

Undercurrents of Japan in the 1990s

by
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 Japan Cultural Centre, Sydney
(The Japan Foundation)

おまけ

毎日新聞

1997年(平成9年)6月15日(日曜日)

『社会学講義』に入る前の「文字通
り」講義には「前に」と題した前書
の冒頭で著者は書いてある。「日本
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と思う」。

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かわらず、この判断と決断が「
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政治家や官僚や企業家や、あるいは
知識人といつた国のリーダーた
ちだけの問題ではない。それと同じ
時に、私たちが自身の直接的でぬき
ざしならぬ問題になつてきている
どころか、この時代の「この日本
のやっかひなどどうであるか」
こんなことになったのか。

二年前に出された『橋爪大ニ郎
の社会学講義』に続くこれは第二
弾なのだが、前作同様とても権
爪の「講義」は、きわめて明確で
筋が通っている。

「現代の日本人は精神的に未熟
である。その歴史と仕方がない。そ
れは「ひとりの人格のなかにな
個人としての自己と国民としての
自己とが、独立して存在してはい
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歴史を冒険つづける彼の歴史をわれ
れが卑劣に、個人と国民を同時に自己
えればいいのか。憲法は、日本の安
全探険は？ 危機管理は？ 大学(教
育)は？ 私たちの生活は？
そうしたさまざまな命題、本質的で
同時に「シャイナリズム」でもある
命題に、著者は、まっすぐに向かい合
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りれない。

日本という国を構想する道筋を示す

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新刊本・いろ・いろ・紹介

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島森 路子 評

Foreword

The Japan Foundation was established in October 1972 as a special legal entity under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the purpose of promoting mutual understanding and friendship between Japan and other countries. The Japan Foundation carries out a broad variety of cultural exchange programs with personal exchange as the basic premise, ranging from such academic pursuits as Japanese studies and Japanese-language education to the arts, publication, audio-visual media, sports, and general life culture.

The Japan Cultural Centre, Sydney was officially opened in April, 1993 to meet the growing demand for cultural exchange and mutual understanding between Australia and Japan, marking the expansion of both the functions and facilities of the

former Sydney liaison office of the Japan Foundation.

As one of our activities aimed at accomplishing the above objectives, the Japan Cultural Centre, Sydney has launched the "The Japan Foundation Papers" series, with a view to initiating greater intellectual dialogue and thereby fostering deeper understanding between the peoples of both countries.

We hope that these papers will be of great benefit in promoting international goodwill and a greater understanding of Japan.

Japan Cultural Centre, Sydney
(The Japan Foundation)

This paper was presented by Prof Daisaburo Hashizume at the University of Technology, Sydney on Friday, 11 October 1996.

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UNDERCURRENTS OF JAPAN IN THE 1990s

by Professor Daisaburo Hashizume

Good afternoon everybody. As introduced my name is Hashizume. I live in Tokyo, but this is my first visit to Australia and I have been very impressed by the greatness of this country.

I gave another talk yesterday titled "Japan at the crossroads". I can see the same faces in today's audience, but today's talk is slightly different to the one I gave yesterday. I have named today's lecture "Undercurrents of Japan in the 1990s".

I believe Japan is going through changes in the 1990s. It is very difficult to describe these changes in detail, but I will try as much as possible to make those changes clear to you today. We have seen the collapse of the Berlin Wall and also the incident in Tiananmen Square in China, and when these incidents occurred people in Japan generally thought that yes, they were huge changes, but changes that would not really happen in Japan. The same thing can be said about the Gulf War, as Japanese people believed that it was something that would never happen to them directly. But while the world is changing it is impossible that Japan will not change too.

Today I would like to divide my lecture into three parts. The first part will deal with changes in the academic and philosophical sectors of society. In the second part I would like to deal with the structural changes within the country and I would like to concentrate on the changes which ordinary Japanese people are experiencing. The third and final part will deal with issues affecting ordinary people's lives, issues which have featured in the Japanese mass media. I hope that through this lecture you will gain an insight into what kind of things are happening in contemporary Japan.

