

A Korean Shaman and a Catholic Bishop: Two Cognitive Narrative Frameworks for Making Sense of Life

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This philosophical essay addresses the semantic process of meaning-making in two autobiographical narratives: one of a Korean shaman and another of a Catholic bishop. Both can be commonly classified under the label of religious professionals, though they were situated in quite different contexts. The Korean shaman lived in twentieth-century Korea and the Catholic bishop, St. Augustine, lived in the fourth and fifth-century Roman empire. Their stories are told in retrospect, after their religious identity was resolutely determined. By analyzing the two life stories, I will provide an account on how a shaman and a Christian can conceive/interact with other people and with her or his non-human surroundings, and above all, how each differentiates her or his own life from others. Considering that both Shamanism and Christianity are thriving in today's Korea, this study of comparative epistemology will contribute to our understanding of the lives of contemporary religious people.

Keywords: comparative epistemology, semantic cognition, narrative framework, Christianity, Korean Shamanism, Korean culture.

Introduction

In this essay, I would like to examine the meaning of life conceived in two autobiographical narratives: one of a Korean shaman and the other of a Roman Catholic bishop. The two share in common the status of religious professional, though they were situated in quite different historical, social, and cultural contexts. The Korean shaman (Yongsu's mother) lived in twentieth-century Korea and her story was told to and rendered into English by an American anthropologist (Kendall 1988). The Roman Catholic bishop St. Augustine lived in the

fourth and fifth-century Roman Empire and composed his own story as a confession directed primarily towards his God (Augustine 1998). Both stories were told in retrospect, after the subject's religious identity was resolutely determined. So when we read their stories, we can see how a shaman and a Christian can tell her or his life from others, interact with other people and with her or his non-human surroundings, and above all how each construes what constitutes a meaningful life.

In analyzing the two stories, one should keep in mind the following questions: What kinds of frameworks are being introduced in the religious, as well as in the everyday, cognitive semantic process of making sense of life? How does such a framework, if any, function in one's orientation in her or his life story? How is such an orientation embedded in interpreting life? And, what does this mean for religious life in contemporary Korean culture? Considering that both Shamanism and Christianity are thriving religions in today's Korea, this study of comparative epistemology will be useful to our understanding of current Korean religious character from a broadened perspective. Indeed St. Augustine has become an exemplary Christian role-model in Korea, emulated by many Korean Catholics and Protestants. This is one of the reasons why I chose St. Augustine for my comparison. However, I will focus more on the shamanic story in this discussion simply because Christianity is relatively new in the Korean context of religious culture and because Augustine's *The Confessions* is better known to us.¹

Before proceeding I should make clear that my attempt here is not to answer such questions as 'What is Korean Shamanism?' and 'What is Christianity (in Korea)?' Rather, it is to understand more clearly 'When is a person a shaman?' and 'When is a person a Christian?' In other words, my task here is to answer, with my cases, the questions of 'How does one become a shaman or a Christian?' and 'How does one identify and signify oneself as a shaman or a Christian?'² As a preparatory measure for understanding autobiographical narra-

1. The first Korean Christian community was established in the late 18th century. For a brief history of Christianity in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Korea, see Baker 1999. For the diversity of contemporary religious cultures in Korea, see Lancaster and Payne 1997.

2. I first learned this style of questioning (i.e., reconceptions of the problem itself) from the American philosopher Nelson Goodman's way of addressing art and the aesthetic. See Goodman 1978, especially pages 57-70. As I believe any attempts to answer "What is Korean Shamanism?" might end in frustration, I won't venture to make any hasty generalizations about Korean Shamanism or Christianity. There might be many other ways of being a Korean shaman

tives, I will start my discussion with a brief account of how experience and interpretation can be weaved together into a narrative.

