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Reflections on the Symposium

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Reflections on the Symposium

JOSEF KREINER

Der Universität Bonn

I would like to comment on this symposium by focusing on five points.

First, I would like to comment on the distinctions among four terms: *chi* (intellect), *kyōyō* (culture), *chishiki* (knowledge), and *kyoiku* (education). At the time this symposium was planned, the distinctions among these four terms or concepts were ambiguous; the four were treated as one entity.

The keynote speech by Professor Umesao and the subsequent discussions, however, led me to think that there was a definite distinction between intellect (Wissen) and culture (Bildung). According to the keynote speech, the Japanese embrace pragmatism, or the practical application of knowledge, while at the same time they appreciate knowledge that is not directly applicable to production, and that is obtained at places other than schools. That is to say, in Japan, pragmatism and culture seem to stand parallel to each other.

To regard intellect, culture, knowledge, and education as one unit is an approach that seems to belong to cultural anthropology. In essence, from the point of view of cultural anthropology, every piece of knowledge in a tribal society plays a certain role in the survival of its members. If this is true, it is difficult or impossible (or perhaps unimportant) to draw a distinction between intellect and culture.

At the level of ancient civilizations or cultures, however, there is a clear-cut difference between knowledge, which is applicable to production, and culture, which is useless in terms of production. In my opinion, this point should have been elaborated more fully in the discussions.

Secondly, I would like to comment on the opinion, raised repeatedly in the discussions, that drawing a distinction between intellect and culture or raising questions about the premise for that distinction are Western kinds of thinking. This opinion seems to disagree with the keynote speech, which regards intellect and culture as different concepts. My feeling, too, is that these two concepts are regarded as one in Eastern, especially Japanese, thinking.

Despite the fact that the keynote speech treated pragmatism and culturedness as independent traits in the Japanese tradition, the discussions following the keynote speech supported another viewpoint—that intellect and culture are regarded as one in Japan but as different from each other in the West. Professor Umesao may sense a major error in this direction of thinking, and feel our discussion lost its way.

If intellect and culture constitute one concept in Japan, and if they are treated

as independent concepts in the West, then there is a great difference between Japan and the West. I would like to remind you of one of Professor Umesao's writings on Japanese culture, in which he compares it to a whale. It goes as follows. At a glance, Japanese culture appears to be utterly oriental, because Japan belongs to the Chinese character culture zone, espouses Buddhism as a religion, embraces the cultural spirit of Confucianism, and shows much ideological influence from China and Korea. Despite these facts, however, Japan's civilization is rather similar to the West in its structure. From this aspect, we can compare Japan to whales which at a glance belong to fish, but actually are mammals. In view of this theory, how would I deal with what is said to be a difference between Japan and the West: that Japan treats intellect and culture as one concept whereas the West regards them as different?

The reports of Mr. Melanowicz and Ms. Mathias-Pauer indicate that in the West intellect and culture function in different ways. They are similar or very close to each other, but not exactly the same. Are intellect and culture the same, or different from each other? If they are different, are they so both in Japan and in the West? Are they linked in Europe as they are in Japan? Further discussion on this matter would, undoubtedly, have been useful.

Third, in connection with the previous discussion, I would like to comment on the fact that the West does not represent one cultural unit, though it was often compared as such with Japan in the keynote speech and the following discussions. The speech by Ms. Lewis and the following discussion pointed out a big difference between the United States and Europe, though they both belong to the West. The difference between them had already been mentioned in the correlation between culture and success in life in the keynote speech. According to this, one's culturedness is monistically correlated with his success in life in both China and the United States. In contrast, these two are separated from each other in the dual structure of the societies in Japan and Europe.

In addition to the difference between Europe and the United States, there is also a question as to whether Europe itself can be regarded as one comparative unit. For example, Mr. Kabayama mentioned France in his speech as one of the successors to Mediterranean culture. According to Mr. Melanowicz, Poland has a structure similar to France and Italy, although Germany and the Alps lie between Poland and these two nations. The more minutely Europe is analyzed, the more difficult it is to demarcate it. At the first Symposium in this series, Mr. Linhart from Vienna had some difficulty in finding the right answer to this problem. What is the unit for comparison? Which culture of which part of Europe is to be compared? Japan also contains completely different cultural areas such as Kansai and Kanto, or the areas to the west and the east of the Hakone checkpoint. Moreover, even Tokyo is definitely not homogeneous in its culture. For instance, it includes two extremely different areas, Yamanote and Shitamachi, one spread over the west of Tokyo and the other over the east, respectively.