This first part of my talk will deal with the philosophical sectors of Japanese society, and in short I think that you can say that there is a sense of loss of direction in Japan, with a new direction yet to be found. Perhaps to elaborate on what I have just said, we should follow the chronological order of events, beginning with the 1970s, the 1980s and subsequently the 1990s.

When looking at the events of the 1970s and 1980s, I have to start with the New Left movement which peaked in the 1970s. Following this peak however, the Japanese New Left movement deteriorated very quickly. This was due to three big events which were related to the New Left movement after 1970.

Maybe I should explain a little bit more about Japan's New Left. This movement emerged after the critique of Stalinism became popular. In other words, the leftists who began to have doubts about the leadership of the Japan Communist Party, started forming small organisations. That movement started in the early 1960s but was quickly coopted by university students. Actually I entered university in 1967 and I believe about half my class supported such a movement. To add to that, 25 per cent of the remaining 50 per cent supported the Japan Communist Party, and the remaining 25 per cent were not interested in politics. My generation is referred to as the "baby boomers" generation, and the baby boomer generation formed a core part of Japan's left movement.

I mentioned three big incidents after 1970, the first being the hijacking of the Japan Airlines aircraft, called "Yodogo" by the leftists. This was the first hijacking incident in Japanese history, and was carried out by about 10 members of Japan's Red Army. The aircraft was hijacked and taken to North Korea with a hostage on board. Those Red Army members were aiming to start a revolution in North Korea, but they are presently acting as North Korea's agents in various Southeast Asian countries.

The second incident was the bombing of the Mitsubishi Heavy Industry office in Tokyo. This bombing killed more than 10 people and a few hundred people were injured. The bombers, who were basically anarchists, were caught in about half a year's time.

The third incident was the internal lynching and murder of members within the Allied Red Army. The Allied Red Army was a coalition of a minor sect of the Red Army and a small ultra-leftist sect. There were about 20 members within this alliance and they were greatly influenced by the philosophy of Mao and Che Guevara. They were based in the middle of the mountains and wanted to

carry out their revolutionary activities in Tokyo.

Half of them however, were killed simply because they were criticised for not being revolutionary enough. Of course, this particular incident shocked the whole nation, but I believe that the impact was particularly felt by the New Left movement, whose members had been feeling that there was something wrong with what was happening in post-war Japan, but also felt that their cause was just and right.

This movement however, was of course a minority and when a minority group tries to do something which they believe is right, they have to demonstrate this by action in one way or another. However, if they do this, they are doing exactly the same thing as those activities carried out by the parties that they are fundamentally opposed to. In other words, the New Left movement criticised post-war Japan and its society, but did not propose any alternatives.

Due to these factors, the New Left movement was replaced by a few new movements, one of them being the Ecology Oriented Sector, which focused on the environment. Another group, known as My Homism, focused on the importance of one's own private, domestic life.

After these changes in the 1970s more changes occurred in the 1980s. One of the major changes began in 1983, and this was initiated by a book called *Kozo To Chikara*, "Structure and Power" written by a Japanese author named Akira Asada. Mr Asada is still relatively young, I think he is younger than 40 years old, and at the moment he is an associate professor at Kyoto University. He was a student of the graduate school of Kyoto University when he wrote this book.

Structure and Power deals with modern French philosophy. The book introduced philosophers such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze and F. Guattari, and other modern philosophers. This book became extremely popular among Japanese intellectuals and there are several reasons for that popularity. I think one of the reasons is that the book proclaimed that Marxism was out-dated.

In other words, it was saying that there was no need to think about revolutions any more. The post-baby boomer generations really loved this book. The book of course dealt with a few other things as well, claiming that sophisticated knowledge and refined philosophy were important, in addition to claiming that capitalism was not necessarily bad.

People began to really appreciate the fashion of knowledge without criticism, or without a critique of capitalism. Hence, an intellectual shift which began in the 1980s, actually turned out to be an intellectual game. Many people were involved in this new intellectual reform. Their movements were actually supported and popularised by the mass media, namely the large advertising agencies.

In the late 1980s Japan experienced the so-called economic bubble, with this bubble reaching its peak in the late 1980s, which led Japanese people to believe that Japan was the best or most superior country in the world. They believed that Japan was the strongest economic power in the world, and they assumed that because it was economically the greatest in the world, it also had to be culturally the best as well.

