

Intellectuals, Ideologies, and Lay People in Contemporary Japanese Society

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Introduction

I have long been concerned with the relationship between the structure of 'society' and the structure of 'knowledge.' As is widely acknowledged, the former influences and constrains the latter by conditioning the nature and function of the 'knowledge system' (cultural system), which is called in the sociology of knowledge 'Seinsgebundenheit.' While the latter controls and defines the former by determining the structure and function of the society concerned, which is now known in the information science as 'cybernetic control.' Society and culture, however, cannot be bridged without some active intermediating agency. Though every human being, as a member of a society, plays some role in everyday life, interpreting and adopting 'cultural information' in order to decide how to behave, there are certain kinds of people in every society, whose cardinal activities perform this very role of intermediaries. They deal exclusively with 'signs and symbols,' producing and reproducing the 'definition of the situation,' through their activities of criticizing the old ideologies and creating the new ones, thus realizing the actual relationship between society and culture. To use a Parsonian term, there are 'social groups and role types which constitute specialists in cultural matter.' Tracing back the origin of this role type, Parsons comes back to the ancient civilizations of China, Israel, and India, and identifies this role type as the 'performer of ritual.' These are the earliest cultural specialist and accordingly 'in some sense' "intellectuals." These cultural specialists were, above all, concerned with the 'problem of meaning' in society.¹⁾

As for the definition of intellectual, there have been many different arguments. Some take into consideration the contents and nature of ideologies to define the term 'intellectual,' and others do not, although many do agree that intellectuals are the men of 'highly specialized (technical) knowledge.' Some argue that intellectuals are those who are always critical of the existing state of things including the established social order of the time. Being skeptical of and faultfinding toward the existing society is supposed to be the main characteristics of intellectuals. Others argue that, at least in modern Europe, the intellectuals (the men of knowledge) are the scholars and researchers who study some specialized fields of academic discipline in universities or research institutes and who make use of their knowledge for the betterment of society. According to this argument, these intellectuals are to be distinguished from 'Russian intelligentsia' whose practical purpose is to mobilize people by their prestige and influence to realize their ideals. They are the men of Enlightenment, the pioneers in advancing the society with certain moral responsibilities, at least in their consciousness. The notion of the intellectuals in European sense has been passed on to modern industrialized societies where a drastically increasing number of 'professionals' are playing the vital role with their technical services for the functioning of society; doctors, natural scientists, engineers, computer scientists, certified public accountants, economists, social scientists, some journalists, and editors, some clergy, and some artists and writers, to mention a few. They do not constitute a power group *per se* in a society, but they collectively give rise to a 'new class' of some functional importance in contemporary information societies.²⁾

1) Parsons, T. 1969. "The intellectual: a social role category" in Rieff, P. ed., *On Intellectuals*. New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc. pp. 3-24.

2) Brint, S. 1994. *An Age of Experts*. N. J.: Princeton University Press.

Intellectually demanding work, however, is not a sufficient but certainly a necessary condition of intellectuals.

In the case of Japan, just like other late-comer modernizing countries such as Russia, intellectuals were the men of 'ideals' although not all of their ideologies were favorable to the 'men of power.' Especially during the early stage of modernization, they were the elite of the 'avant-garde' in the cultural spheres of social life. Their canonical job was to introduce and apply advanced Western thought, knowledge, and technology to build a nation-state after the Meiji Restoration. At the same time, it is said that in the pre-War days, some individuals were regarded as genuine intellectuals for their courage, integrity, and sincerity (like some communists, liberals, and Christians). They insisted on their own peace-principles against the war being waged by their own nation despite stringent suppression on the part of the militaristic government. Consequently, many of them spent time in the harsh prisons of the Japanese military police and some died there. They were called the 'leftist intellectuals,' whose legacy remained influential even after the end of World War II.

In this essay, in which the contemporary Japanese situation is primarily discussed, I do not employ a definition of the intellectual as 'leftist' or antiestablishment or faultfinding 'men of knowledge' nor a definition of the intellectual as a group of professionals performing a vital role in post-industrial society due to their technical competence and expertise. Rather I refer to the intellectual as a person whose ideological influence over the common lay view of contemporary Japanese society cannot be ignored, particularly through the media activities he or she engages in. It is precisely these people who, like a preacher on the stage at Sunday gatherings of Christian fundamentalists, interpret everyday life events and give meanings to them; in this way they undoubtedly contribute to the formation of the world of 'meaning' (opinions and attitudes) of the average citizen.

