

The Early Educational Thinking of Meikichi Chiba

Focusing on the Influence of the Philosophy of Life

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Abstract

This paper examines the educational thinking of Meikichi Chiba, a thinker and practitioner deeply influenced by the philosophy of life. He is known for advocating an educational theory at a series of monumental lectures, entitled *The Eight Greatest Pedagogical Opinions*, presented in 1921. This thinker, who was inspired by Western philosophers such as Bergson and Nietzsche, attempts to promote vital activities of children, who find and solve problems to satisfy their own needs. His educational thinking is unique; yet, few studies have been conducted to examine his views. We therefore focus on how the philosophies of life impacted his life-centered theories.

In the 1910s, Chiba established his pedagogy based on the problem-solving learning model proposed by progressive American educators. He believes in learning as a problem-solving process based on the needs of an organism. He then proposed a unique theory named the *all-impulses-fully-satisfied theory* (*issai syōdō mina manzoku ron*) in the early 1920s, with reference to the key concepts of the philosophy of life such as *élan vital* and *creative evolution*. Supported by these ideas, he claims that all the impulses of children should be entirely satisfied, because every impulse is an adequate manifestation of vital life.

Chiba devoted all his energy to promoting the realization of children's potentiality. Ironically, however, his approach sometimes results in the depth of life being ignored, despite his intentions. He sometimes reduces vital potentiality to superficial aspects. To analyze the roots of this problem, this paper reviews the structure of Chiba's life-centered thoughts, by comparing them to Deleuze's ideas; this contemporary philosopher of life proposes the distinction between *virtuality* and *actuality*, which hints at reconsidering the concept of the potentiality of life.

Keywords

problem solving, all-impulses-fully-satisfied, solidarity, association, virtuality, actuality, potentiality

Introduction

This paper investigates the educational thinking of Meikichi Chiba (1887-1959), a thinker and practitioner of New Education in Taisho Era, focusing on his early work from the late 1910s to the early 1920s. He is known for advocating his unique theory, *all-impulses-fully-satisfied theory* at a series of monumental lectures, entitled *The Eight Greatest Pedagogical Opinions*, presented in 1921. His early thinking is deeply influenced by life-centered philosophies, especially those of Emerson, Dewey, Bergson, and Nietzsche. These impacts also left traces their mark on his educational thinking after 1922, when he went abroad to study Spranger's cultural pedagogy and Husserl's phenomenology in Germany, and even later when he began to support a Manchu occupation policy in the Showa era. In this paper, therefore, we examine the influence of the philosophy of life on his early thinking in order to elucidate the fundamental characteristics of Chiba's educational thinking.

Regarding previous studies on Chiba, Horimatsu (2003) is the most all-encompassing study. He points out the crucial influence of Bergson and Atsutane Hirata, a noted Shinto thinker from the Edo era (Horimatsu 2003: 131-3). According to Horimatsu, Chiba was profoundly impressed by Bergson's works, *Matière et Mémoire* and *L'évolution Créatrice*, both of which he read in the English versions (Horimatsu 2003: 131). Although Horimatsu provides a detailed biography of Chiba from the perspective of prosopography, he does not adequately account for the construction of Chiba's thinking. Kikuchi (1994), on the other hand, analyzes how Shinto and Bergson influenced Chiba. According to the research, Chiba believes in the commonalities between the Shinto perspective of continuous life and Bergsonian notion of *duration* (Kikuchi 1994: 149-51). Kikuchi explains Chiba's thinking from the perspective of Hirata's Shinto and Bergsonian influences; however, his analysis regarding the philosophy of life is, in our view, insufficient.

Although we do not deny the importance of Shinto for Chiba's thinking, we focus instead on the Western philosophy of life in order to more precisely examine the foundations of his life-centered thoughts. In the following chapters, we will consider several Western thinkers, such as Emerson, Dewey, Bergson, and Nietzsche. In addition to these scholars, we will touch on Deleuze, a contemporary philosopher who inherited the Bergsonian and Nietzschean philosophies of life. For Chiba's thinking can be explained more clearly, including all its complexities, by being compared to the Deleuzian concepts of *virtuality* and *actuality*. As discussed below, the predicament of

Chiba's thinking can be attributed to the fact that he prioritizes functional ability over vital potentiality: that is to say, *functionalism* over *vitalism*¹.