In order to prove their cultural superiority, Japanese people have to go to France and Italy to buy up all the cultural items and they also have to have philosophical arguments over French philosophy. I think as a result of such crazy activities, Japan ended up with a sort of cultural deterioration.

In the era of post-modernism or so-called new-academism however, whatever was discussed in the past no longer had any value. The leaders of these new movements lacked the same sense of conviction as that which had motivated some of the modern French philosophers to commit suicide.

This late 1980s movement also produced consequences on a mass level, a kind of hedonism, or cultural relativism, so that people began to think that so long as they were able to have fun it did not really matter what they meant. Japanese TV was full of so-called variety shows in which the main theme was making fun of people, or putting people down, and this phenomenon spilled over into the news media as well.

In those variety programs they did things like hang a comedian from the ceiling and drop him on the floor, or they put him in a canon and fired him into a lake. Of course children imitated these programs, and as a consequence many junior high school children were killed by their classmates.

However, things began to change slightly in the 1990s. I think the trigger for this change was the Gulf War. We saw things which we believed had been impossible, that is Iraq invading Kuwait. Facing this unthinkable event, Japan was at a loss in deciding whether it should send its Self Defence Forces or not,

or how to respond to such an international incident.

Of course, constitutionally speaking, Japan was in the position of not being able to become involved at all, but at the same time Japan didn't have the courage to remain merely an observer, as that would have attracted a lot of international criticism, and they did not have the guts to face such criticism as well. Perhaps I should be a bit more precise. I think that if Japan remained just an observer without getting involved in the Gulf War, then Japan would not be able to sell its products to the rest of the world.

So as a result, Japan reluctantly made a contribution of \$13 billion. However, that was rather late in its timing, so it was not really fully appreciated. Whilst the arguments of what to do regarding the Gulf War were going on, the so-called Japanese post-modernists suddenly converted into the post-war democrats. They suddenly started saying that the Japanese constitution was very important and claimed that Japan should oppose any involvement in the war according to the provisions of the peace constitution. This group was led by people like Akira Asada, whom I mentioned before.

That really surprised everybody, including myself. What they were saying was exactly the same as what the Japanese Social Democrats and the Communists were saying. This sudden change really made us all wonder about what the Japanese new-academists had been opposing. In other words, it proved that what they were arguing in the 1980s really had nothing to do with the reality of Japanese society.

As a consequence, we started seeing the emergence of a new group of people in the 1990s. They were much more practical, realistic and conservative. Of course, such people had always been there, but they had never been part of the mainstream. Yet in the 1990s we started to hear their opinions, as their articles started appearing in popular magazines and books of social importance. I think the most representative person of this movement was Susumu Nishibe.

In the 1990s we started to see the beginnings of real arguments over constitutional reform, or perhaps the reform of the Self Defence Forces into a real military organisation. Of course these issues are still not yet popular among ordinary Japanese, but the seed of such a movement is there.

As you know, in the 1990s Japan has been suffering from an economic recession. Within Asia, recession is unique to Japan as most other Asian

countries have experienced economic growth during the same period. Japan has seldom had such an experience and this is why Japanese people began to lose confidence in themselves and began to think that perhaps something needed to be changed.

I would like to move onto the next subject, that is the changes to the dogma, the traditional things that made post-war Japan stable. One of the important pillars of Japanese society was peace, in other words, peace was one of the most important things for Japan after the war, and that is why Japan has a so-called peace constitution.

I am sure that 99 per cent of Japanese people would agree that peace is important. However, there has been almost no discussion on how to achieve such peace. I think the general way of looking at peace among Japanese people is that if one wishes for peace strongly enough then peace is achieved.

Of course, Japan is a member of the United Nations. When Japan joined the United Nations, Japanese people rejoiced because they thought the United Nations was a peace creating organisation. Of course, this is not a totally false idea, but Japanese people should have read the United Nations charter in a little more detail, because the United Nations charter states that the United Nations can form a UN force to fight against forces opposing peace.

