

SHIMAZONO Susumu

From Salvation to Spirituality

The Contemporary Transformation of Religions Viewed from East Asia

In the contemporary world there is a trend to restore a religious world view against the dominant secularist view. Three aspects can be observed: 1. a return to traditional religions; 2. the rise of spirituality; and 3. an increase in religiosity within the modern institutional sphere. In this article the main focus is on the rise of spirituality. The author examines the historical process through which a new spirituality, mainly in economically advanced countries, has emerged and spread. The author proposes that this phenomena is related to skepticism against people's faith in salvation. In economically advanced countries, a contemporary transformation of the world view can be seen as "from religion to spirituality," but it may be more appropriate to call this transformation "from salvation to spirituality." There is continuity between "new spirituality," which develops outside the traditional religions, and an emphasis on spirituality which develops within the traditional religions. In order to understand the relationship between religion and spirituality, provisional definitions of religion and spirituality are proposed. Although there is a tension between religion and new spirituality, from another viewpoint religion and new spirituality are complementary. The understanding of this complement proposed here reflects an East Asian perspective of religious history.

KEYWORDS: spirituality—salvation religion—religious resurgence—spiritual world—new spirituality

SHIMAZONO Susumu is a professor in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Tokyo.

IN CONSIDERING the trends in contemporary religions, the year 1978 has a symbolic significance to me. The Iranian Revolution occurred in this year, and the name of Ruh Allah Khomeyni became known to the world. The revolution gradually strengthened its Islamic inclinations, and the year will be remembered as a turning point when the drive of religiously-inspired political regimes gained strength against secular political regimes in an increasingly modernizing and globalizing world.¹

Changes in the Contemporary World View

It was also in 1978 that a “spiritual world” (*seishin sekai*) section was set up in bookstores in Japan; this is an original Japanese term that had a close connection with “religion,” but it came into use with connotations to suit the sentiments of modern life, replacing the term “religion” which was becoming outmoded. Within a short space of time, the “spiritual world” section was installed next to the religion section in large bookstores, and young people have become more attracted to the “spiritual world” (SHIMAZONO 1996).²

The focus of young people’s interest, like my own, in the 1970s was more directed to religion rather than politics. Among young people a shift occurred, from participating in the anti-Vietnam War movement or anti-pollution movements, to being engaged in introspective activities to transform themselves through meditation, physical activity, and psychological therapy. In the United States, the counterculture period of the 1960s was replaced by the trend of seeking an alternative spirituality in the 1970s. A similar trend occurred in Japan a little later. What is called the “spiritual world” in Japan largely overlaps with the “New Age” in North America, and both are interactively related to some extent.³

* This is an enlarged and revised version of my earlier article published in Japanese as *Kyusai-kara supirityuaritii e: Gendai shukyo no hen'yo o higashi ajia kara tenbo suru* 救済からスピリチュアリティへ—現代宗教の変容を東アジアから展望する— [From Salvation to Spirituality: Contemporary Transformation of Religions Viewed from East Asia], *Shūkyō Kenkyū* 365: 127–54 (2010).

1. Scholars who took note of the trends of “religious revival” include KEPEL 1991 and JUERGENSEMEYER 1993.

2. Many research books on the New Age have been published in the West. Books which were published relatively earlier, and which have high academic value, include MELTON 1990; YORK 1995; and HEELAS 1996.

3. Sociologists in English-speaking countries often cite two definitions on religion, one substantive definition (faith in supernatural beings) and the other, a functional definition (relations

The theory of secularization was dominant among religion scholars and religious sociologists in the 1950s and 1960s. They discussed that along with the progress in the process of modernization and rationalization, the influence of religions had declined and was bound to further decline in the future. Bryan Wilson, a leading British sociologist of religion in the 1960s and 1970s, and Peter Berger, one of the leading sociologists in the United States at that time, advocated the theory of secularization (WILSON 1966, 1982; BERGER 1967). However, in the 1980s and 1990s, those favoring this theory decreased in number. More people considered that the influence of religions might have been weakened at a certain stage in the process of modernization, but that secularization would not proceed in a linear manner. The view that a return to the sacred would occur became stronger. Thus, terms such as “sacralization,” or “re-sacralization” came to be used (for example, DEMERATH 2007).

“Re-sacralization” can be observed from three aspects. The first aspect is the revival of traditional religions. In Islamic countries, the tendency to live in accordance with Islamic religious norms was strengthened, and in some countries such as Israel and Turkey there are political forces foisting the strict practice of Islamic teachings. The Iranian Revolution was the first expression of such a trend, which was followed by other countries in other regions. In India, Hindu nationalism gained strength and in Israel, the religious party came to have a stronger influence. In many cases, young people supported these parties. It can be said that to some extent in the United States, Evangelical (or Fundamentalist) Christianity caught the hearts of the youth, and gained stronger political strength, although this tendency was more remarkable in developing countries than in industrialized countries (SHIMAZONO 2007a).