Life Experience and its Interpretation

A life story is constructed out of the welter of one's life experiences, by the use of signs and symbols. Expectedly, all that one has experienced is not to be recognized, remembered and represented, but only something relevant (positive or negative) to one's life. What is relevant must be selected in accordance with one's frame of meaning and value or one's orientation toward the world, which can be seen as regulative or constitutive in forming a life story as well as in leading a life. So '*lived* experience' is by no means the same as '*interpreted* experience'. And any life story should, no doubt, be placed under the category of interpreted experience. In this manner, interpreted life will function as a frame of reference or semantic framework when one has to deal with and express experiences, old and new. In other words, this will dictate one's cognitive and emotional orientation and form one's narrative model in a process of story telling.³

Especially in the case of an autobiographical narrative, the storyteller's self-representation is required not only for self-understanding but also for public dissemination of one's version of her or his life story. Through self-representation we can see a personality or an identity that is produced conjointly from many different sources. For this reason, the self represented in one's life story is a useful guide in locating who one is. Here the narrated self is our focal point. "The

or a Christian that are not addressed in the present work. My impression on Korean Shamanism is that it can be much harder to capture some general patterns from Korean shaman cases than Christian ones. The lack of defining formal frameworks (e.g., the Bible, dogmas, and organizational traditions) is one of the unique characteristics of Korean Shamanism. This may be at the same time advantageous and disadvantageous for Korean shamans and students of Korean Shamanism. In this respect, the comparison between Christianity and Korean Shamanism can be seen akin structurally to the one between Western medical science and Eastern medicine in contemporary East Asia. We can see some similar trajectories of Shamanism history and Eastern medical history in modern times. For an account of Chinese medicine in modern China, see Scheid 2002.

3. In fact, the interaction between experience, memory, and storytelling is too complex to address here in detail. Memory consists of such a process of continual construction that it can change, depending on the context of the immediate experience. The interaction between experience and memory is at work in bidirectional ways. For some detailed accounts on memory and experience in cognitive science, see Modell 2003:25-48 and Hirstein 2006:43-69.

self that is the center of narrative gravity,” as Owen Flanagan succinctly states, “is constructed not only out of real-life materials; it is also organized around a set of aims, ideals, and aspirations of the self” (Flanagan 2002:251).

However, it is not our business here to determine whether the represented self in our case trades in fact or fiction. Sometimes, the self may express ideals of what one tries to be but has not yet achieved. At any rate, our main concern is what their story is *about*. Our aim is, in analyzing the construction of the narrative self, to arrive at an understanding of how one organizes and structures one’s (especially religious) experiences and symbolic devices into a single story or multiple versions. In a sense, the process of telling a life from others and making a certain sense of life is a sort of complex, strenuous practice of constructing a meaningful text or its evolving versions, whether told to others or not.

In addition to such a text, we should take into consideration the setting since there must be some context in which a text can be signified and made sense of. As our life cannot but be situated in human and non-human surroundings, our text is destined to be constructed and interpreted within a certain context. For this reason, context is no less significant than text. Moreover, the semantic structure and organization of a text is, in most cases, dictated by which context one tries to fit it into. So we should not miss noticing the interdependent and interactive relationship between the text and its context.

Different Frames of Narration

To begin with, I would like to cite a passage from Stanley Fish’s helpful discussion of master narrative models of biography:

Once upon a time, biographers didn’t have to invent connections because they came ready made in the form of master narrative models. The two most durable were the providential model (everyone lives out the pattern of mistakes bequeathed to us by the original sin of Adam and Eve) and the wheel of fortune model (every life worth chronicling is an example of the general rule that what goes up must come down). The great advantage of these models was that they supplied in advance the meaning... (Fish 1999:19).

Besides the two antithetical master models of the providential and the wheel of

fortune, Fish indicates another option available to modern-day biographers which can be named the minutia-without-meaning model. Though all this is about biography and biographers, the narrative models offered here can hold true for autobiography as well. Autobiographical narrators can adopt, intentionally or unknowingly, such models to interpret or invent and fabricate a certain meaning in their own life story. Given that our cases are successful in publishing their story meaningfully and our aim is to understand their ways of signification of life, we should eliminate the third option from our discussion.