All the UN members have to either send their military forces or to provide maximum cooperation as part of their responsibilities as United Nations members. This clause did not actually mean much during the Cold War because the United Nations never had the chance to form a UN force during that period. But the Gulf War occurred after the end of the Cold War and put a country like Japan in a really awkward situation.

So in fact, there are contradictions between the Japanese peace constitution and the United Nations' charter. Similarly, we can see contradictions between the Japanese constitution and the Japan-US Security Treaty. Japanese people are forced to deal with the question of how to deal with such contradictions in the pursuit of peace.

Let me leave the issue of international affairs and move onto the issue of the Japanese domestic economy. I am sure you have all heard the expression "Japan Inc", which regarded the phenomenon of Japanese economic growth as a secret.

I believe however, that the issue of Japan's miraculous economic growth is related to the process of Japan's modernisation.

Modernisation in the West, in Europe and the United States began after the separation of the church and the state. Modern Western philosophy held that the church and the state were two separate things, the state being a secular institution. This separation however, did not take place in Japan's modernisation process. In Japan the emperor initiated the Meiji Restoration and as a result the people viewed the state as being holy. Many of Japan's war dead are enshrined at the Yasukuni Shrine, which many people believe confers on the state a religious/holy role.

Maybe such a strong power was necessary for Japan's modernisation. In 1945 however, Shintoism as the state religion was dissolved, the emperor renounced his divinity and the state became a secular entity. This lack of a holy entity threw Japanese people into a state of confusion. As a result they began a search for a new holy entity, which manifested itself in the form of the company.

That is why many business people, faced with contradictory demands from their company and their private lives, chose the company as their priority. There was a desire within people to have such a holy element within their lives, and their companies in return provided things like promotion based on seniority and lifetime employment.

This attitude of regarding Japanese companies, or the corporation, as holy has not disappeared at all. Actually it is still there, not only among the older generations but in the younger generations as well. Due to the economic recession, many Japanese companies can no longer maintain the traditional system of promotion based on seniority or the lifetime employment system.

The third aspect concerns Japanese administration and bureaucracy. There exists what we call the "Kasumigaseki Myth". Kasumigaseki is the area in Tokyo where the government offices are concentrated and many people used to believe that the Japanese bureaucracy was so capable that if everything was left to them, they could somehow resolve all the nation's problems.

But this myth has disintegrated due to an incident known as the HIV-AIDS scandal, where untreated blood products were authorised by the Ministry of Health and given to haemophiliacs, resulting in the contamination of 2000

people with the AIDS virus, leading to 500 deaths so far. The Ministry of Finance has also experienced a series of scandals. After the economic bubble burst many Japanese companies went into financial difficulty and there are growing numbers of voices claiming that perhaps this bad economic situation is the government's responsibility.

The problems currently facing Japan require the younger generation to show their initiative and be more energetic in tackling these problems, but I am rather pessimistic about the ability of the younger generations to do this. I am sure you have heard about the "entrance examination hell". Young Japanese people are too busy with study for their entrance examinations to do anything else, in particular to think for themselves.

Between studies as a means of relaxation they just watch TV or flick through magazines. What they supposedly think or talk about are things you can easily find in many magazines.

About last year, or perhaps two years ago, there was what we call the "*burusera* argument". Perhaps I should explain the meaning of *burusera*. It is a combination of the word *buru* that comes from the English word "bloomers", which young female students wear to gym classes, and the word *sera* that comes from the word "sailor suit", which is the name used to describe female school uniforms. So *burusera* means the female gym suit bloomers and the female sailor-style school uniform.

In Tokyo there are shops called *burusera* shops which sell used female students' bloomers and school uniforms to adult males. Of course, these items have to be genuine, so in these shops they attach photographs of the previous owners complete with their age, weight and other personal data. When these shops were introduced on TV and in popular magazines they became extremely popular.

Of course, the majority of the visitors to these shops were middle-aged men, but there were also a lot of young Japanese girls. Initially these girls could not believe that their personal things could be sold for such a high price. Citizen's groups, representing the social conscience, started arguing that this phenomena was the result of a bad education system, and called for educational reform.