1. Life and Problem Solving

In this chapter, we describe the basic features of *creative education*, which is proposed in Chiba's early works, *Theory and Practice of Creative Education* (1919) and *Creative Education* (1921). Its core concepts are "creation" (*sōzō*) and "origination" (*dokusō*). According to Chiba, these are vital activities: an organism feels frustrated with its environment, so strives to produce new circumstances, and finally achieves satisfaction (Chiba 1919: 3-8). In other words, creation and origination are problem-solving activities inherent to life itself. The starting point of the process is the organism's dissatisfaction; the end point is its satisfaction; the drive is the impulse to fulfill its needs.

Chiba considers learning to be principally concerned with problem solving and tried to construct teaching plans based on this leaning model, referring to progressive educationists such as Dewey². He illustrates the learning procedure as follows: (1) receiving materials, (2) finding problems, (3) formulating problems, (4) solving problems, and (5) expressing solutions (Chiba 1921a: 433-8). As intelligent organisms, human beings follow these steps: first, they receive materials with their sense organs; they then find, formulate, and solve problems intelligently by themselves; and finally, they express their solutions with motor organs. Of all these stages, Chiba emphasizes the significance of "finding problems" and "formulating problems," particularly for creative education³.

Chiba regards problem solving as an inherent activity of life. The act of living involves striving to improve one's situation and seeking satisfaction in order to grow continually. The demand to "create new circumstances for self-development" causes children to find and solve problems by themselves (Chiba 1919: 177). In this sense,

¹ Hara (1992) discusses the "functionalism" observed in the New Education thoughts. We believe that such functionalism is comparable to "pragmatism" in Chiba's vocabulary. cf. Hara (1992: 8).

² Chiba was so familiar with Dewey's thinking that he translated his *Reconstruction in philosophy* (1921) into Japanese. Hayakawa (2010) conducted a detailed comparison of Dewey's problem-solving learning theory and Chiba's.

³ "What is lacking in the three sects [Herbart's, Lay's, and McMarry's educational theories]? That is the following two stages: finding problems and formulating problems. These are the cardinal points of creative education. The essence of learning also consists in these phases. Study-based education should center on these steps. This claim is my original thought exactly" (Chiba 1921a: 120, text in square brackets is mine).

“problems” are sort of “means” for making the present situation better for life (Chiba 1919: 46). The problem-solving process based on intrinsic demands is not controlled by a purposeful rationality imposed from the outside. It has, on the contrary, an innate purposeful rationality that aims at self-development.

These schemas of learning are associated with three basic characteristics of Chiba’s educational thinking. First, he insists on *the unity of knowing and doing* (*chikō gōitsu*) in Yangmingism, which he identifies with “pragmatism” in that both theories encouraged “thinking well and acting well” (Chiba 1919: 25-6). He consistently emphasized the inseparability of knowledge and practice since his first publication, *A Study of Test Reform Based on the Unity of Knowing and Doing* (1918). According to this perspective, thinking and acting are the essential components of problem solving. He claims that both elements should contribute to achieving goals in a complementary way, and criticizes thought without action or action without thought. Second, Chiba demands the *efficiency* of knowing and doing from children. For problem-solving intervention in surroundings requires subtle skills to handle the factors of complex circumstances. Therefore, learning as problem solving should be assessed in terms of the efficiency and effectiveness of children’s activities (Chiba 1919: 312). Third, Chiba underlines the *utility* of problem solving, because it is done *for* life itself (Chiba 1919: 312-45, 557-61, 572-5). Problem solving accompanied by satisfaction results in further self-development of life, so there is intrinsic utility for life in the process.

Arguing for *the unity of knowing and doing*, *efficiency*, and *utility*, Chiba opposes the idea that teachers should impose problems on students from outside. Chiba believes that the cornerstone of creative education is the spontaneity of life, which thinks and acts to develop itself. The three characteristics are distinguished from the general unity, efficiency, and utility demanded from society. In this respect, however, Chiba’s thinking is ambiguous. He regards individual lives as modes of national life; the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic viewpoints mentioned above thus becomes blurred.

Individual lives are the differentiated complex forms of national life. Therefore, it means that, in the development of life itself, each life ultimately serves the national life. What is effective, efficient, and useful for life is good for life; it is national utility. It is good to bring what is of utility for the Emperor as the great life of the nation in an immanent and ordered manner. (Chiba 1919: 558)

Chiba asserts that the individual life is inseparable from the national life and that what is good for life is not only good for the individual, but also for the whole nation.

