

symptoms to a hospital or clinic totaled almost 33,700,000, or 280 persons per 1,000 population. They are the patients when they come to the hospital and are treated. Are they ill or healthy, however, those suffering from hypertension who can control their blood pressure by medication and can lead a 'normal' life? On the other hand, the gigantic medical care complex (doctors, hospitals, and pharmaceutical industries) need 'patients.' Thus, many 'healthy' old people are likely to be made 'patients.' As for cancer, a hot debate developed recently concerning whether the best way to treat is 'to discover it as soon as possible and to cut it off.' The government policy of 'Group Cancer Detection' was also criticized as it served 'to produce the patients.'

4) Cultural ambiguity

Once, for example, the natural sciences and the social sciences (and Humanities) were neatly separated. This was the legacy of the classical philosophy: materialism versus idealism. Especially, the anthropocentric Enlightenment ideology, which separated culture from nature, and placed the former above the latter, thus has simply forgotten the fact that human beings are a part of nature. Environmental 'problems,' that are caused by human intervention, and the exploitation of nature, has evoked people's consciousness toward the limit of 'tolerance' of Mother Nature. On the other hand, the development of biology with its epoch-making techniques makes people realize that human beings are a kind of animal, or biological entity, which coexists with other millions of species on this planet, called earth. Here comes a convergence of the natural and social sciences. Take an example of 'information.' The concept of information today is widely shared in both natural and social sciences. It is processed, stored, and transmitted. In addition, it controls and determines the structure. There is a parallel function, for example, between genes and culture. Both are information which determine, in the former case, the structure of biological organisms, and in the latter, the structure of society. Let me give you a concrete example of confusion in academic circles when this idea is adopted to reorganize the curriculum. Traditionally, Faculty of Letters at national universities in Japan consists of three departments: philosophy, history, and literature. There are two disciplines, however, which are inherently natural science-oriented, experimental psychology which belongs to philosophy, and natural geography which belongs to history. Under the 'enlightened' Ministry of Education, our Faculty of Literature recently undertook a radical structural change, in which history, sociology, and geography were commingled and three new 'disciplines' were created: social information studies, historical sociology, and regional information sciences. These new disciplines roughly correspond to sociology, history, and geography in the old categories. This reform brought confusion not only to professors who are accustomed to their old disciplines, but also to students who need new textbooks for these new disciplines, which are yet to come.

There were many radical structural changes at curriculum in higher educational institutions since the 1970s. To get rid of the rigid boundaries between natural and social disciplines was one guiding principle, and to abolish the distinction between 'general' education and 'specialized' education was the other. Students also have a wider selection in the area of foreign languages today, which includes other languages in addition to German and French.

Another cause of cultural ambiguity is the changing social status of universities, which were traditionally regarded as the center of knowledge in society. Today, they are no longer regarded in this way. Information once monopolized by the academics is now easily shared by many other agents, including the media. Academic authority for knowledge is weakening as people are beginning to believe that knowledge should be of practical use. The 'know-how' or the manual type of knowledge is sought, and the distinction between lay and specialist is disappearing.

Social knowledge, just like other social institutions, needs 'legitimacy,' and cultural values are no exception. Once there was a critic, who said that now all Japanese are now becoming 'critics.' When there is no legitimate authority, some quasi-authority may appear to tell people true and false, and right and wrong.

Concluding remarks

The Economist: The World in 1998 compares today's Japan with the past two radical transforming periods;