Finally, a brief note on the definition of 'ideology'. The definition of 'ideology' is equally as controversial as that of 'intellectual.' In a previous

study, I examined the types of 'ideology' (mainly, 'political') and came to the conclusion that any information (ranging from social scientific findings to religious interpretations of the world) concerning social 'facts' could be 'ideological' as long as it affects the interests and/or (life-chance) situation of the individuals as a member of the society.³⁾ I also suggested the view that the term 'ideology' should be distinguished from scientific knowledge, religious belief, and philosophical insights due to its value-loaded nature and quasi-scientific verifiability.

Here, I use the term not as a wider perspective of the world in general (Weltanschauung), but as a specific interpretation of the social world (Japanese society), closely related to the achievements of the social sciences and other analogous disciplines of humanities and liberal arts.

Categorization of Contemporary Japanese Ideologies

The battle field of intellectuals is 'ideologies.' They are divided according to the ideological orientations that they support or oppose. In connection with contemporary Japanese ideological orientations, I would like to propose two dimensions, on which the Japanese intellectuals have been and are still sharply divided. These two are as follows:

(a) universalism vs. particularism

This dimension is concerned with the 'identity' of the Japanese and the Japanese nation. Since the early stage of its history, Japan, being situated on the periphery of 'great' civilizations of the world, has been influenced by the cultural elements that were introduced from 'advanced' foreign countries. As a consequence, Japanese intellectuals have been divided according to whether they identify their nation with the 'foreign' (and often 'advanced') model or with the 'native' (often 'retarded') model. Prince Shotoku (573-621), an archetype of the Japanese intellectual, who is credited with the first explicit statement of the normative order of Japanese society (the so-called Seventeen-Article Constitution), is said to have found himself in the typi-

3) Nakano, H. 1989. "Ideology, Politics, and Intellectuals," *Kwasei Gakuin University Shakaigakubu Kiyō*, No. 58, pp. 57-68.

cal predicament of the Japanese intellectual; having to deal with the relation between foreign culture (Buddhism from China) and the Japanese tradition.⁴⁾ The parallel conflict in ideological orientations can be seen when this nation consciously introduced the 'foreign' (this time, Western and definitely 'advanced') thoughts, technology and institutions in an effort to 'modernize' the nation as quickly as possible, so as to be able to cope with the threat of colonization by Western colonial powers, even though the Japanese have shown its capacity to accept foreign culture without losing its own coherence and continuity. The situation described by Bellah is as follows;

As before, intellectuals were specialists in alien Chinese culture, now they are specialists in alien Western culture. Many have vacillated between extreme acceptance of some aspect of Western culture and wholesale rejection of it. The common man has largely escaped the inner agonies, the identity problems, and the (sometimes multiple) conversions from one to another intellectual position which has been the lot of the intellectuals. (Bellah, 1972, p. 104)

Theoretically speaking, this dimension stretches from one extreme to another; around the middle of the road we can see the 'moderate' opposing ideological standings, namely Asia versus the West. *Datsua, Nyuou* (to quit Asia, to enter the West) was a famous slogan of Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835–1901), an Enlightenment intellectual of the time, who is regarded as one of the most influential propagators of Western civilization, though, like many enlightened intellectuals in the Meiji period, he retained a strong national identity, fervently committed to this nation. His pro-Western attitude came from the recognition that Japan was a weak and backward country and that its culture lacked two things possessed by Western nations: science and the spirit of independence. That these two things when inculcated into the Japanese nation would soon enrich the nation in power and wealth

so as to rival Great Britain and secure from any threat of Western attack and exploitation. On either side of this middle of the way, the two opposing 'extremes' can be found, although these theoretical ideals did not appear in a concrete form but in the writings of some extremist thinkers, the anarchists, for example. The theoretical reproduction would be something like this; at one extreme there is a radical internationalism by which the Japanese nation itself would disappear with the emergence of the world government consisting of all nations on the earth, and at the other extreme there would be only the Japanese nation on this planet which would include all other nations of the world. In between, there was the form of the moderate extremist of internationalism, for example, Mori Arinori (1847–89), a prominent educational statesman, diplomat, and outspoken proponent of Western thought. He advocated not only religious freedom and a secular education system, but also abandoning the Japanese language in favor of English and the adherence of all nations in the world to reason and the principles of the international laws. Though in a modified way, these opposing ideological orientations remain vivid in the intellectual struggle even after the end of World War II. The idealistic humanism (Pacifism) or the international communism or whatever could be the background for this 'global' universalism.

