In Sakaguchi's novel, Family Philosophy 7), he clearly describes the suffering of bipolar disorder (quotes in parentheses are from this book). In this book, he describes the desperate suffering of bipolar disorder in a way that cannot be found in psychiatric textbooks or articles. Reading his descriptions, one cannot deny the impression that human thought and reason are simply overwhelmed by the

fluctuations of emotions.

As is well known, in his hypomanic state, Sakaguchi is extremely productive. Ideas for works come to him one after another, and he acts, talks, sings, draws, and writes as he pleases. When he is in a good mood, he has no trouble writing ten manuscripts a day. He also calls himself the "Prime Minister of the New Government", and is involved in "Inocchi's Phone", a campaign to prevent suicide by disclosing his cell phone number. He has conceived and implemented a series of ideas that psychiatrists would describe as ideational and megalomaniacal.

To Sakaguchi's credit, he has acted very "pragmatically" in implementing such ideas, from confirming the relevant legislation to laying the groundwork for them, and has a track record of "mobilizing" many people involved. In other words, if we are talking about the degree of social adaptation in the psychiatric sense, Sakaguchi did not deviate greatly even in his manic phase. This would be considered a much milder form of bipolar disorder than, for example, Morio Kita, who went bankrupt because of stock trading during his manic phase.

Needless to say, however, the manic phase does not last long. When the depressive phase came, Sakaguchi became a different person, more desperate and tormented by thoughts of

death. Let me quote some of his words.

"Even when I look fine, I am really in pain, I am just trying to hide it. That's what Sakaguchi thinks as he enters the depression phase. His evaluation of his family also changes 180 degrees. "The truth is, I feel despair for my parents, and I've been suffering because of it. But when I'm feeling good, I can hide that pain. (omission) In the end, I've had that problem all along. In fact, I'm in despair all the time.

To prepare for such an eventuality, he has posted messages to himself on his wall. For example, "When I'm not feeling well, I need a good night's sleep", or "I'm sure I'm going to say I want to quit my job, so Fu (see below) should make sure to stop my behavior. Of course, Sakaguchi remembers that he was the one who wrote these memos. However, in the depressive phase, it becomes difficult for him to even understand the meaning of the notes.

Of course, this phenomenon is not new to clinicians. Patients with bipolar disorder often deny all of their perceptions and judgments during the depressive phase of their normal mood. They do not experience amnesia as in dissociative identity disorder, but their thoughts and worldview change nearly 180 degrees as a result of the loss of "emotional continuity".

Therefore, during the depressive phase, as Sakaguchi himself has repeatedly

written, he turns over all the statements and records he made when he was in a normal mood, saying things like "I was actually in pain" and "I was really desperate. Metaphorical words such as "really", "actually", and "from the beginning" are often added. The horror of depressive hopelessness is that it always invades these meta-levels of the mind and quickly retroactively occupies all areas of the mind, leading to the perception that the hopelessness will last forever.

Even meta-perceptions, such as "I have despaired before, but I was able to recover", or "This is just a mood swing of bipolar disorder, so it is temporary", are no longer valid. What we can say is that in severe depression, emotions always dominate the meta-level of perception, memory, and logic, and there is a limit to how much we can resist them with words alone. Of course, verbal resistance may be effective for mild depressive moods. We all remember the experience of getting through a depressive mood by telling ourselves, "This mood is transient, it's okay".

## II. Epi-salutography

One of the words that has kept Sakaguchi, who is tormented by thoughts of death during his depression, alive is his partner Fu's "Anything is possible if you don't die".

His relationship and conversations

with Fu are extremely interesting from the perspective of salutography. Following the "epi-pathography" of Tadao Miyamoto, who argued that the "madness" of the partner influences the author and encourages him to create, the author would like to modestly propose the perspective of epi-salutography here.

For example, in response to Sakaguchi's complaint, Fu says the following. "There are times like that. It can't be helped. You can't help it, because that's the way your body is. But don't forget, there are other times. We must not forget that".

At this point, what Sakaguchi needs is Fu's point of view. By looking at the world from this perspective, he is able to perceive that there is a world other than the despair I feel when I'm not feeling well.