However, the younger critics within the post-war generation started saying exactly the opposite. A personal friend, Dr Shinji Miyadai, a leader of these younger critics, claimed that the more you emphasise or try to control such a

movement the more it will grow. According to my friend Miyadai, these young girls are simply taking the most rational course of action based on what society demands. He is now a very popular lecturer.

I think that what this whole affair indicates is that when a younger generation tries to make a decision on whatever the issue, there is no set criteria on which they can base their decisions. Of course, not every young person thinks that money is everything, there are young Japanese people who believe there is more to life than money. But what are these things that mean more than money?

I am sure that you have heard of the Aum Supreme Truth Incident which happened last year. All the members involved in that affair were very serious people, and I am sure that they joined this religious group to do something good, to do something more than attain money. I can guarantee that most of them felt that way when they joined the group because I personally interviewed those members.

Although they initially wanted to do something good, they ended up using sarin gas in the subway, so that sort of consequence is possible in spite of good initial intentions. The whole Aum affair revealed that although good intentions were there, there was extreme immaturity in selecting the methods to achieve their objectives.

I think my personal impression or opinion of the younger generation is that they are perhaps a bit too inactive and they are not sure what to do with the problems that they have to face. It was not so long ago when the new word *shinjinrui* was coined, which meant "new human race" and was used by the previous generation to describe the younger generation as if it was an alien generation to them. Those people who were described as *shinjinrui* or the "new race of people", are now in their 30s.

No matter whom you talk with however, they describe the next generation, who may only be two or three years younger, as incomprehensible to them. The young generations are described now as the *famicon* or the "family computer" generation, or the *conveni* generation, the "convenience store" generation. I have to describe what a convenience store is in Japan because you do not see many similar shops in Australia. In Japan almost every corner has a shop which is open 24 hours a day, where you can go any time and get whatever you want. It is sort of a small version of a 24 hour supermarket, so the younger generations can go to such a shop and read magazines or buy food or whatever, any time of the day.

Young people feel that they have to catch up with the latest news all the time, but the latest news instantaneously becomes old news. Up until quite recently perhaps the most noticeable group in our society was called *gyaru* or "gal". This gal group consisted of young ladies in their 20s, perhaps early 20s, normally with shoulder length hair, wearing "body conscious" or very tight suits. These "gals" went to discos every night in their flashy clothes.

Following the "gals" however, came another generation called *kogyaru* or "child gals". While the gals, who were in their 20s with proper incomes, could afford brand products, the "child gals" were high school or college students who were not so financially well-off and could not afford to buy expensive brand products. "Child gals" however, did not regard possessing brand products as trendy and actually looked down on the original "gals".

Kogyaru however, were soon threatened by *magogyaru*, literally meaning "grandchild gals", a word which was used to describe pre-pubescent girls in their early teens. I think this phenomena typifies the fact that one generation is always threatened by upcoming generations, particularly when one does not have a very strong identity.

I think my speech is dragging on a little too long, so I should come to a conclusion. The first thing is that Japanese people are beginning to feel a sense of loss regarding the criteria on which they base their behavioural patterns. While they sense that traditional morals no longer serve as an adequate basis for modern behaviour, in other words that traditions are quickly becoming archaic, "internationalisation" which is a very popular word in Japan, does not provide an alternative basis either.

Yet the fact that the behaviour of younger people is 100 per cent influenced by the situations they are in, is in some way very traditional indeed. It is my personal opinion that it will take some time for Japanese people to identify and establish a new set of behavioural patterns.

Thank you very much for your time.

Q & A

Q There has been an analysis of contemporary Japanese society focusing on words like "soft fascism" or "soft totalitarianism", which I presume is emphasising the co-optive rather than the coercive nature, sort of co-opting people's consent to control things rather than coercing them into control. Is that a current analysis, or has it died in the 1990s, what do you think of that analysis, has it been replaced by other things?

Prof Hashizume: I am not really sure if expressions like "soft fascism" or "soft totalitarianism" would be appropriate words to describe Japanese society at any time. If you apply these terms to situations that are anti-individualist or undemocratic, then perhaps Japan falls into this category. Fascism, I think, implies that it has its own set of goals or objectives, and forces people to follow certain patterns in order to achieve them.