Let us start with the one that is easier to address. The providential model is pervasive in any Christian life story, which characterizes the Christian tradition based on confessional commitments to the belief in the Bible as God's word or as the true, foundational testimony. The theological term "God's providence" means that the Lord God created the world and His people, and He did not abandon His creatures to live on their own. God's continual care, as the loving Father, for what he has made is designated by His providence in the Christian context. In short, being a Christian means first of all believing in His providence. Hence it is tautological that expression of God's providence is an essential element of Christian narrative. For this reason, we can often see the image of God as the Creator and as the loving Father, when reading such stories written with the providential model framework.

Augustine's *The Confessions* is a good example of this model; in a sense, it has to a great extent contributed to forming such a style of providential narrative. Granted that Augustine came to believe in 'no happenings by chance' after his conversion to Christianity at Milan in 387; the wheel of fortune model might not be proper for his life story that was written when he was a Catholic bishop from 397 to 400. He says: "You are God and Lord of all you have created. In you are the constant causes of inconstant things. All mutable things have in you their immutable origins. In you all irrational and temporal things have the everlasting causes of their life" (*The Confessions I. vi*). In this train of reasoning, those who attribute an event to 'chance' are certainly ignorant of the true cause. Nothing but God is the true cause of everything every time. Here we meet a monotheistic model of the providential narrative.?

Now we will look at the structure of Augustine's narration. Just browsing *The Confessions*, we can easily notice that passages from the Bible occupy significant and privileged places in his story: telling his Christian life from others and making a certain Christian sense of life. His narration begins and ends with some passages from the Bible: the first verse is to praise God, "You are great,

Lord and highly to be praised (Ps. 47:2): great is your power and your wisdom is immeasurable” (Ps. 146:5) and the last verse is to confess to God that He is the one and only Master of providence, “Only you can be asked, only you can be begged, only on your door can we knock” (Matt. 7:7-8).

Thus the organized structure of narration itself might reflect the narrator’s steadfast faith in God as the single Master of even his own life. In this way, God is represented as the alpha and the omega of his story. Put another way, this implies that his life is amorphous and meaningless without God. As a consequence, the Bible is placed as the frame of meaning and thereby his life experiences are interpreted and organized into a single story in a tight connection with that frame. In this respect, the Bible provides Augustine with a model and a vocabulary for his quest that is directed to the meaningful life in his conception. Here we can see one way of making sense of life: signification of life in terms of the master model of the Bible.

Another point to note in *The Confessions* is its principal leitmotif—the ‘parable of the prodigal son’. Augustine found his personal quest and pilgrimage symbolized in St. Luke’s account and rephrased it in narrating his past experiences. It is in the form of a master model, especially in *Confessions III. vi*. And this prodigal son parable represents allegorically the belief that “the story of the soul wandering from God and then in torment and tears finding its way home through conversion is also the story of the entire created order” (*The Confessions, xxiv*). We can see here once more Augustine’s conviction that the Bible is the single redemptive truth for the salvation of fallen souls. Following such a faith, fallen souls cannot but live out “the pattern of mistakes bequeathed to us by the original sin of Adam and Eve.” Salvation or redemption of human beings from original sin is possible by God’s grace alone, and by no means by their own efforts. The meaning Augustine sought in life fits quite well into the single master model of providential narrative.

Then what about atheistic or irreligious people? Many adopted the wheel of fortune model in their practice of making sense of life, as we can observe in the expression *amor fati* (love toward one’s fate) by Nietzsche and ancient Greeks, as well as by many Asians.⁴ Then, what about those who are not committed to the Christian faith but still theistic and religious people like Yongsu’s mother? It is tempting but mistaken to believe that they also use the wheel of fortune model

4. Scientific determinism can be considered another modern version of this model.

in the construction of the meaning of life, simply because they do not accept the providential model.