(b) conservatism vs. radicalism

The notion of conservatism and radicalism has no specific ideological content. This is the general attitude of the people, one being skeptical of something new and reluctant to accept changes, while the other is critical of things existing (status quo) and ready to accept changes and reforms. One can say that the former is past-oriented and the latter, future-oriented. However, once they are placed in concrete historical context, they become specific ideological orientations *per se*. Thus, in the modern Western social and political settings, conservatism refers to the ideological stance which opposes the so-called Enlightenment thoughts, accordingly anti-revolutionary, either the American or French

4) Bellah, R. 1972. "Intellectual and Society in Japan," *Daedalus*, pp. 89–115.

In connection with the characteristics of two cultures and their relationship, he wrote;

The split between abstract foreign culture carried by relatively isolated intellectual coteries and emotional native culture more widely shared among the people has never been entirely overcome. (p. 90)

model. This is one of the well-established intellectual legacies of Western social thought, tightly connected with the aristocratic and elitist classes. Opposed to this conservatism is the specific ideological tendency; bourgeois-supported liberalism and individualism in the early modern period and socialism and communism supported by proletariat in the later part of the same period.

In the Japanese context, particularly after the end of World War II, the popular understanding of these two ideological orientations in the political scene is that the Liberal Democratic Party organized in 1955 is to represent conservatism, while the other opposing parties including the Social Democratic Party of Japan and the Japan Communist Party represent radicalism. The actual situation is much more complicated, especially after the collapse of the former Soviet Union in the international scene and the formation of the coalition government of the LDP, the SDPJ and the Sakigake in 1994. Ideologically, there seem to exist at least two types of conservatives in this country; one emphasizes the conservation of traditional aspects of Japanese culture (naturally, more nationalist leaning) and the other wants to preserve the cultural heritage (wisdom) of mankind in general (consequently, less nationalist). Generally speaking, however, Japanese intellectuals were all 'nationalist' to some extent and they never abandoned their Japanese identity until recent days. Liberals, socialists, communists, and Christians have always been alienated from the orthodoxy of Japanese ideology as well as from the power center of the nation, particularly when the nation devoted itself to the mission of modernizing the country by resorting to such strategies as imperialism and colonialism. Until 1945, modern Japan had been inevitably involved in the international wars. Even ancient mythology was mobilized to justify the conducts of this nation in the pre-War days. Radicals had been continuously forced to subordinate themselves to the orthodox ideology of this nation of *Kami* (god). It was at the end of the war that Japanese radicals (progressives, liberals, socialists, and communists) gained the full-fledged status of intellectuals so that they could engage in their proper role.

The combination of these two dimensions yields a typology of ideology in contemporary Japanese society. Tentatively, these can be described as

follows;

- 1) universalistic conservatism
- 2) particularistic conservatism
- 3) universalistic radicalism (the 'humanitarian' and the 'Marxist' versions)
- 4) particularistic radicalism

Type 2) and 4) are always closely associated with the official ideologies of political parties, the former with the LDP and the latter with the JCP, for example. They are completely identical when they speak of 'national interests' and the government's responsibility to protect the life and property of Japanese people. Type 1) and 3) are more 'ideological' in the sense that their perspectives deal more with universal human problems such as self, life, liberty, death, society, culture, and religion. With this temporary framework we turn now to the contemporary scene of intellectuals and ideologies in Japanese society.