In Japan no matter how hard you look you cannot find any particular person or group of people who have such a plan or overall set of objectives. Yes, you can see elements of very strong control or management within society, but it is quite vague. Who is in control, who is managing Japan?

I do not think any appropriate name has been given to such a phenomenon, but without any particular name having been applied, I would like to study a little bit more about it.

Q Professor, the book by Shintaro Ishihara, *The Japan That Can Say No* and the other book co-authored with Malaysia's Dr Mahathir, *The Voice of Asia*,

is quite popular in Southeast Asia and many Asians seem to be quite inspired by this cultural nationalism which you spoke about earlier, that because the Japanese have been so successful in facilitating economic growth and development after the Second World War, they believe that the culture must also be superior because so many Southeast Asians are inspired by this.

How strong are the views of Shintaro Ishihara and others who promote this pan-Asian attitude? Is this an attitude which is more persuasive solely for economic reasons, such as rising trade barriers and protectionist policies in the West, or is it more than just that?

Prof Hashizume: First of all Shintaro Ishihara is a very popular politician, but it does not mean that he has great influence in Japan, or real power in the Japanese context. I think what he was trying to say in that book was perhaps that Japan had been too obedient, or accepted too many demands from the United States, and Japan should have more confidence in itself. Essentially I think that is what the book is all about, but I personally think that he lacked sufficient evidence in his book.

I think many Japanese people are interested in what is happening in the rest of the Asian region, but to tell the truth, I think that there is still not enough information on other Asian countries within Japan. So I think if a book like Ishihara's book is ever published, it should come from the context where the people themselves have more knowledge or

are more informed about Japan's relationship with other countries, particularly those in Asia, and also the proposals for a new relationship with Asia.

Q I have spent long periods of time in Japan and I have spent various periods of my life in Germany, and the Japanese understanding of the war is very unlike that of the Germans. I have never been in a country with less of a sense of history than Japan. The reason why Germans have a sense of history might have to do with the unfinished project of German reunification, and Japan has not had that, but I would suspect that this lack of a sense of history is in fact to do with a set of peasant values, crudely speaking, which are buried deep within the political culture, but manifested themselves in the 1980s, when they were co-opted by the state.

I wonder what your view is on this lack of historical consciousness in post-war Japan?

Prof Hashizume: I totally agree with what you are saying about the total lack of a sense of history among the Japanese people. I think if you look at the individual Japanese person, their attitude is that if one does not need to take any responsibility then that is the easiest way, and that is a very common attitude I think.

In other words, if one does not have to make decisions and consequently does not need to take responsibility for that, then there is no history, attitudes which I believe were emphasised by the fact that Japan was occupied by the American forces in 1945.

Americans then claim that of course the Japanese government and also a section of the Japanese population were responsible for what happened, but the majority of Japanese people were free from any responsibility. So many Japanese people felt, "Okay, we don't have any responsibility, so let's forget about what happened in the past". Of course, I think

this was wrong of them, but this attitude still persists.

Q The most popular book in China now is *China Can Say No*. I am just wondering what the reaction in Japan might be to this rising nationalism and xenophobia in China, particularly next year when Hong Kong will be transferred back to mainland China?

Prof Hashizume: I believe that China is a country which falls into pieces if you leave it untouched, so I think it is important, at least for a while, to have such things like nationalism which bind the parts of the country together into one whole.

On the other hand, it has always been believed that every Japanese person thinks that he or she is part of one unit, so that such things like nationalism are not really necessary. So I think what Japanese people need to do is understand the need for this nationalism in China and also perhaps to cultivate a kind of nationalism within Japan as well.

Q You just said there is a sense of a loss in direction, or the sense of a loss of a moral core in Japan, and I wonder whether this is peculiar to Japan, and if we cannot find that moral core, what do we do?

Prof Hashizume: I believe that this sense of a loss in direction or a loss of core values is not particular to Japan but is a global phenomenon, but it is particularly deep-rooted in Japan.

Additionally, a relativism in value itself can not exist in my opinion, because value relativism has to admit all types of value systems including value absolutism, which may deny even the existence of value relativism.