One of Fu's ways of dealing with Sakaguchi is to "let it go". This does not mean ignoring the words, but rather "receiving them as music, not as meaning", and "not judging, not deciding, just accepting. According to Sakaguchi, when this is practiced in front of a despairing person, the person becomes "a nameless person", the surroundings become "an unknown landscape", and "one's body suddenly becomes lighter". Not only that, but being listened to can bring about a sense of refreshment and even gratitude.

In the last chapter of "The Philosophy of the Family", it was Fu's words that brought Sakaguchi out of his depression. "I'm amazed that you can find words to deny yourself from so many different angles. I'm impressed. It even looks like a creative activity. With her words as an opportunity, Sakaguchi's feelings lighten, and he begins to recover from his depression.

### III. "Creativity" linking the "web of thought"

Sakaguchi offers a very interesting perspective on "reality" in "The Theory of Escape from Reality" 6) (quotes in parentheses are from this book). He emphasizes that this reality is only an illusory space. As a basis for this, Sakaguchi points out that reality changes drastically depending on one's mood state. For example, Sakaguchi sees space, depth, and even colors differently when he is in a good mood and when he is depressed. "It is as different as a Formula 1 car and a rickety truck, he says. Of course, this is not a confrontation between "subjectivity" and "objectivity", nor is it an episode to be interpreted from a cognitive psychology perspective.

In this book, Sakaguchi proposes an interesting concept called "the nest of thought. According to Sakaguchi, thinking is not an act of thinking, but a "nest" that we form inside ourselves, a

"space in opposition to reality. The senses and behavior of human beings become materials for the construction of this nest. In this case, the act of creation means connecting the "nest of thoughts" that the individual has created by escaping from reality, on the stage of reality for communication.

For example, let's take a look at how Fu listens to Sakaguchi's "story" (= nest of thoughts). Here, a "story" is an act of luring a space that exists firmly behind the doors of the sensory organs into reality. He tells such a "story", or in psychiatric terms, a "delusion-like notion", to Fu, who is working at home. Fu does not criticize his ridiculous stories. Sakaguchi, on the other hand, makes a promise to Fu that he will never practice what he says in reality.

Here, the gesture of "letting go" that I mentioned earlier comes into play again. "Like background music in a town, my wife listens to the story without being aware of it. "She listens from right to left. I don't put as much as possible in my mind. I don't examine them one by one. I don't respond to them. Don't criticize. I don't agree with them. But that doesn't mean I ignore them. You must listen to them at least once.

Accept all delusions and hallucinations as fact, but do not practice them in the real world. The reason for this is stated by Sakaguchi as follows: "Mr. Reality' is another person. Even if I try my best to

tell others what is true for me in their ears, they will only call me delusional. It is necessary to communicate in a language that can be understood by Mr. Reality". According to Sakaguchi, "By welcoming "Mr. Reality" and calmly interacting with him as another person, we can understand that our own thoughts are a space formed by our own perception and recognition".

In this case, "reality" is the stage for communicating with others. The thoughts of others cannot be fully recognized. Communication with others is possible only in the space of reality. However, in the real world, the rules and regulations of the group tend to dominate, and individual thoughts are quickly stifled. This is why we need a circuit to safely connect the "webs of thought" between individuals. Sakaguchi calls this "method for realizing encounters and dialogues with the thoughts of others as smoothly as possible, if not directly," "creation.

In this clear definition of "creation", the author believes that there is a very compelling answer to the question of the true significance of outsider art, Able Art, and art therapy, the direction in which pathology should be heading, and not only that, why all kinds of expressive acts are necessary in this world.

#### IV. Open Dialogue

I would like to examine the possibility that Sakaguchi's definition of "creation" can be linked almost directly to "treatment". In recent years, the author has been working to raise awareness of "Open Dialogue (OD)", a method/ideology of care through dialogue, and the concept of dialogue in OD has much in common with Sakaguchi's definition of creation.

OD is a therapeutic intervention technique for psychosis that has been developed and practiced since the 1980s, mainly by the staff of Kelopudas Hospital in Western Lapland, Finland. The treatment has been extremely successful, requiring little or no medication or hospitalization, and has attracted international attention in recent years. For more details, please refer to books and the literature 3)8)9) and the "Guidelines for Open Dialogue Practice" prepared by the Open Dialogue Network Japan (ODNJP) 2).

