

## COMMENTS

KOHEI HANAZAKI

### I. *From a Philosophical Point of View on Modern History and Civilization*

Today, the world society having polarized into two camps due to the cold war goes into unity after the drastic collapse of the socialist camp in 1989. This political change made the world society unite economically, too. The prevailing economic principle is called free market system. The term “free” of this free market system means chiefly freedom for the multinational corporations. As this unification goes on, the disparity between people’s living condition in North and in South is widening. An overwhelming majority in the world society living in the third world is facing deterioration of their living condition. Their communities having kept an autonomous, subsisting system of production and consumption are now going to ruin. The progress of the crisis in the world society has become more conspicuous under this unified world. The endless economic growth by exploitation of natural resources will sooner or later beyond the limit of the capacity of global environments.

Contemporary problems we are facing, have a complex structure composed of the problems having various historical depth. The collapse of the eastern socialist camp not only changed the world structure after the World War II, but also, brought the efforts for establishing socialist state system since the beginning of 20th century to a period.

Now we realize, socialist development strategy catching up advanced capitalist countries has been planned within the same paradigm with the modern industrialism since 18th century. It has pursued an endless industrial development and destroyed natural environments as its result.

This civilization, on the one hand, created the ideas of human rights. It established the system of civil society and of nation-states. It united the world by these ideas and systems. On the other hand, it divided the world into two groups: the group of sovereign states and the group of colonies. It made up a hierarchical order between civilized superior Europeans and uncivilized inferior non-Europeans, between the people having their own nation-states and the colonized indigenous people. This split of the world into so-called North and South began from the European conquests over the non-European world since 1492.

The philosophy founding multiculturalism should depart from criticism to such history of modern Eurocentric civilization. This criticism should guide us to the idea of reconciliation between civilization and nature and urged us to propose a new alternative to the modern civilization, aimed at preservation and sustenance of the circulation system of life and nature on global and universal scale.

The idea of multiculturalism usually covers the issues on nation, ethnicity, language and religion, etc. We have to make it more wide to cover the issues on gender and sexuality, and on natural and human ecology (including the cultures of the disabled persons).

## II. *The Issues on Multiculturalism in Contemporary Japan*

There is neither common understanding nor consensus on "multiculturalism" in common people in Japan. The word "multiculturalism" does not yet have popularity in Japanese society. There is another term being used in Japanese society, instead. It is "multiethnic togetherness" in literally translation. This word has emerged from the new social movements since the end of 1960s and penetrated into society. The initial issues giving birth to this word are the discrimination against around 600,000 Korean residents in Japanese society.

Another issue on discrimination having been exposed since the same period was the one against the Ainu people and other indigenous minority people in northern areas. The Ainu people have lived mainly in northern islands, Sakhalin, Kuril Islands and Hokkaido since time immemorial. They have their own language and culture and their population is estimated around 50,000. Japanese state and government keep on neglecting their identity as the indigenous people until now.

There are the Okinawans keeping an ethnically different culture from majority Japanese, though they do not declare themselves as a different ethnic group. The task achieving an equal relationship without discrimination between those minority people and majority Japanese is expressed as the word "multiethnic togetherness."

The new comers who are mostly immigrant workers from Asia and Latin America, have increased since the beginning of 1980s. Their populations are now estimated 900,000. Majority ethnic Japanese still has mono-nationalist mentality that it is natural for them to enjoy citizenship as their exclusive rights and for those minorities and foreigners being not treated as equal. The new social movements have aimed at abolishing various sorts of discriminations against those people, establishing the rights of the minorities and creating a society in which all the residents could enjoy equal rights as citizens.

Therefore, we must stand on the critical reflection on modern history of the imperialistic nation-state building, when we intend to change Japanese society into a multiethnic, multicultural one. We must overcome Japanese national identity based on mono-nation-state ideology, having been formulated in that process.

This national identity was fostered by the influence of the Chinese ethnocentric culture during the premodern period. This culture says, the Chinese is a civilized cultural superior people and other people surrounding them are cultural inferior barbarians. Japanese confucianists applied this ideology to Japan. They modified it to discriminate non-Japanese people as barbarians. The Europeans were considered as barbarians under the closed policy to the foreigners in Tokugawa period.

Since the Meiji reform in 1868, the state leaders in the new government intending to set up a modern nation-state system following the European model, changed the paradigm of evaluation from the Chinese to the one in European civilization. To unify the nation, they invented the ideology on emperor (*Tenno*) worship. It was a myth that the *Tenno* must be a divine hereditary ruler, because he is the purest blood successor from sacred gods descending

from heaven to this country, we should respect him as the father of our nation. The school taught us this myth and said, the Japanese is a divine nation having mission to govern other nations and peoples under the authority of *Tenno*.

Multi-ethnicism in modern Japan was founded by this ideology for building an imperium called "Great Asia Co-Prosperity Area." The creation of Manchukuo in the north-east region in China in 1932 was the application of this ambition. The key words of the Manchukuo state building were "Making paradise under benevolent king's rule" and "Five people's harmonious life" etc. The five people meant Japanese, Korean, Chinese, Manchurian and Mongolian. What the Japanese did under the beautiful words like "interracial harmony between those people" was mobilization and exploitation of the other four peoples as working forces.

After the defeat of the war in 1945, the overseas emigrants and residents had to come back from the colonies and the occupied areas to the home territory before expansion. As a result, the national feeling that this archipelago is a natural home place for the ethno-Japanese was strengthened. The people was liable to think the community within this territory as a community related by blood and only the ethno-Japanese have its full membership. The majority Japanese have not liquidated the previous national mentality as the imperialist Japanese. They have preserved it underneath their perception even after accepting a new democratic polity since 1945.

The new constitution was enacted in 1946. It guaranteed the fundamental human rights. Though its enactment had an epochmaking significance, the individual identity as a subject of human rights has not introduced after thorough negation of the nationalist identity under imperialism. The Japanese society until the end of 1960s was insensitive or thoughtless to ethnic minorities.

It will become an increasingly important task hereafter for Japanese to recreate or to refound their identity through self criticism to their own discriminatory feelings and oppressive behaviours against the minorities in the country and the peoples in Asia-Pacific region.

PHILOSOPHER