In summary, Chiba's creative education is grounded in his life-centered theory, which enables him to describe learning activities as dynamic processes. On the one hand, he finds purposeful rationality in the process aiming at development and derives several viewpoints for assessment from intrinsic rationality: unity of knowing and doing, efficiency, and utility. On the other hand, he blurs the boundary between intrinsic rationality and extrinsic rationality, which he tries to distinguish by identifying personal lives within the larger flow of national life.

2. Impulse of Life

2.1. Self-affirmation and Solidarity

Building on the schema of problem-solving learning theory mentioned above, Chiba began to assert his *all-impulses-fully-satisfied theory* (*issai syōdō mina manzoku ron*) in the early 1920s. The theory was presented at a series of monumental lectures, entitled *The Eight Greatest Pedagogical Opinions*, presented in 1921, but it appeared so sensational that its substance has not yet been analyzed in detail. In this chapter, we investigate his insistence on encouraging all impulses in every life.

In the previous chapter, we saw that the motivation to solve problems was considered to originate from the needs of life. Based on this idea, Chiba starts to regard *impulse* as a fundamental need of life and then claims that all impulses should be fully satisfied. He believes that each impulse, a spontaneous force issuing from life, is good for life (Chiba 1921a: 1). An impulse does not seek to maintain the present form of life as it is, but to sustain life through “eternal change” (Chiba 1921a: 14). According to Chiba, *instinct* is a congenital mold and *desire* is an acquired one, while impulse is “a power penetrating through forms.” Impulse breaks through the fixed modes of life, whilst also shaping individual modes⁴. It is a fluid force, never confined to certain forms; it is life itself, which is always in a state of becoming. Individuals feel the flux of life immanently, and they have to act in order to satisfy their impulses. Chiba claims that students should be engaged in “taking care” of their own impulses and in “thorough pursuit” of their satisfaction (Chiba 1921a: 8)⁵. That is not to say students should blindly

⁴ The impulse-satisfaction theory is inspired by the instinct-satisfaction theory (*honnō manzoku ron*) of Chogyu Takayama, a famous Nietzschean of the time, accused by Chiba of not discriminating impulse from instinct (Chiba 1976: 180). Chiba also distinguishes impulse from desire (Chiba 1976:181-2).

⁵ At this point, Chiba refers to Emerson's work, *Self-Reliance*, in which he says, “Trust thyself” (Chiba 1919: 310; Chiba 1921a: 68).

aim at satisfaction, but rather think deliberately and act carefully toward one's goal (Chiba 1921a: 71). In other words, this refers to the act of sticking to one's own problems and striving to solve them committedly.

If impulse can be regarded as an affirmation of life that promotes its duration (*conatus*), then respecting impulse is to reflexively re-affirm the innate affirmation. We can think of this self-affirmative attitude as "creativism" (Chiba 1919: 9). In the field of creative education, Chiba emphasizes the self-affirmative attitude of individuals facing up to any obstacles and conflicts. They take care of innate impulses and expect opposing impulses to unite, believing that every impulse is originally intended to affirm life. The concept of "origination" (*dokusō*) implicates an attitude that refers to the fundamental tendency of life. The originality stems from the original impulses of life (Chiba 1976: 179).

Chiba insists that *all* impulses should be *fully* satisfied. Although Chiba believes that every impulse is somewhat valuable to life, he does not claim that individual impulses should be satisfied momentarily and independently. For the satisfaction of a single impulse without resistance is merely an animal life, such as swilling water because one feels thirsty (Chiba 1921b: 111-2). On the contrary, satisfaction acquires values beyond nature when all conflicting impulses are satisfied without sacrificing any individual impulse (Chiba 1921b: 111-5). According to Chiba, "all impulses fully satisfied" does not only mean that each impulse should be satisfied, but also that all impulses should be completely satisfied in "solidarity" with each other⁶.

Chiba maintains that ordinary views of education and morals are biased in favor of certain impulses and tend to suppress the rest. For instance, educational directions filter children's impulses, promoting some and stifling others (Chiba 1921b: 122). Nonetheless, the ideals of teachers in fact derive from their impulses, and so there is no reason to give priority unilaterally to their impulses over those of children in the name of an "ideal" (Chiba 1976: 192-3). In existing moral codes, there is also supposed to be a self-evident priority of reason over emotion, or "a sense of duty" (*giri*) over "human empathy" (*ninjō*); however, Chiba considers both to be manifestations of impulses to be satisfied, criticizing conventional morals as fixing unjust dualism (Chiba 1921b: 154; Chiba 1976: 200-3). As it were, he attempts to dismantle commonly accepted hierarchical moral instances by breaking them down into the original impulses from which they derived. The all-impulses-fully-satisfied theory assumes that everything is

⁶ Chiba points out two meanings of the word "all" (*issai*) as follows: "(1) All means every single impulse" (Chiba 1921b: 137); and "(2) All means the wholeness of things in mutual solidarity" (Chiba 1921b: 142).

impulse, but it does not follow that only disorder remains. He describes a plural world where all impulses exist as equals, engaging in mutual agony and solidarity.