Let us now examine the Korean shaman story. First of all, there are several elements of the story and the way in which it was told that we should be aware of. First, we cannot attribute the full authorship of her own story to Yongsu's mother herself, unlike in the case of Augustine. This shaman story is a sort of discourse evolved through the cooperation of two women—an American anthropologist and a Korean shaman. Therefore each chapter consists of two parts: Yongsu's mother's own narration of her story ('interpreting life') and Laurel Kendall's explanatory annotation ('interpreting interpreted life'). Moreover, the finalized English rendering of her story available to us was not produced under the shaman's control. Second, and related to this first caution, this story was not written consistently in the form of a single unified version by the autographical narrator, unlike Augustine's story which is organized in chronological order. Adding more difficulty is the fact that there are different versions of the same episode. Third, we should also consider who Yongsu's mother's target audience for her story was. Unlike God in Augustine's case, the shaman's narration was primarily toward her human in-groups (friends, colleagues, relatives, and neighbors). This is one of the reasons why she was reluctant when she first heard about the plan to publish her story: "But in America, what if Koreans read it? They'll think it's shameful" (Kendall 1988:126).⁵ If she had intended to publish her story at its conception in the form of a book, she might have provided a different version. Keeping in mind such background features, let us return to our discussion about narrative models.

The most obvious difference in the Korean shaman story is that the shaman does not take the Bible as a model for creating a narrative, nor does the shaman share the concern of Augustine for a confessional commitment. This deprives the shaman's story of the sort of readymade structure that would tell us as soon as we start reading it what the underlying theme of her story is going to be or what sort of framework she will use to link the many twists and turns in her life into a coherent narrative.

5. Another thing to note is the dynamic character of storytelling itself: "Storytelling is a group activity: the presence and assistance of an audience ensures that there will always be a number of persons to bear witness to the contents of the story and to quell any accusation that the storyteller may have erred or touched on matters which were improper" (Hoffman 2001:241). This description can apply as well to Yongsu's mother's narrative performance in our case.

At first glance, Yongsu's mother seems to accept the wheel of fortune model. She occasionally uses words such as 'horoscope' and 'fate' in interpreting her life and the lives of others, locating causal conditions of what has happened. Moreover, she attributes the cause of mishaps in her life and her troubled life as a whole ultimately to her birth at an unlucky hour:

I was born at seven in the morning on the eighth day of the third lunar month. I should have been born in the evening, and so my fate is wretched (*p'alchaga sanapta*). They told me I should marry late, but even that didn't help because my husband died anyway (Kendall 1988:31).

She acknowledges that there are external, influential forces on her life which are not in her own control. Seen from the utterance above, the concept of fortune, or broadly the wheel of fortune model of narrative, is used in understanding her life experiences and the telling of her life story as a frame of meaning and signification. The self-image of Yongsu's mother as 'a women of wretched fate' is constructed in connection with the framework of fortune—*saju* (the horoscope determined by the four units of timing: year, month, day, and hour of birth). In this style of thinking, human beings can know what will happen but cannot control it. This is contrary to Augustine's skeptical attitude toward the human capability to know God's providence. In one way or another, this *saju* framework dictates the meaning of life in our shaman story.

However, it is noteworthy here that such a style of astrological thinking is not unique to Yongsu's mother; rather, it is more or less popular and pervasive in the Korean cultural context, both past and present. That is clearly no marker of telling a shaman life from others. Many figures in her story make reference casually to that explanatory framework in their daily discourse. For example, her sister said to her, arguing about the matter of her marriage: "With your wretched bad fate, you should marry an older man, someone who's already been married once" (Kendall 1988:21). This must be taken as a standing cultural matrix shared between Yongsu's mother (a shaman) and her audience (actual or latent clients), in a form of cultural common sense.

