

Academic Summary Lecture: November 9, 2006

Religions and Academics (2):

Religions are dangerous!?

Fumihiko Sueki

1. Are we in a time of the abundance of religions or a time without religions?

Morioka, Masahiro. *How to Live in a Post-Religious Age*. Tokyo: Hozokan, 1996.

“The Reason Why I cannot Believe in Religion” (p.57)

- (1) I must be honest about the feeling that no one, including myself, has ever spoken or will ever speak the absolute truth.
- (2) I can not talk about the life after death assertively.
- (3) I can not take an assertive attitude to say, “This is the very truth that is correct,” with regard to the fundamental matters concerning the overall formation of the world and the universe.
- (4) I can not immerse myself in what others say and think about those fundamental matters. I must find an answer for myself, using my own words and thoughts.

“Religion” and “Religiosity”

“Religion” in this context is a movement into which the founder, his dogmas, his group’s religious activities, etc. are integrated. “Religiosity” concerns religious themes intrinsic to human life such as “What is life or death?”, “What happens after death?”, and “Why do I exist?” (p.61)

Issues:

1. Ambiguity of religion
2. Ignoring history and tradition

2. Concept of “Religion”

2004 statistics (“*The Yearbook of Religion*”): The religious population of Japan is close

to twice the country's total population (approx. 12 million).

Shintoism:	107,778,194 (49.9%)
Buddhism:	95,555,343 (44.2%)
Christianity:	1,917,070 (0.9%)
Other religions:	10,713,248 (5.9%)
Total:	215,963,855

On the other hand, according to various surveys, those who believe in religions account for less than 30% of the Japanese population.

Issues:

1. Why is it that the religious population is twice the total population?
2. Why is it that believers are few in number in the survey results despite the large number of religious population?

Duality of "Religion"

1. Self-conscious faith in the strict sense of the term
2. Activities that have become mores: *Hatsumode* (the practice of visiting a shrine or a temple at the beginning of the New Year), *Shichigosan* (the festival for children of three, five and seven years of age, who dress up in traditional kimono and visit their local shrine), wedding ceremonies, and funerals Buddhism (i.e., reliance on Buddhism for funerals only) (Shinto and Buddhist deities often complimentary)

Modern "religion" equals religion as described in 1. above.

Shimaji Mokurai (1838-1911)

When modernizing Japan through the Meiji Restoration, the Meiji Government attached importance to Shintoism and adopted the policy of unification of religion and politics.

A counterattack by the True Pure Land sect of Buddhism (*Jodoshinshu*) --- the breakaway from the policy of unification of religion and politics --- freedom of religion The concept of new "religion" as the basis for freedom of religion --- A matter of one's personal beliefs.

It is different from the traditional concept of Buddhism or Shintoism: It is not so much a matter of one's belief in his mind as a matter of the family or the community, e.g., funeral Buddhism and the syncretic fusion of Shintoism and Buddhism

Establishment of “academic disciplines” in Japan ----- imperial universities ---
“academic disciplines” in national universities

“Academic disciplines” useful to the country ----- There is no tradition of free learning.
An illusion of “academic freedom” ----- Academism: an ivory tower or an
“intellectual”?

The questions raised by the movement of the All-Campus Joint Struggle Committees
and their outcome.

“Academic disciplines” within the framework of society-- universities as professional
groups

Who decides the overall framework? -- Collapse of Marxism --- Disappearance of the
discussion questioning “the whole”

Can public-ness be established? -- Suspicion about “public philosophy”

“Philosophy”-- Trivialization of philosophy -- Philosophy is also a separate discipline.

“Human” Domain and Deviation:

Concept of “humans,” cf., Tetsuro Watsuji, *Ethics as an Academic Discipline of
Humans*.

Source Books and Papers by the Author:

Sueki, Fumihiko. *Bukkyo vs. Rinri (Buddhism vs. Ethics)*. Chikuma Shinsho, 2006.