Although there seems to be a dualism opposing good against evil, impulses are plural. They should be regarded as *plural conflicts*. Conflict does not necessarily mean that one beats another. It consists in fighting each other. If one is beaten immediately, no conflict exists. The genuine conflict occurs when impulses aggressively compete against one another. If impulses compete, it is because each one desires to grow. If impulse were not worth claiming, there would be no battle from the outset. Battle does not automatically mean selecting one and discarding the others. Plural conflicts lead to plural satisfactions. (Chiba 1921b: 158, italics in original)

From this perspective, a teacher's impulse does not command a child's impulse from outside, and the impulses of reason do not suppress those of emotion from inside. All of them are resolved into impulses in agony and solidarity. The self-denial of impulse by impulse is not any more hidden under the guise of dualism. Impulse simply affirms itself and fights to assert itself. Chiba believes that while competing against one another, impulses seek ways of satisfying each other together. If one impulse represses another, it has a feeling of "guilt," with its satisfaction remaining insufficient⁷. Chiba seems to insist on the transformation from the ethics of *self-denial* (asceticism) to the ethics of *self-affirmation* (creativism), following the Nietzschean idea of the "guilty conscience"⁸.

As an educational form of solidarity, to replace command and direction, Chiba suggests "consultation" (*sōdan*). Consultation is not so much an act of persuasion as one of "opening up to one another" and "embracing the other's life in our own life" (Chiba 1921a: 142-3). He states that the fundamental mode of consultation is an internal dialogue, in which present impulses interact with the whole past ones. Citing the Bergson's discussion in *Matière et Mémoire*, he claims that the association between

⁷ "If a great self subdues a small self, it will necessarily feel guilty. If the latter conquers the former, the small self will also inevitably have a guilty conscience. When both of them grow together, there would be a sense of solidarity and authentic morals" (Chiba 1921b: 158-9).

⁸ Chiba was familiar with Nietzsche's thoughts through Chogyu Takayama. Chiba referred to Nietzsche in his discussion (Chiba 1921a: 68). Probably inspired by Nietzsche, who confronted Greek thinking with Christian asceticism, he attributed the impulse-centered theory to Shinto, not to Buddhism or Confucianism, and he pointed out that the affirmation of impulse is a common feature of both Japanese and ancient Greek (Chiba 1976: 175-6).

present impulses and past ones (memories) is necessary for the wholeness of self (Chiba 1921a: 142-7). Chiba's concept of *association* not only refers to the mental mechanism, the so-called "association of ideas" in the sense of associationism, but also implicates the *solidarity* of different impulses. He regards past memory, which is a latent impulse, as a partner of inner consultation, anthropomorphizing it as "an associate filled with love and wisdom" (Chiba 1921a: 146). From his perspective, the familiar association between present consciousness and past memory is an ideal form of solidarity.

The solidarity of impulses is sought among people as well as in an individual mind. Chiba states, "[s]ocial solidarity is nothing less than impulse solidarity" (Chiba 1921b: 152). In this case, "consultation" is interpreted as being with another person in a literal sense. He asserts that when children consult with a teacher, the latter also must be "an associate filled with love and wisdom" (Chiba 1921a: 147). A teacher, however, only gives advice to the children so that they can consult themselves in order to find a solution by themselves. The consultation in this sense is the basic relationship in creative education, rather than directions given to subordinate students (Chiba 1921a: 8). In short, based on the all-impulses-fully-satisfied theory, which insists on plural solidarity among self-affirmative impulses, he proposes internal and external dialogues called "consultations" as the ideal form of educational relationship.

2.2. Difficulties with the All-impulses-fully-satisfied Theory

In this chapter, we examine the difficulties with the all-impulses-fully-satisfied theory. Chiba claims that we should return to the origin of impulses and restart from their foundation: self-affirmative life. He trusts in the tendency of life. He is, so to speak, optimistic about the possibility for satisfaction. Is it unreasonable, however, to hope that all needs can be fully met?