Then, is this frame of meaning identical with the wheel of fortune model that was suggested at the beginning of this section? Yongsu's mother would not accept such a standard model that "every life worth chronicling is an example of the general rule that what goes up must come down," though she *used* some

similar version. If she had had a strong fatalistic attitude toward her life, she would not have cried out for what had happened, whether bad or good for her. If so, she should have accepted in silence whatever happened/happening/will happen, as her husband advised: “What’s done is done. You won’t get anywhere by crying about it” (Kendall 1988:23). Her husband looks like a strong fatalist, but she does not. The fact that she cried so often at some critical events in her interpretation indicates, at least symbolically, that she strived to find some solution to life problems, even by intervening in fortune’s unfolding. To Yongsu’s mother and anyone else, crying out is the first basic skill acquired, usually mastered in infancy, in struggling with and solving life problems.

However, if she had not mastered any skills other than crying, she would have remained under the bondage of a wretched fate. And yet, somehow, this ill-fated woman became a shaman! Then, what do shamans do? What distinguishes shamans from other people? Yongsu’s mother describes herself as *mansin* (shaman) but does not provide any precise definition of who is a shaman. So our business now is to delineate some aspects or features of being a shaman and to identify what a shaman does.

According to Kendall’s introduction, Yongsu’s mother is “a Korean shaman [*mansin*], one who invokes the gods and [spirits of dead] ancestors, speaks with their voice, and claims their power to interpret dreams and visions” (Kendall 1988:1). From this description, we can see one feature—belief in a kind of supernatural being (like Augustine and unlike atheists). Yongsu’s mother is certainly theistic and believes that supernatural powers exert substantial influence on human lives and world affairs. She can be seen as accepting a certain version of the providential narrative, though her version is not as clearly defined as Augustine’s. Why and how she became a shaman is to be explained by this providential model of hers.

Kendall describes it thusly: “When she was down on her luck, the gods lifted up and chose her for a shaman” (Kendall 1988:3). In this respect, “a white-haired grandfather” in Yongsu’s mother story plays a role no different from God in Augustine’s. She sometimes calls that grandfather “Grandfather Mountain God” and believes that the Mountain God saved her life during the Korean War. When she talks about that Mountain God, it is always with gratitude for his grace. This special relationship of Yongsu’s mother’s with that grandfather God is a unique framework positively constructive and constitutive in making her own shamanic sense of life. This must be a distinct marker in conceiving and expressing her life as a destined shaman. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that there

are also other supernatural agents of a different character and power in her story. As usual in shamanic stories, the unlucky dead cause trouble and restless spirits are held as causal agents of unfortunate events. At any rate, this feature can be seen in others as well as in shamans.

Next, another feature is the skill of communication with such supernatural agents, with which she can track down the source of trouble, whether human or supernatural. This is more or less a special talent of shamans, though not a uniquely shamanic one. One of the unique features of being a shaman is her role as *mediator*. Shamans claim they are capable of managing the relationship and even striking bargains between supernatural agents and human agents. Let us look at Kendall's personal observational account of Yongsu's mother:

By virtue of the powerful gods who possess her, she can summon up divination visions and probe the source of a client's misfortunes, exorcise the sick and chronically unlucky, remove ill humors from those who have difficulty in finding mates, and coax a reluctant birth spirit into an infertile womb. The professional shaman makes the gods and ancestors a vivid presence in the home; she spots them in her visions and gives them voice in trance. In *kut*, her most elaborate ritual, she grabs herself in their costumes and in their person scolds, banter, advises, and commiserates with the mortal members of household and community (Kendall 1988:6).