_____. *Nihon Bukkyo-no Kanosei (Possibility of Japanese Buddhism)*.
Shinjusha, 2006.

_____, *Ganbare Tetsugaku! (Keep it up, Philosophy!)*, in Yasuo Kobayashi
(ed.), *Ima Tetsugaku towa Nanika (What is philosophy today?)*, Miraisha, 2006.

(Reference Materials)

**Outline of a Presentation at the Japanese Association for Religious Studies
September 10, 2005**

Asking the Question of “Religion” Again

Fumihiko Sueki

1. Situation after the Aum Shinrikyo Incident

I do not necessarily agree with the excessive coverage of the Aum Shinrikyo incident. It is, however, no mistake to say that it was an incident symbolic of a major historic turnaround to the world as well as to Japan. With the collapse of the Marxist countries, the illusion of political reform realizing an ideal society came to an end, and political terrorism of the past shifted to religious terrorism. That was also the end of the illusion that religion seeks peace. It is not convincing to say in simple dualism that good religions seek peace and bad religions resort to violence. The opportunism of switching from politics to religion simply because politics doesn't seem to work, won't work, either. Rather, what really needs to be elucidated is how humans really are, which is revealed when humans are shorn of political and religious ostentation. That said, however, why is it that religion still has to be a fundamental issue?

2. Review of “Religion” and “Religious Studies”

It is widely recognized today that when the concept of “*shukyo (religion)*” came to be used as a translation of “religion” in modern times, it had a significant bias. Shimaji Mokurai and others who used the concept of “religion” at the earliest time reduced it to one's personal beliefs, thus concealing the functions such as funeral Buddhism that Buddhism actually fulfilled. Is it, then, enough to expand the concept of “religion” to include those in the framework of “religion” and recognize “religious studies” as the academic discipline that studies such phenomena? The answer is not that simple. No matter how large the framework of “religion” is expanded, “religious studies” cannot go over the framework of special science in which a special phenomenon called “religion” is elucidated by special methods.

I do not mean to deny the meaning of such special science. What “religion” entails, however, cannot necessarily be elucidated in a sufficient manner by means of special science. “Religion” deviates “religious studies.” If “religious studies” attempt to limit

their own domain abstintently, how should the issue of “religion” that goes beyond such a domain be handled?

3. Is it possible to transcend the domain of “humans”?

Following the example of Watsuji Tetsuro, I call the domain that is public and explainable by rational language the domain of “humans” as “between humans.” Ethics holds in that domain, so does science. The domain of “humans,” however, is not completed in itself. Not all that I feel as an individual can be verbalized and carried onto the public domain. Humans cannot help getting engaged in the domain that is deviated from “humans” in one form or another and that cannot be made public. All that transcends “humans” cannot simply be referred to “religion.” Religion is the workings that materialize at the crossroads between “humans” and “that which transcends humans” or between “that which can be talked about” and “that which cannot be talked about,” and has methodologies by means of building up experiences.

When we consider it in that light, it becomes clear why “religious studies” cannot sufficiently deal with “religions.” “Religious studies” as special science is merely one of the humanities that belongs to the domain of “humans,” and can deal with issues and topics that fall under that framework. It can, for example, discuss religious doctrines that have been verbalized, and deal with issues concerning the role of religion in society and religious bodies. When the issues go beyond the domain of “humans,” however, they come outside the scope of “religious studies.”

Is it, then, that there is no other way but to know by experience that which cannot be expressed in language? Is there no other alternative but to jump into “religion” itself rather than “religious studies”? There is not necessarily a clear-cut division between “humans” and “that which transcends humans” or between “that which can be talked about” and “that which cannot be talked about.” Doesn’t it stand to reason that linguistic workings that cannot be immediately defined as “religion” can be established as a kind of “philosophy”? Of course, at that stage, the question of “What is philosophy?” has to be revisited.”

(Shukyo Kenkyu [Religious Studies] 347, 2006)