I think Japanese people follow value relativism, in that Japanese people are not religious. This does not mean that they

cannot understand religion. Nowadays we are bombarded with various options so far as a sense of values or ways of thinking are concerned, and what is necessary for Japanese people is to understand correctly what value absolutism is or what religions really mean. I think what is needed within Christian or Islamic cultures on the other hand, is an appreciation of value relativism.

I think what is necessary for Japanese people is an opposite one, and the ultimate purpose in that is to achieve a co-existence of people who have different sets of values or different sets of principles. So in doing that perhaps there is room for Japanese people who have absolutely no dogma whatsoever, to make a contribution.

Q You described the confidence of Japan's economic growth as perhaps leading to a sense of cultural superiority. One of the ways in which this was reflected in Japanese intellectual life was the rise of an intellectual discourse, leading to a series of books by Japanese scholars. Firstly, do you recognise that as a particular discourse in the Japanese community, and secondly, have the changes you are describing in the 1990s had an impact or an effect upon those scholars and the work they do and the issue of a unique Japanese consciousness?

Prof Hashizume: Yes, Japanese people love to read books about "the Japanese" or theories on Japanese people. Perhaps a lack of confidence in themselves and the need for self-assurance drives them to read these books. This interest has not really disappeared in the 1990s either, but I think the arguments or the contents of these books have changed a little bit. That is, there is a shift from the books that describe what the Japanese are, back to the arguments concerning Japanese characteristics based on historical events.

Japanese people are being described as the products of history in many of the books. In

other words, I think there are more convincing arguments being used in these books in the 1990s. Of course, many books on the Japanese were written to make Japanese people feel better, but if the books are based on proof or evidence, they are more scientific and there may be room for the value of such books in the academic world.

Q I was amused when you said that when there is a problem in Japan, Japanese people usually leave it up to the bureaucrats to deal with it. So my question is, is there a version of "Yes, Minister" in Japan?

Prof Hashizume: The answer is a big "Yes". You see, the bureaucrats keep the important things away from ministers. There was a recent incident where a minister fired a bureaucrat and it had never been done and so it became a big social issue.

橋爪 大三郎著
橋爪大三郎の社会学講義2
新しい社会のために

ほくは 以前から 橋爪大三郎の文体に、倫理的な断念の明晰さとてもよべる賞を感してき た。それ は余分な ことか といは

社会問題への積極的な発言

そのスタンスにちょっとした違和感が

小阪修平

「自己」のような決着のつかない問題を考えない決意のよさなものである。だが、その質は橋爪が社会現象全般について積極的に発言するようになったことのよさに変化したのだろうか。

『社会学講義』の続巻である本書では、社会問題について発言しようとする橋爪の積極姿勢が特に目立っている。扱われているテーマは大学の改革から宗教、破防法、そしていま段階にさしかかった日本の進路にまでおよんでいる。それは、

橋爪が考えた「結果」のみを見ているからだろうか、啓蒙書という性格が、そのプロセスがほくには見えなかつたからだ。むしろ現実的な諸問題に目をうつらない市民主義といつた政治的スタンスが見えてくる。

「日本は、むずかしい場所になじかかっただと思つた」という認識が橋爪をつき動かしているからだ。だが、これまでの本に比べてこの本は、問題点をちよつとした処方箋の羅列としてしかほくには読めなかつた。それ

に、異質な他者になじかみを開くといつた橋爪の決意に裏打ちされている。だが、そういったミニマリズムがどれほど共有のものとして成立可能なのか、それはどこで社会を抽象的な諸個人の交通関係としてとらえる、理念的な市民

社会の発想に移行してはじめて成立するのではないのか。ほくにはそういう疑いがある。もちろん橋爪には、個人の思想を展開している

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思想のミニマリズム

知識の累積を、応用しているのだという自信が背景にあるだろう。『社会学講義』が「日本語で社会学するた

た」として、思想が、だからといって共通のものにはなかなかりがたいこの間をどういふふうにつないでい

に、必死で編み出される宗教だ」と言う。たしかに地球の将来を考えるといつた立場に立てば、橋爪の言う