The Postwar Situation

With the end of World War II (1945), Japanese society underwent a drastic change in its major institutions. This was accomplished by the (American) Occupation Army Headquarters led by General MacArthur. Though no details of this change are explained here, two 'ideological' features of this period should be mentioned, namely democracy and peace. These two new ideological features were clearly stipulated in the 1947 Constitution with its declaration of people's sovereignty, fundamental human rights, and renunciation of war and arms. These new ideological values were placed at the center of a new orthodox Japanese ideology and a group of new intellectuals flocked together around it. They were called the 'postwar intellectuals.' This new ideology criticized root-and-branch and totally negated the pre-War Japan (imperialist and colonialist). Actually, with the strong executive power of the Allied Forces, many institutional reforms were implemented in almost all spheres of Japanese society; economic, political, social, and cultural. The new Constitution became a sacred Bible, which should not be modified even partially. In time, the Social Democratic Party of Japan was consistently revealed as the protector of the Constitution. In 1952, the Occupation ended. Internationally the Cold War overshadowed every world event, and domestically the capital-labor confrontation

was vividly deployed on the social stage. Away from any involvement in international disputes, Japan engaged in the efforts of recovering its economy under the leadership of the conservative Liberal Democratic Party which was formed in 1955. Under these circumstances, the 'new' postwar intellectuals were basically critical of the LDP government, who carried out, on the one hand, the 'utilitarian' economic policies and, on the other hand, the 'philosophy-less' diplomatic policies. (This diplomatic policy was called by the LDP leaders the 'multi-directional, UN-centered diplomacy.') To the eyes of the new intellectuals, the LDP government misled the country, strengthening only the 'military' (consequently, 'dangerous') tie with the USA at the sacrifice of friendly relations with the socialist and communist nations. It also beefed up the so-called Self Defense Forces to the point of a 'real' army without any serious reflection on its pre-War ferocious and inhuman conduct toward Asian peoples who were forcefully integrated into a part of the Japanese Empire. The intellectuals were also critical of the LDP policies toward *Hiroshima, Okinawa, and Minamata*.

The second Japanese Nobel prize winner for Literature (1994), a Japanese writer named Oe Kenzaburo, is a self-declared 'postwar intellectual,' who declined the '*Bunka Kunsho*' (Order of Culture) offered by the Japanese government and willingly accepted the Nobel prize. He held that the Order of Culture was not appropriate for the postwar intellectual because it was awarded by the government of the Emperor. Although the new Constitution defines clearly the role and status of the Emperor (from Article 1 to Article 8), the existence of the Emperor (system) represents, at least to the postwar intellectuals, two negative aspects of contemporary Japanese society. One, that the Emperor is still the symbol of the past Japanese 'crimes' in wars, and two, that the Emperor's existence itself is somehow anti-democratic. As is widely known, the Emperor system is closely associated with Shintoism, and spending tax money on various royal ritual practices may be unconstitutional as the Constitution rules the separation of religion and politics. According to the author's framework, Oe's ideological position belongs to type 3) universalistic radicalism (the

humanitarian version), which is explained here through his attitudes and opinions in the above-mentioned two social issues, *Hiroshima and Minamata*.

In 1963, Oe was asked by the editor of *Sekai* (a monthly publication of *Iwanami Shoten*; a quasi official journal of the postwar intellectuals) to write a report on Hiroshima. Knowing nothing about the political background maneuvering of the Anti-Nuclear (Peace) Movement, he went to Hiroshima, saw the trauma of the atomic bomb victims, and responded to it as a humanist. There he met a doctor and was deeply impressed by what he said. The doctor said, "There are suffering people in front of you, why not treat them?" Oe had never been politically committed before. His understanding of Hiroshima is far beyond the secular political sphere. He tries to understand Hiroshima as a problem of the human being in general. His series of reports on Hiroshima was compiled in a book, *Hiroshima Notes*. Re-reading the book thirty years later, he wrote;

Full of mistakes, it is yet still living. I am certain that what one simple individual wanted to tell, voices of a child among grown-ups, can be communicated at least in the world of literary expression.⁵⁾

As the Japanese economy began to develop around the late 50s, environmental pollution due to industrial waste came to the surface. In Minamata, Kumamoto Prefecture in Kyushu, a local fertilizer plant polluted the fish population with organomercury compounds. Those who ate the fish were affected by the degeneration of nerve cells. The illness was named from where it originated, *Minamata* disease. The symptoms were similar to those of mentally handicapped children. Around the same period Oe's first son was born heavily mentally retarded. As a father of a mentally handicapped son, Oe naturally became compassionate with the victims of this disease. Here again, he identified this problem as that of those who are weak and suffering, and he appealed to the public sense of moral responsibility as fellow human beings.