In OD, a "team of experts" is formed as soon as a request is received from the patient or family, and visits the patient's home. The patient, family, and other concerned parties sit in a circle and engage in an "open dialogue" using techniques such as family therapy.

Dialogism, one of the main pillars of OD, is based on the social constructivist idea that language and communication constitute reality. Sakaguchi's ideas ("thought nests" and "reality-san")

mentioned above are similar to this.

If the patient starts to talk about his or her fantasies, the treatment team will not deny or criticize the patient's narrative. They simply ask more questions about what the patient has experienced. "I don't have that experience. I don't have any such experience. If you would like to tell me about your experience so that I can understand it better? And so on. In this way, we ask the participants to describe their "fantasies" in more detail. The delusion is reinforced in the monologue, or monologues, and is released by opening it up to dialogue. If this is the case, the delusion can be improved by opening the dialogue with interest and curiosity. At least, OD has achieved remarkable results through practices supported by these ideas.

To do so, we must first free ourselves from the idea of cure. If we stick to the goal of "cure", i.e., getting rid of delusion, the interaction will tend to lean toward "argument" and "persuasion". What is important here is to open up a polyphonic space where multiple "voices" can be generated and flourish around the delusional narrative as the core.

This is what OD calls the "polyphony of social networks". Therefore, it is not important to reach a simple agreement or conclusion. The purpose of the dialogue is to create a shared language

in which the meaning of the patient's suffering becomes clearer, and the different perspectives of the participating members are connected in a safe atmosphere. Consensus and conclusions will be derived, so to speak, as a "by-product" of the process.

## V. Polyphony of Multiple Layers

If we return to Sakaguchi's description, we can say that "listening" means listening to the other person's voice as if it were polyphonic music, without being bound by the meaning or content of the words. Polyphony is a strange word for a single person, but Sakaguchi's comment about the importance of "body movement" is important here. People try to disclose their "nest of thoughts" not only with their voices, but also with their facial expressions and gestures. The emphasis in OD is also on "being on wavelength with nonverbal messages, including silence. This includes gestures, actions, breathing, tone of voice, facial expressions, and the rhythm of conversation.

If we think about it in this way, we can see the possibility that the "web of thoughts" Sakaguchi refers to is itself polyphonic in nature. The dialogue space may be a place where the patient can be freed from the monological obsession with his or her own delusions and recover the polyphonic structure inherent in the "web of thoughts."

Like a "web of thoughts", "reality" is also a polyphony. Since his debut work, "Zero Yen House" 4), Sakaguchi has consistently insisted on the multiplicity of this "reality, just as the city becomes a hunting field filled with rich "urban happiness" from the perspective of street dwellers. His "independent nation" also consists of "lands that do not legally belong to anyone" scattered all over Japan 5). Reality is always already a multilayered space with many overlapping layers. "The web of thought and reality can be connected because they both share a polyphonic structure.

Meta-level interventions, such as "actually" and "really" in depression, already have a delusional element in the sense that they are monologues that suppress such polyphony. In general, abstract theories and concepts only lead to identification or confrontation, eliminating corporeality and inhibiting polyphonic synchronization. In the end, dialogue and creation are important as an opportunity to become aware of this polyphony, mediated by the physicality of oneself and others.

Meanings, narratives, and "relations" are generated from the synchronization of multiple corporealities. In this case, "otherness" is the name of a unique physicality, and in this sense, synchronization is not a symphony like fusion or identification, but a polyphony.

Let us recall that OD was not an

individual psychotherapy setting based on two-person relationships, but required team therapy. In the space of two-person relationships, the pressure to identify operates strongly, and the body is often singularized, becoming a space that marginalizes the other. The introduction of teams and networks activates the multilayeredness and plurality of individual bodies (= vertical polyphony) under the plurality of flesh and blood bodies (= horizontal polyphony), facilitating polyphonic synchronization and meaning-making beyond prediction. This is an important therapeutic opportunity in OD.

### **Conclusion.**

From the perspective of polyphony, the relationship between Sakaguchi and Fu is quite unique. In spite of the relationship between the two, there is an opportunity for therapeutic polyphony that can be seen everywhere. How did this become possible? What we can say for now is that their unique relationship was supported by the third term, Mr. Reality, and that easy fusion and harmony were carefully avoided. Perhaps there is a hint here for generating polyphony without a team, but I will continue to discuss it later.

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