This shows clearly what a shaman does. According to this account, Yongsu's mother can know not only what will happen in advance, but can also intervene in ordinary or extraordinary human events and world affairs through the use of supernatural forces. This then is an essential marker for telling a shaman life from the lives of others. Here we can see another framework—a version of the interventionist model—utilized in expressing and interpreting her life experiences. Some human agents (competent shamans in our case) can channel and manipulate supernatural powers for some human benefits: an asymmetrical but bidirectional relationship between the supernatural and the natural. No doubt, this is not permitted in Augustine's conception of God's providence. According to Augustine, God (the supernatural agent) can intervene occasionally, with no constraints, in the natural process and human affairs, but human beings are too weak to influence God to do something for them. The relationship between the supernatural and the natural in Augustine's conception is asymmetrical and fairly unidirectional. In contrast, our shaman claims that she can do such and so and

her clients also believe her capability to do such and so for them. Adopting such a frame, she may participate to some extent in making sense of not only her own life but also others' lives (i.e., her clients'), even though this is not done solely through her own power.

Due to the absence of any single binding frame of narration, it was harder for us to track down what kinds of frameworks are at work in the meaning-making practice of life in the shaman story. As seen so far, Yongsu's mother alternatively or concurrently uses three frameworks—the fortune, the providential, and the interventionist, each in her own way—in constructing her life story. Thanks to there being no formal constraints in her story from the outset, narrating that story can be more inventive and improvisational. For this reason, we can find no precisely defined meaning of life that is used to regulate the whole story of her life. As her experience or her situation changes, she can adopt another framework and express another meaning. Her mode of signification of life and narration of her life story is plural, pragmatic, and flexible. This we can designate as a *complex adaptive model* of cognition and narration.⁶ Next, let us look briefly at how such frameworks are embedded in conceiving life problems.

Ways of Conceiving and Solving Life Problems

In *The Confessions*, Augustine's life from his birth to his becoming a Catholic bishop is conceived as a linear and continuous progression toward God, thanks to His providence. But the evolving story from a girl named Changmi, to a woman called Yongsu's mother, and to a shaman with the title of *mansin* is not linear but complex, continuous but not accumulative. Thus each story reflects the main features of its underlying master narrative model. If Augustine's autobiographical narration means for him finding evidence of God's providence in his life, then the story of Yongsu's mother means for her and her audience the discovery of demonstrative reasons for why and how she became a shaman, and at times advertises what a competent shaman she is.

6. Those who adopt this model can borrow some elements or even some frames easily from other religions, as we can see in our shaman case. See the shaman's ties to Buddha in the fifth chapter (Kendall 1988:68-84). This kind of flexibility is one distinct characteristic of Chinese medicine (Scheid 2002). My model suggested for the shaman story is developed from some cognitive psychologists' comparative study. See Nisbett 2003.

In Augustine's story, the meaning of life in this world is instrumental and provisional at best, by no means an end to itself. It is meaningful only when it is right on the way towards God. And his final destination is aimed at the Sabbath rest of eternal life, as he confesses again and again, "our heart is restless until it rests in you" (*The Confessions I. i*). Resting in God is held to be the true happiness that is possible only in the afterlife and that can be given by God's grace alone, never achieved by human efforts: "Who will enable me to find rest in you? Who will grant me that you come to my heart and intoxicate it, so that I forget my evils and embrace my one and only good, yourself?" (*The Confessions I. v*). This orientation is shown in his determined attitude toward loving the incorporeal, in attempting to transcend this-worldly material things — physical pleasures, secular ambitions, and so on. So faith and will to understand God's truth are valued as essential elements in a meaningful life in this world. The life problem taken seriously by Augustine is anything but a matter of this-worldly affairs. In short, Augustine's life problem is not to be solved within this provisional life.

If there is no place in the Korean shaman's story for such concepts as salvation and happiness in the afterlife, then what makes life valuable for Yongsu's mother? Unlike Augustine, she is certainly oriented toward this-worldly matters. She values nothing other than living well in this world and flourishing in this life. Ordinary and normal life may be her ideal life, though its conception and imagery are changeable as her situated society changes. Let us then see how she describes her ideal life. She says: "People should be born, marry, and grow old, reach their sixty-first and seventy-first years" and "When I die, I want to be reborn in a rich family. I wasn't able to study. I never had the love of parents, of siblings, of husband, none of it, none of it" (Kendall 1988:29, 126). Think about the expression 'a woman of wretched fate'! The degree of wretchedness is measured by how far one is away from society's standard of living well and flourishing.