To this problem which troubled Mr. Linhart, Professor Umesao answered as

follows: The meaning of the comparison lies in the comparison itself. It does not lie in what is compared, but in the act of finding and bringing together the two things in order to see the differences. It is this act of comparing things that is important. Researchers should not bother themselves too much trying to perfect their framework—or unit of comparison—since historical, regional, and other factors can be taken spontaneously as a unit for a particular comparison and that comparison will only represent one method of comparison among various others. As to definitions for intellect and culture, those found in encyclopedias would be useless for the study of civilizations, though philosophers or educators might find them useful. In his keynote speech Professor Umesao defined them as “a check on ‘the sword’.”

My fourth set of comments refers to the following questions that were raised by Professor Umesao. They focus on the process of the establishment of the intellectual class, the contents of its culture, and the way of handing it down from generation to generation. He mentioned particularly the way of inheriting it through the school system and the hobbies (*o-keikogoto*) of the general public in the Edo period. This reflects the substantial studies made by Dore, Passim and others. The premise for establishing a school-based educational system may be a common way of thinking about intellect and culture, shared among a people. Without this premise, the effort to set up the school system would not be made. The establishment of the school system itself must have resulted from common attitudes and values, rooted in the society, toward intellect and culture. Here one should have a look at the Chinese classical examination system for service in the government, which seems to have something in common with the words of Francis Bacon: “Knowledge is power.” In China and Europe, a certain class or fraction of people often excluded other classes or people from the attainments of intellect or the power it embodied. It is very important that Japan has never experienced such an environment.

My fifth comment is on the spoken language and the written language, as reported on by Mr. Kurita. The relevant part of Professor Umesao’s speech to this point asked “How are intellect and culture handed down?” Mr. Yoshida answered in his report that written letters made a great contribution to their inheritance. Particularly they played a crucial role in Chinese history.

In Japanese history, however, it is not the written language that has been of greatest importance in fostering Japanese identity. Written characters were brought in from China long after the Japanese had established their identity. The Japanese had handed down intellect and culture before the introduction of Chinese characters, and after their introduction they continued to do so, not so much in written language as in spoken Japanese. Throughout their history, the Japanese have communicated in Japanese and invented “kana,” or distinct Japanese syllabary writing, as a means to write down communication. The same is true of the Hangul alphabet developed in Korea. We thus find the crucial significance of carrying on the language. As Mr. Melanowicz reported, Polish language and music have

played a major role in maintaining the identity and the culture of Poland. This is a case in point to show the importance of the language in culture.

As another means of carrying on the culture at a level other than the language, Mr. Kabayama showed us the importance of exhibitions and museums. In addition, Mr. Watanabe reported that the Japanese held exhibitions for various products as early as the Edo period. I think, however, that exhibitions and museums are only secondary to travel. Traveling is by far the most important means of acquiring first-hand knowledge of and exposure to different cultures. Therefore, I think it is unfortunate that we did not have any opportunity to discuss "monomiyusan"—the pleasure-trip.

Travel aimed at acquisition of culture can be found in every civilization of the world. For instance, in the Islamic world travel greatly contributed to the acquisition of culture. Travelers including Ibn Battutah wrote world-famous itineraries. In Japan in the Edo period the travel culture prospered, with innumerable people traveling to Ise to worship there. People went to Ise in various ways such as "okagemairi" (traveling without money but with the contributions and help of others), and "nuke-mairi" (traveling without permission of one's parents, husband, village official or master). In Europe, people traveled to Italy or France, in the name of "Bildungsreise," meaning travel to gain culture. What interests us then is the goal of travel. In Europe, or at least in central Europe including Germany and France, each nationality claimed ancient Rome as the source of their culture and therefore traveled to Italy seeking their roots. The Arabic counterpart of Rome was Mecca, where the Islamic religion was born and which therefore became a sacred place to worship. In Europe, every nation has a strong belief that she has inherited and developed the tradition of ancient Rome, or has advanced far beyond it. The Soviet Union proclaims itself the successor to the Byzantine Empire, as did Czarist Russia as well. Also, there is an indication that in the East, Korea feels that she is the real inheritor and long-time preserver of Confucianism, which originated in China. In contrast, the Japanese seem to have little notion that they have inherited and preserved the Chinese culture and classics. This attitude seems quite different from those attitudes mentioned above.