As a workable framework to guarantee the reconciliation of conflicting impulses, Chiba maintained the problem-solving learning model after having developed the all-impulses-fully-satisfied theory in the 1920s. In addition to the problem-solving process mentioned above, he adds the five stages of emotional process: (1) frustration, (2) effort, (3) care for oneself, (4) thorough pursuit, and (5) gratification (Chiba 1921a: 67-70). Actual satisfaction is eventually dependent on the creative solution. In other sections, he notes that creative activity shows "contingency" (Chiba 1921a: 48-9). Considering these points together, we can suppose that impulse satisfaction is caused by a creative solution which occurs contingently, so that the successful satisfaction also remains contingent. Nevertheless, Chiba often suggests that all impulses can be

necessarily satisfied. We explain what theoretical schemas enabled him to think of uncertainty as necessity⁹.

There are three controversial points in Chiba's impulse theory. First, self-trust based on spontaneity of impulse is at risk of transforming into blind self-conceit. Chiba encourages individuals to thoroughly pursue the satisfaction of their impulses. He claims that they should follow the problem-solving process as "an associate filled with love and wisdom," even though they do not know exactly what consequences will result from this process. If we trusted in the course without analysis of its conditions and results, we would lapse into a blind belief or self-conceit. In this sense, I would merely be unquestionably affirming all my choices, rather than a sensible companion for consultation. When the circle of self-reference as self-affirmation is closed, self-reliance is liable to convert into self-conceit¹⁰.

Second, Chiba tends to assume the pre-established harmony among impulses. His premise is that life maintains its integrity through differentiation (Chiba 1919: 556). According to this standpoint, life is a comprehensive process that unifies different components, so that, in principle, no irreconcilable contradiction can exist within it. On the one hand, there is no contradiction in social life, which he classified into six fields (health, economy, politics, leisure, academics, and religion), because all the spheres work as "functions" to sustain the whole social life¹¹. On the other hand, he also postulated the intrinsic integrity of an individual life, interpreting "individuality" as "indivisibility" of the whole ego (Chiba 1921b: 26; Chiba 1976: 194). He often ensures the success of achieving satisfaction in advance: any possible contradiction is considered reconcilable because of the integrity in social life as well as in personal life.

Third, the arbitrary demarcation of life's totality can be observed in Chiba's theory. He claims that all impulses should be fully satisfied; however, what does he mean by "all" with regard to life, which is always changing? If life is enduring changes, as he said, determining life's totality must be impossible at any given moment. Chiba strives to affirm the whole life, but such an attempt may erase what is left of the alleged "all." When every impulse is allegedly recognized, in principle, no impulse can be left

⁹ "It is not easy to satisfy all that are associated with each other, but it is not impossible. Its difficulty is the same as that of doing good deeds or that of exhibiting originality. However difficult it is, we can certainly do that, as long as we hope. That is because life does not hope for impossible things" (Chiba 1921b: 143).

¹⁰ This risk is illustrated by Chiba's argument itself; he was proud of his thoughts as unique to Japan, which he considered to be lacking in Western thoughts (Chiba 1919: 571).

¹¹ "These fields originally derive from functions for the perpetual motion of nation state. Because all the functions exist for the perpetual motion, they cannot be contradictory to each other" (Chiba 1919: 334).

behind; when everyone is considered to be content, in theory, no one else can be discontent. When students are filled with delight at the moment of resolution in the climax of the dramatized process, which is supposed to proceed from “frustration” to “gratification,” discontent voices should be drowned out by the enthusiastic applause of the class. Impulses left behind, which are supposed to be resolved, are consigned to being lost in oblivion.

Given the essence of the all-impulses-fully-satisfied theory, which is firmly against the oppression of impulses, such unexpected outcomes must be contrary to Chiba’s original intentions. In fact, the concept of plural solidarity across conflicting impulses is meant to revitalize the excluded impulses. Nevertheless, we have to admit that Chiba’s life-centered thought is at risk of contravening its spirit. The key concepts of his philosophy of life need to be reviewed in order to achieve his original objectives.

