

# Philosophy and Ethics

My research is chiefly in the areas of Western philosophy and ethics, including bioethics and medical ethics.

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Associate Professor

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Interests:

Kant's philosophy, Terminal care, History and classification of ethics, Elderly living in solitude, Individual and community

## 1. Kant's philosophy and the German Enlightenment

Kant's philosophy and its background is one focus of my research and I have published a monograph on Kant's distinction between the terms "plausibility" and "probability" (2002) (in German). Kant attempted to distinguish these terms on the basis of his debates with the authors of the German Enlightenment. In the course of my research I describe how Kant also spent his entire life dealing with human nature (1).

## 2. Terminal care

Among recent discussions on euthanasia and death with dignity, there are two contrasting views. One emphasizes the importance of the patient's self-determination, and the other the importance of compassion for dependent patients. I survey the situation of international disputes on the withdrawal of life-sustaining treatment (2).

## 3. History and classification of ethics

Various western philosophy and ethics have an influence on modern bioethics. I survey the characteristics of these philosophy and ethics (3).

It is widely recognized that biomedical ethics was based on liberal individualism, which originated in Mill's arguments in *On Liberty* (1859). Since then, importance of independence and self-determination has been emphasized in society. However, in recent years there has been criticism to this stress on independence seen from the viewpoint of human relationship. I think that these insights of the latter position are essential in order to deal with the problems of providing support to suffering (4).

## 4. Elderly living in solitude

The study focuses on the extent to which elderly living in solitude are satisfied with their lifestyles. To examine this issue, semi-structured interviews were conducted with twelve elderly persons (ages 69-90). The transcripts from these interviews were analyzed through a qualitative-inductive approach. The information provided during the interviews suggest that in order for the elderly to better accept their present situation, it is necessary that they are able to find ways of deepening and improving both their self-relationships and relationships with others (5-7).

## 5. Individual and community

We live not only as independent individuals but also as members of various communities. However, many people find it extremely difficult to enter into a community. Anxiety is widespread in modern society. Antagonism and a lack of understanding between people are ever present in our everyday and social lives. Once they are living on their own, the elderly may seek social exchanges more than they had previously. Nevertheless, they find difficulties fitting into a community, which consequently results in them distancing themselves from human relations. The trend of the world in which individuals are prioritized over the community has a great influence on the lives of these elderly. In the study, I focus on the present type of society in which we live from the viewpoints of philosophers engaged in the problems of communities (8).

We find people in our communities who face difficulties such as aging, sickness, physical handicaps and bereavement. These physical and mental hardships, as well as economic problems, are especially burdensome for elderly people who live alone. Anxiety is widespread in modern society. People feel anxiety about the possibility of terrible events occurring that could weaken their position in society. In the study, I am concerned with the manners in which comfort can be provided for those in pain (9).

## List of Main Publications from 2013 to 2018

- 1) Funaki S. Development of Kant's thought of human nature in a person: from Moral of individuals to moral of communities. Sapporo Medical University (2015) 6:9-16 (in Japanese).
- 2) Funaki S. The legal system and the present situation in each country. Measures to shorten the lives. Muramatsu S, Matsushima T, Morinaga S (eds.), *Bioethics as a cultural study* (2016)144-147. Maruzen, Tokyo (in Japanese).
- 3) Funaki S. What is ethics? Awaya T, Yamashita N, Shishido K, Kato J (eds.), *Bioethics. Medicine and Law* (2016)2-11. Fukuro, Okayama (in Japanese).
- 4) Funaki S. Ethical Inquiry about society, and how it supports

people in weak positions: ethics of strength and ethics of weakness. *Journal of Mind-Body Science* (2016) 25(1): 13-22 (in Japanese).

- 5) Funaki S, Yamamoto T, Hatate T, Awaya T. Mental and social situations that provide support to elderly people living alone. *Hokkaido Journal of Bioethics* (2015) 3:13-26 (in Japanese).
- 6) Funaki S. Philosophical and ethical inquiry about society, which supports elderly living in solitude. *Caring of Regions* (2016) 18(4):60-61 (in Japanese).
- 7) Funaki S, Miyajima S, Yamamoto T, Michinobu R, Away T. Our society, which stands close together with elderly living in solitude. *Caring of Regions* (2017) 19(9):52-53 (in Japanese).
- 8) Funaki S. A society in which forming a reliable community is difficult: from the perspective of support to elderly people. *Hokkaido Journal of Bioethics* (2018) 6:1-12 (in Japanese).
- 9) Funaki S. The sphere of loneliness and the community. *Journal of Mind-Body Science* (2017) 26(1): 13-23 (in Japanese).