Oe is not a leftist (though he fervently applauded the Chinese youth he met when he visited China, saying that their eyes are bright!), nor a man

5) Dialogue between Oe and Yasue (President of Iwanami Shoten), *Sekai*, no. 603, January 1995. pp. 22-58.

of religion, but a Humanist. He seems to believe in the possibility of the World Language, with which he thinks he wrote his literary works. He is convinced that his literary works written in this universal language could be understood and evaluated by the world. He has been avoiding any sort of religion. He wants to be alone as just a simple human being. Recently he completed his 'final' novel with the word 'Rejoice!' (op., cit.) In connection with this, he said;

When I think of my own death, I want to remember, not a sorrowful word, but an encouraging word. Maybe there would be nothing beyond the death, and it is the end of everything. So when I jump over this final threshold, I am encouraging myself with a fervent expression which I have reserved during all my life time. That is 'Rejoice!' (op., cit.)

A self-declared conservative, Nishibe Susumu, an editor of *Hatsugensha* (Speaker), shares quite an identical view of death with Oe. Once Nishibe was an aggressive radical in the student movement in the 1960s, and he was also a professor of Economics at Tokyo University. Recently he published a book entitled *Shiseiron* (On Life and Death)⁶⁾, in which he writes that he wants his death to be just as simple and natural as possible. Here he is criticizing the artificial prolonging of human life under the medical supervision. He also reveals his view, against the humanitarian slogan of "one man's life is heavier than the earth," that there are 'heavier' and 'lighter' life in this human society. Thus, Nishibe, diametrically opposing the humanist Oe, belongs to type 1) universalistic conservatism. He realizes that the most rampant ideology today is 'progressivism' which is not hesitant to destroy traditions and customs to enhance the value of economy and progress. Basically, human beings are imperfect. When these imperfect human beings seek freedom, they have to depend on self-love and transactions with others. Thus, the market emerged without any human intention. With Hayeck, he criticizes the hypocritical character of politics under the name of social jus-

tice, and the beguiling character of science under the name of social planning.⁷⁾ In relation to contemporary Japanese society, he diagnoses it as follows;

Happiness and equality are the values nobody could deny, so it is natural that economics which tried to realize these values on a societal (national) level has had a big say. But are you ready to accept whatever happiness and equality the society provides? Aren't you worried about possible degeneration of happiness and equality themselves? The modern mass of people are those who lost any distrust in happiness and equality (and industrialism), and now they occupy every corner of this society and the intellectuals are no exception. (Nishibe, 1991, p. 204)

Nishibe also warns about the rising trend of Japanese neo-nationalism (ethnocentrism), which comes into existence through the economic success the conservative LDP government was proud of. On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II, there was a movement in the LPD-SDPJ coalition government to pass a resolution in the Diet to express our people's apology to Asian people and our determination to commit to the world peace. The resolution was passed, but the nationalist conservatives in the LDP modified the proposal, making it less stringent and critical of the Empire's atrocity by insisting that Japan did what other Western colonialist powers had done. The modern intellectuals, according to Nishibe, should be skeptical of 'progressive' industrialism and democracy (the fundamental bases of contemporary mass society) and the rising tide of nationalism in this nation.

Oe and Nishibe share the same kind of universalistic perspective, but they are entirely different; one believes in the so-called postwar democracy and the other does not. Maybe they also share in common the characteristics of Japanese intellectuals (those characteristics ubiquitously seen among the intellectuals in late-comer industrializing countries); they are dependent on the ordinary people,

6) Nishibe, S., 1994. *Shiseiron (On Life and Death)*, Tokyo: Nihon Bungeisha.

7) Nishibe, S., 1991. *Keizai Rinrigaku Jyosetsu (An Introduction to Economic Ethics)*, Tokyo: Chuokoronsha.

but at the same time they have contempt for them because of their ignorance and absurdity. Oe's novels have never attracted a big audience because they are too difficult to read. Nishibe speaks of the 'noblesse oblige,' because fundamentally he distrusts the 'masses.'