2.3. Contemporary Philosophy of Life

In this chapter, we limit ourselves to offering some suggestions for such a task. We make a comparison with Deleuze, who has developed a unique philosophy of life, inheriting Nietzsche and Bergson’s legacy in a different way from that of Chiba. Indeed, it may be a little simplistic to interpret Deleuze, who used the concepts of “body without organs” and “death drive,” as a philosopher of life, but the category is helpful to emphasize the genealogical link between Nietzsche/Bergson and Deleuze.

Deleuze (1983) focuses on the value transformation from negative to affirmative with reference to the Nietzschean concept *will of power* (*volonté de puissance* / *Wille zur Macht*). It is the transformation from a *human*, who is full of *ressentiment* and *guilty conscience*, to an *overman*; the former is transcendently conditioned by negative will of power, and the latter by the affirmative. Deleuze cites several phrases from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as follows.

Play: “A throw you made had failed. But what of that, you dice throwers! You have not learned to play and mock as a man ought to play and mock.” *Dance*: “Even the worst thing has good dancing legs: so learn you higher men, how to stand on your own proper legs.” *Laughter*: “I have canonised laughter; you Higher Men, learn to laugh!” (Deleuze 1983=1986: 196=218, emphasis original, passages quoted by Deleuze are from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* IV “Of the Higher Man”)

Learning to affirm is the essence of Zarathustra's teaching. Learning to play, dance, and laugh is necessary in order to metamorphose from a (higher) man into an overman. According to Deleuze's interpretation, it is to affirm not just contingency but also its necessity (play), becoming and its being (dance), and life and its suffering (laughter) (Deleuze 1983: 196).

For Deleuze, the Nietzschean theory of *eternal recurrence* is critical for value transformation. He interprets eternal recurrence as the affirmation of affirmation, the essence of which is the enjoyment of *difference* itself. Yet, he criticizes dialectic logic as the negation of negation, which misinterprets difference as *opposition* to be overcome. Deleuze insists that the negative logic of dialectic is insufficient for transformation as long as negative will rules human histories, and that the affirmative logic of eternal recurrence is indispensable for transformation. In addition, he suggests that the conversion also needs the genealogy of morals to analyze the human condition. It follows that we need *dynamics* to analyze where life came, where it will go, and how its forces have been organized, instead of a naive trust in life's potentiality.

Furthermore, Deleuze (1966) discusses Bergson's thoughts, focusing on the distinction between *virtual* and *actual*. By distinguishing two dimensions, Deleuze explains the principle of *creative evolution*. He says, "[e]volution takes place from the virtual to actuals. Evolution is actualization, actualization is creation" (Deleuze 1966=1988: 101=98). According to his interpretation, creative evolution is an *actualization* from virtuality to actuality. The former dimension cannot be reduced to the latter level. The visible differences of organisms at the present time are not the whole; rather, they are the differentiated forms of life.

According to Bergson, the word "Whole" has a sense, but only on the condition that it does *not* designate anything actual. He constantly recalls that: Whole is not given. This means, not that the ideal of the whole is devoid of sense, but that it designates a virtuality, actual parts do not allow themselves to be totalized. (Deleuze 1966=1988: 95=131-2, emphasis original)

Deleuze insists that the whole is not given in actuality. The actual spheres are not the totality of being; life is also open to the virtual dimension.

In addition to this distinction, there is another difference between *possible* and *real*. According to Deleuze, the transition from the possible to the real, which is called *realization*, is based on "resemblance" and "limitation." Reality resembles the possibility and realization is performed by limiting various possibilities to certain

possibilities. The transition from possibility to reality, however, cannot explain the emergence of differences nor their creativity. The actualization, on the other hand, is based on “difference” and “divergence.” There is a “difference” between virtual and actual, and “divergence” among the pathways from virtuality to actuality (Deleuze 1966: 99-101)¹². Deleuze claims that the creative evolution of life is only understood in terms of actualization, not realization.

Virtuality is considered to be the transcendental condition (*élément généalogique*) from which actual differences emerge. Deleuze derives the theory of virtuality and actuality from the whole philosophy of Bergson, referring to not only *L'évolution Créatrice* but also *Matière et Mémoire* and so on. In a word, he opens up a new horizon for describing life's creativity, using Bergsonian concepts in a different way from that of Chiba.

3. Potentiality of Life

In this chapter, we return to Chiba's argument and review his ideas regarding life's *potentiality* with reference to the concepts of Bergson and Deleuze¹³. Chiba prizes the dynamic expression of potentiality. Needless to say, no one would disrespect the lively activities of children, but positive evaluations are often too superficial. What is important to note here is the *depth* of the vitality, as detailed below.