Having and raising one's own children is one of the essential elements of a normal life conceived by Yongsu's mother or expected by the society in which she lived. Before becoming a shaman, she was told: "To raise up your children, use Kam'ak Mountain" (Kendall 1988:29). So she went to Kam'ak Mountain to use its supernatural force and prayed there that her sons would turn out well. She succeeded in raising her sons, but her sisters-in-law, who had no shamanic capacities, were unable to bring any sons into the world. Perhaps she became a shaman, so as to lead her life and to maintain her own family. Then, being a

shaman can be seen as one way of leading and reaping a certain ordinary life in this world, as seen in the case of Yongsu's mother.

Concluding Remarks

From our two cases, we have learned that both religious professionals had a belief in the existence of some extra-human agent or agents exerting influence to a significant extent on human affairs. Is such a belief indispensable for endowing some 'religious' meaning to life? Maybe, or maybe not! At any rate, our study of these two life stories shows clearly the relevance of such a belief to their conception of the religious sense of life. No matter what commonalities are shared between the two, a major difference to note is direction. A set of aims, ideals, and aspirations of the self is directed at things this-worldly in the shaman's case, contrary to the Christian's orientation toward the afterlife. This is no trivial matter!

Another issue to take seriously is the binding problem. We have observed the presence of some formal constraints in Christian stories that life becomes meaningful only within the single master framework of God's providence. But no such definite constraints are to be seen in shamanic stories. Christianity is monistic but Korean Shamanism is pluralistic, in the dimension of epistemology. As I have discussed earlier, the absence of any single master framework for binding all shaman practitioners together could become a distinct feature of Korean Shamanism and shamans could use a sort of complex adaptive model for life experience and its interpretation. The implication of adaptability, complexity, and plurality is that what is identified as an essential marker of being a shaman in one story need not remain the same over time and in other stories. This may explain one of the reasons why we have difficulty in describing, representing, or even recognizing any single identifying feature of Korean Shamanism in general. In that case, we should direct our attention to the diversity and variety of shaman practitioners and their clients, rather than to finding a neat formula for differentiating shamans from others.

Now let us think about some possible applications of our study to religious cultures in Korea. Considering some characteristics of Korean shamans and the fact that Shamanism is still robust in Korea, we may ask: 1) whether Koreans might demand that religious professionals provide some solutions to this-worldly matters, even when that kind of business is not proper for their own religious

tradition: 2) if it might be possible to divide those identified in surveys as Christians (or as Buddhists, for that matter) into two more refined categories: those who share Augustine's other-worldly orientation and those who share the this-worldly concerns of shamans. We should not let a common label (such as "Christian") blind us to the diversity within the group to whom that label is applied. Instead, we should look at lots of little things individual religious Koreans say and do and let the data provided by such observations generate the categories we use in describing Korean religious culture. That will give us a more informative and accurate picture than one we would get through highly abstract and general categories. The stories individual Koreans tell can offer diverse lenses and perspectives to us viewing in and out of the broad concepts and categories of the schema that has been used to describe religions in Korea. As here and elsewhere, we should be aware that our established habits of classification lead us fairly often to apply an old scheme when the case it is applied to is new, even when the case does call for us to devise a novel way of understanding. Taking a closer look at stories, or cases is one of the few ways available for us to go beyond our entrenched scheme of concepts and categories.⁷

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7. I learned this historicist way of doing philosophy (i.e., "taking a look") from the Canadian philosopher Ian Hacking's project of 'historical ontology'. See Hacking 2002, especially pages 51-72.

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