The collapse of socialism as a social reality has contributed to the consolidation of the process of 'conservatization' among intellectuals. Even communists have been built into the established political system. Today, the 'media intellectuals' preach 'peace, human rights, and democracy' as interpreted by the establishment and the 'men of power,' through their role as technical experts in explaining the 'complicated' problems of the time. In essence, the dichotomous paradigm of 'socialism versus capitalism' and 'progressive versus conservative' has lost its meaning. Symbolically, the political party of 'Liberal and Democratic' has merged with the long standing opponent the 'Socialist' party and at the top of this coalition government stands Mr. Murayama, the Chairman of the Social Democratic Party of Japan. (Early January, 1996, he resigned and Ryutaro Hashimoto, the president of the LDP was nominated as the prime minister, still keeping the tripartite coalition framework of the LDP, the SDPJ, and the Sakigake party, as of August 17, 1996.) True, socialists could realize some tiny portions of their ideals in the government's policies because they are in power, but they have been substantially absorbed in the traditional conservative LDP's sphere. The prime minister, the speaker of the House of Representatives, and some ministers are socialist today, but the socialist ideology and ideals together with their long-cherished policies concerning the Japan-US relationship, the SDF, the Emperor system, and the Constitution have all gone, and there is no way to find any social group which still seriously supports this party.

More fundamentally, we cannot deny the fact that since the beginning the 'new' Japanese ideological orthodoxy, 'peace and democracy,' has been challenged by the cold reality of international affairs. With the Korean War, the Americans quickly changed their original policy toward Japan of keeping it disarmed. The 'infant' Japanese Armed Forces under the name of 'Reserved Police Forces' were created despite Article 9 of the new Constitution. (1950) The very basic spirit of the postwar democra-

cy has also been eroded by the nation's successful economic growth and its accompanying affluence. Although this affluent society was only possible because the nation has never been involved in any war in these fifty years, it has brought to all the people a kind of life style which confirms the maximization of their own desires and the routinization of social reality. Here has emerged a closed, conservative, one-dimensional society, where people have become inner-oriented and short-sighted. Type 2) and type 4) intellectuals cannot escape from their share of responsibility for this reality.

Problem of the Lay People

In the contemporary Japanese political scene, all established parties except the JCP have been integrated into the government system. (The New Frontier Party does not participate in the coalition, which mainly consists of the 'old' LDP members or its supporters.) The JCP has gained only around 10-13% of the vote of the Japanese electorate in the nation-wide elections during the past two decades. In the past 25 years, along with the economic growth of this country, the 'enbourgeoisement' of the Japanese people has evolved. They have become more conservative, feeling that they are all 'middle' class now. They are reluctant to change the status quo even in a more ideal direction. They have been short-sighted and concerned only with their own 'business.' They listen to the media intellectuals who are justifying their way of life. Some of them may take a 'radical' stance only as long as their everyday life is secure. To many of them, the structure and functioning of contemporary highly industrialized society is so complicated that they simply cannot understand the situation. When the 'notorious' consumption tax (3% sales tax) was introduced, the SDPJ increased its support, mainly from women or housewives, because, it was said, women had a sense of 'kitchen,' instinctively sensing that it was a 'wrong' tax. According to Nishibe, this is a typical example of the 'politics of idiot mass.' Not only did these women not understand the complicated tax system, but they were also exposed to the tremendous influence of the 'progressive' media intellectuals, who criticized this new tax, insisting on the cut of the defense budget and the increase of the corporate tax. Basically, Nishibe is trenchant to Jap-

anese mass media for their monopolistic character which disseminate the 'official' (quasi-progressive) information through newspapers and television stations.⁸⁾ Their functions have a negative impact on Japanese democracy because they hinder the development of diversified opinions on different issues. Moreover, the ordinary Japanese people have not been trained to act on the basis of their own principles or philosophy. Not many Japanese are self-assertive as they simply lack what they should assert. Traditionally, three things have been important for the Japanese to decide what to do; the (political) authority (feudal or democratic: *OKAMI*), the situation (including the others: *SEKEN*), and the personal secular desires (: *SHIRI-SHIYOKU*).

Concluding Remarks

On the one hand, it does not seem that Japanese intellectuals today can provide people with a secure sense of direction to go in this global community. The postwar 'progressive' intellectuals have stopped telling them what they should believe. The society has become more conservative and realistic. For example, under the excuse of 'international contribution,' appropriate to one of the economic giants in the world, the government (one main pillars of which is now the SDPJ!) is trying to make it easier to send the SDF abroad. Here the spirit of Article 9 of the Constitution and the deep self-reflection on the pre-War days militarism are dishonored and violated. At the same time, Japan bearing no responsibility for the international problems (many of them are violent wars or military confrontations.) is regarded as a 'Free Rider' and its 'UN-centered diplomacy' is at odds with severe international realities. It is evidently true that Japan has profited and is profiting more than anybody else from a stable, free, and developing international market, but how much has it contributed to create and maintain this international order? As far as the international relations are concerned, technical 'intellectuals' (the specialist of this subject) explain the reality and its difficulties. They can, however, offer no specific role Japan should take, thus leaving people directionless. The media intellectuals,