Chiba insists on “the unity of knowing and doing.” This implies that thinking and acting should work together to achieve an objective. According to his explanation, when an action is interrupted by an obstacle, thoughts and memories are activated to overcome the problematic situation, as if to bypass the dead end (Chiba 1919: 32) We live under the divergence of thought and action. As a result, two unbalanced attitudes arise from this separation: some people think so hard they cannot make a decision; others are so impetuous they do not deliberate (Chiba 1921b: 286). Opposed to such a dichotomy, Chiba calls for the seamless integration of thinking and doing. He suggests that “thinking well and acting well” enables us to live an active life in the truest sense (Chiba 1919: 25-6).

This viewpoint allows us to take into account both the mind and body of students, so that teachers can understand the dynamism of the learning process and adjust their

¹² Bergson criticized the concepts of *possible* and *real* in “Le possible et le réel” (in *La Pensée et le Mouvant*).

¹³ As regards the concept of *potentiality*, see Agamben (1999). He discusses Aristotle's concepts of *dynamis* and *energeia* and Deleuze's ideas noted above.

teaching plans accordingly. Nonetheless, this perspective requires utility and efficiency in thoughts and actions. As long as knowledge and memory are evoked for practical solutions, they are destined for efficient actions. Chiba condemns the inefficiency and stagnation of activity: “[i]n a word, the evil is waste or paralysis of ego, not anything else. Because ‘ego’ is the same as ‘national ego,’ the waste or paralysis of ego inflicts a large loss for national development” (Chiba 1921b: 274). He deplores the waste or paralysis of life, which are caused by either hesitant or hasty actions. Comparing life to the flow of water, he laments its course being deflected from the mainstream and blocked by obstacles. He believes that the current should be quickly redirected, so to speak, into the original stream through a bypass of thinking, in order to maintain its momentum.

Based on this perspective, the teaching plan is prone to a straight-line pathway, even if it allows for some meandering. The teaching schema illustrated by Chiba provides an example of this. The learning process was represented by a single line: from “receiving materials” to “finding problems” to “formulating problems” to “solving problems” and finally to “expressing solutions” (Chiba 1921b: 433-8). It thus appears to be a steady flow. Furthermore, his vision of school facilities corresponds to the schema. He classifies classrooms according to their uses and arranges them concentrically on the model of a human body (Chiba 1921b: 471). The arrangement of the school represents the neural circuit from the sense organs via the central nervous system to the motor organs; classrooms designed for receiving materials and expressing solutions correspond to sensory and locomotor apparatus respectively.

These ideas are related to the concept of *potentiality*. Chiba refers to Dewey’s passage on potentiality of children¹⁴. Influenced by Dewey, Chiba finds potentiality in the immaturity of children. In his opinion, “the mission of education is to add progressive potentiality to conservative potentiality, and to actualize it. That is why education is called the arts to promote growth and to encourage development” (Chiba 1921b: 343). He distinguishes the potential level from the actual level, and considers the actualization from potentiality to actuality to be the mission of education. He makes the distinction, but he tends to reduce potentiality to actuality: “[i]f adults are the kinetic energy of a nation, then children must be its potential energy. Education in its essence is

¹⁴ “The prefix ‘im’ of the word immaturity does not mean a mere void or lack, but something positive, capacity and potentiality. Potentiality is potency. In fact, immaturity is not an absence of power, but the possibility of growth, the force positively present and the ability to develop” (Chiba 1919: 343). Chiba’s translation is not word-for-word. See Dewey (1997: 41-2).

to produce the potential energy of the nation” (Chiba 1921b: 574-5). He regards the potentiality of children, expected to work as members of the nation, to be “potential energy” that can be converted into “kinetic energy.” He also stated the following:

The essence of education for perpetual motion is to increase potential energy. It is to provide enormous coal fuel for perpetual motion. Coals that burn well and fresh represent children growing and developing well who find, formulate, and solve problems in themselves in a miniature perpetual motion. Each item of knowledge needs sufficient efficiency to convert into every action. The knowledge merely stored in memories is as inefficient as incomplete combustion. For this reason, we need creative education to encourage self-sustaining development with the unity of knowing and doing. (Chiba 1921b:576-7)

The potentiality of life is interpreted as potential energy for a machine in perpetual motion, narrowly represented by coal fuel and heat engine, which are the symbols of modern industrialization. Potential knowledge and memories are mobilized and forced to convert into actual motions as efficiently as possible.

