

# Commentary on Kuriyama's paper

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I'm not a specialist on the history of medicine. I have researched contemporary ethical and social issues arising from modern medicine and life science. Hence I would like to comment from the viewpoint of today's medical ethics.

Generally speaking, today's medicine is slowly changing from cure-based medicine to preventive medicine. The idea of preventive medicine is to prevent future possible diseases and disabilities by carefully diagnosing the state and function of our body in advance. For example, scientists recently discovered one of the triggers of Alzheimer's disease in certain areas of the human DNA, and they are now trying to identify the exact places of the mutation. If they succeed in discovering the genes of Alzheimer's disease in the human DNA sequence, we can diagnose the future possibility of the appearance of Alzheimer's disease by genetically diagnosing our own bodily cell. And in case that we have Alzheimer's gene mutation or something, it may be possible to begin special therapy for preventing the appearance of the disease while we are young and healthy. This is one example of possible preventive medicine. It seems to me that today's advanced medical technologies, for example, gene technology, reproductive technology, and artificial organs, aim to reach total preventive medicine.

Then, what is considered as the ideal state, utopia, in preventive medicine?

The ideal human life, according to preventive medicine, is to live without serious diseases or disabilities until the end of life, and die peacefully without pain. The final goal is long and comfortable life as much as possible. In order to attain this goal, we should diagnose future possible diseases and disabilities, and try to prevent them in advance. We should know every important factor concerning our own body and health. We should know every important information to control the whole process of our life, and the total quality of life. This is the philosophy of preventive medicine. At the basis of this philosophy, there is the idea of control, or total management of life. In preventive medicine, the utopian life can be attained by control and management.

Kuriyama says that an ideal state of the body reflects an ideal state of society. If this is right, I would like to know what relationship there is between the ideal state in preventive medicine and our modern society. Advanced nations are, more or less,

in the state of managed society where our every day life is surveyed and managed by the government, bureaucratic systems, regulated economy, and the sophisticated information web. In this sense, there seems to be some relationship between the ideal state and society. But at the same time, these technologies are progressing most in such countries as the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia, where people prefer freedom and individualism to management over people. This is my first question.

In preventive medicine, we try to control the state of the body as much as possible. But in order to succeed the management we should know well the function of nature in our bodily system, and sometimes we should leave our treatment to the natural process or natural healing power in the body. Our attitude towards nature is complicated in modern medicine. If you have any comments I would like to know.