particularly the 'quasi-progressive' ones, have simply been criticizing the establishment and government's policies. They should be aware that their position such as the complete abolishment of American military bases in Okinawa are unrealistic, but they do not propose any alternative policy. The politicians, who should be the most responsible group of all in contemporary Japanese society, are busy with their day-to-day political maneuvering and negotiations among themselves. The ordinary people suffer from the 'dual' confusion brought about by both intellectuals and politicians. It is symbolic that at the recent Upper House election, the first nation-wide election after the present coalition government was shaped, the voters' turnout was as low as 44.5%. People said that they had no clear 'alternatives' to choose from, but I suspect that they had no trustworthy 'definition of the situation' of the contemporary Japan and the world. Being 'everyday-life conservatives,' they decided to select policies or directions only concerning the problems and issues around themselves. As far as the more global problems are concerned, however, they are passive, thinking of ways to avoid the involvement of international affairs as much as possible. Once an Orientalist-turned ambassador, Edwin O. Reishauer, pointed out that diplomacy is the 'least' confident area for the Japanese.

On the other hand, this nation does not think and behave in 'religious' terms these days. For better or worse, religion has played an important role in creating people's view of the self and the world. In contemporary Japanese society, however, people are quite 'secular.' Statistically, it is said that if you add the number of believers of different sects or religious groups in this country, the total number would easily exceed the whole population of Japan. The reality is that when asked whether they believe in some religion or not, those who responded 'no' is 79%, far surpassing the 20% 'yes.' (*Yomiuri Shinbun*, June 27, 1995) In 1979, believers were 33.6%. Consequently they have been constantly diminishing in number. (So the secularization process has advanced.) Inherently, the Japanese are indecisive, always adapting themselves to the ever-changing situations. The lack of unwavering self-assertive-

8) For example, unlike in Western societies, the Japanese 'influential' newspapers are proud of the voluminous amount of copies to sell; *Yomiuri*, nine million, *Asahi*, eight million, *Nikkei*, five million, *Mainichi*, 4.5 million, and *Sankei*, 2.5 million, a day.

ness goes hand in hand with the lack of a solid sense of responsibility. The vehement commitment to such values like peace and democracy is to be enhanced and maintained only by a 'religious' (religion-like) passion, I believe. Oe, a universalistic radical, said that he has been avoiding religion, but has never denied that he has often felt and dreamed of a sort of 'religious' image in arts, nature, and human beings. Nishibe, a universalistic conservative, admits the imperfection of human beings. His notion of 'simple death' is also 'religious.' The ordinary people of contemporary Japan who possess nothing but secular and materialistic values, do not seem to be ready to cope with the ideological problems which they have to face; such as peace-

ma between the limit of the Constitution and the expected (by the international community) collaboration with the UN's PKO, and democracy—how to cultivate grass-roots participatory democracy, and human rights— including those of the ever-increasing foreign workers (legal or illegal), to mention a few.

The social reality is not 'out there.' It is a 'meaning world' of human beings. It is produced and reproduced through their activities, mental as well as physical in a particular historical context. The role of intellectuals is ever more important and their responsibility is ever larger today than yesterday.

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ABSTRACT

This essay describes the present situation of intellectuals and ideologies in Japanese society today. After discussing the preliminary definition of these two terms, I will propose a tentative categorization of the types of ideological orientations relevant to the contemporary Japanese situation which also refers to the different groups of intellectuals. This paper then goes on to examine the so-called 'postwar intellectuals' (radicals), together with the 'conservatives.' Against the background of the recent historical changes, namely the end of the Cold War in the international scene and the emergence of the LDP-SDPJ (Liberal Democratic Party-Social Democratic Party of Japan) coalition government in the domestic scene in particular, the ideological confusion and the increasing influence of the 'media intellectuals' will be presented. Finally, some problems concerning the relationship between Japanese intellectuals and their 'audience' (lay people) are treated in connection with the rapid process of 'secularization' in the society.

Key Words : Japanese society, intellectuals, ideology