By contrast, Bergson claims that the potentiality of memory cannot be reduced to the actuality of present actions. According to his explanations in *Matière et Mémoire*, memory is not physically stored in the brain; it simply exists. Memory is evoked as far as it is “useful” for the present needs of agent, while there subsists “inutile” memory free from the current necessity (Bergson 1959: 282-3)¹⁵. According to his memory model, in the shape of inverted cone, the whole memory exists with virtual multiplicity to varying degrees of its contraction: on one plane, individual memories are scattered while keeping their particularities; on the other plane, similar memories are contracted to the extent of high generality (Bergson 1959: 302). It is here that Bergson finds the vertical *depth* of spirit, which cannot be reduced to the horizontal extension of body.

Chiba was evidently aware of this argument. With clear reference to Bergson’s theory, he mentions the latent existence of memory (Chiba 1976: 190-1). Besides, Bergson does not ignore the necessity of useful actions. He instead supposes that the

¹⁵ Deleuze explains Bergson’s idea as follows: “[i]t [the present] is not, but it acts. Its proper element is not being but the active or the useful. The past, on the other hand, has ceased to act or to be useful. But it has not ceased to be. Useless and inactive, impassive, it IS, in the full sense of the word” (Deleuze 1966=1988: 49-50=55, emphasis original, text in square brackets is mine).

inextricable linkage of memory and action is the essence of “good sense” and “practical sense” of practitioner (Bergson 1959: 293-4). In this sense, Chiba’s theory, with emphasis on the unity of knowing and doing, corresponds to Bergson’s theory; however, they proceeded in different directions. Chiba progresses to actuality to seek practical actions, while Bergson moves on to virtuality to explore pure duration and pure memory. According to the latter, the mission of philosophy is the pursuit of “depth”; it brings us “joy” different from “pleasure” of science¹⁶. Chiba does not simply neglect the profound potentiality of life, but rather he returns too quickly from the depth to the surface.

We should re-examine the relation between the virtuality and actuality in order to explore the profoundness and dynamics of life. Life is not confined to the short-circuit linkage between an organism and its environment. Creative actualization occurs from the virtual sphere of potentiality. If we neglected them, the lively activities of children would be narrowly interpreted: on the one hand, child-centered discourses would focus on superficial aspects such as their shining smiles or cheerful voices; on the other hand, meritocratic discourses would emphasize practical aspects such as their creative competencies contributing to national and global economy. These risks are implicitly included in Chiba’s arguments. Although he respects the potentiality of life more than anyone, he sometimes tends to promote the effective exploitation of life, rather than the dynamic duration of life itself.

Conclusion

The early educational thoughts of Chiba are based on a unique philosophy of life. Perceiving impulse as the driving force, he claims that life is a process of problem solving to reach satisfaction. He describes the dynamism of problem-solving learning with emphasis on the unity between knowing and doing. This functionalistic theory, however, allows him to reduce potentiality to superficial efficiency by ignoring the virtuality of life.

Chiba employs the problem-solving learning model, which had been developed in American progressive education in particular, as the framework of his educational

¹⁶ “With its applications which aim only at the convenience of existence, science gives us the promise of well-being, or at most, of *pleasure*. But philosophy could already give us *joy*” (Bergson 1959=2007: 1365=106, italics added). “It [art] enriches our present, but it scarcely enables us to go beyond it. Through philosophy we can accustom ourselves never to isolate the present from the past which it pulls along with it. Thanks to philosophy, all things acquire *depth*” (Bergson 1959=2007: 1391=131, italics added, text in square brackets is mine).

thinking, through the lens of Yangmingism's concept of *the unity between knowing and doing*. In addition, he establishes his life-centered thoughts on the basis of the Bergsonian and Nietzschean philosophy of life, through the Shinto notion of life. The former functionalistic perspective tends to focus on the horizontal interaction between organisms and circumstances, while the latter perception of the philosophy of life is inclined to emphasize the vertical dimension, such as pure memory and eternal recurrence. In the middle of this historical carrefour, Chiba is destined to integrate these heterogeneous dimensions: horizontal–vertical, functionalism–vitalism, and West–East.

This paper proposes *potentiality* as a key concept for reviewing life-oriented educational theories, including Chiba's thinking. We discuss Deleuze's concept of *virtuality* and *actuality*, but our attempt remains insufficient. Further study of these concepts should be conducted to include the primary concepts affecting modern education, namely *perfectability* and *educability*.

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