The second aspect is the rise of spirituality that was more notably observed in industrialized countries. An increasing number of people in these countries came to consider that their lifestyles and mindsets were led by their relation with something greater than themselves or a transcendent domain, rather than following secularism or rationalism. They do not like to use the term “religion” to explain their state of mind. They do not feel comfortable with organized religious groups that traditional religions and their pious followers tend to form. Instead of forming a communal society of followers of a leader, they prefer to develop spirituality individually as they like, and connect with like-minded people in a loose network. Many of them consider themselves to be “not religious, but spiritual.”

The third aspect is an increase in the number of people who realize there is a limit to secularism in the modern institutional domain in which secularism was

with something that satisfies one’s ultimate interest), and encourage people to choose either one; for an example, see MCGUIRE 2002. Selecting one of these definitions is one idea, but here, a definition that embraces both sides is better.

the norm and who find it necessary to bring religion and spirituality into their lives. Typically, they are people working in hospitals and schools, to which the knowledge and practice systems of medical care, nursing care, education, and psychology are related. In the modern assumption, these institutions have their own functions which are removed from religions and spirituality. However, they are, in fact, inseparable from religion and spirituality. For example, hospitals and other medical institutions which give medical and nursing care for terminally ill patients cannot avoid being faced with the spiritual suffering of patients whose time is drawing near. They find it necessary to offer spiritual care that is not necessarily based on a specific religion. If religious or spiritual experience is indispensable in a person's life, institutions and fields which have considered secularism as their leading principle should incorporate a spiritual dimension in their services.

In Japan, and presumably in other areas of East Asia, I noticed that the trend in the second aspect was remarkable. In the 1970s, the trend toward the spiritual world became apparent, and young people were attracted to it. In the 1980s, the spiritual world became part of pop culture and achieved commercial success as a part of the culture of consumption. Around the turn of the decade, moving into the 1990s, I realized that this was more than a reflection of the overflowing hopes of young people, and that it was more than "cultural fashion." For example, cases emerged whereby people suffering from social discrimination or people struggling with psychological suffering were involved in gaining spiritual knowledge and conducting spiritual practices together with others who also shared the same suffering. A good example of this is the self-help movement whereby people suffering from eating disorders formed a network aimed at healing, and for sharing spiritual experiences. It was around this time that networks spread among people who became overwhelmed with grief due to separation by death. These phenomena and the third aspect are closely connected.

By taking Japan as an example in considering the theme of re-sacralization, the rise of spirituality occurring mainly in industrialized countries has been discussed rather than religious revival on a worldwide scale. As the phenomena in the second and third aspects (the rise of spirituality; the limits to secularism remarkable in industrialized countries, we may see that the general trend of human spiritual history is directed toward the rise of spirituality. The process "from secularism to religion" is both a religious revival and re-sacralization, but as a shift "from religion to spirituality" is taking place, the general tendency can be defined as "from secularism to spirituality."

However, the present situation cannot be accurately grasped with this view. For one thing, the phenomenon corresponding to "religious revival" also occurred in industrialized countries. The roles of religious traditions and religious organizations may be increasing, calling for peace, and promoting inter-

national cooperation; this is also true for the domain of bioethics, such as the question of whether to approve or disapprove euthanasia, and that of social welfare activities to help the socially disadvantaged (SHIMAZONO 2000; 2008). These are cases that have the potential to activate the public arena. On the contrary, religious traditions and organizations may exert their influence to promote domestic or international conflicts and disputes. José Casanova noted that industrialized countries in Western Europe, which once separated politics and religions according to modern principles, were rediscovering the potential of religions to play a positive public function. He attempted to express this function with the term “public religion” (CASANOVA 1994). It is along the same perspective that Robert Bellah took note of the role of “Biblical tradition” in the contemporary public arena in the United States (BELLAH et al., 1985). The activation of the public functions of traditional religions may contribute to the integration of society based on diversity, but on the other hand, may lead to social division and social exclusion. It is not easy to distinguish both aspects.

From the nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, when nation states and modern institutions that were formed in the West rapidly developed and spread, secularism became the main trend on a worldwide level. Industrialization and the progress of modern sciences, and the extension of a modern universal education to support this, promoted the expansion of organizations and fields of activity in accordance with rationalism. A visible indicator for this is the increase in the number of professionals with a knowledge of specialized sciences. In addition, in the twentieth century, socialism became popular as a guiding principle for social change, giving impetus to the trend in secularism.

Nonetheless, in the late twentieth century, the negative sides of modern civilization became apparent: for example, no feasible solutions to the problems of environmental destruction and poverty, the endless expansion of material desire, and an increasing number of people living in solitude and having no real reason to live. Furthermore, the authority of secularism was weakened due partially to the decline of socialism both in developed and developing countries, and people’s minds were drawn to religion and spirituality. With the failure of their utopian expectations of secularism, there was a rise in the number of disillusioned people in both the western and eastern blocs. People came to realize that modern institutions had fundamental limits when establishing meaningful lifestyles. The authority of science was increasingly strengthened, and secularism remained the mainstream world view of industrial nations. However, the world views that were different from this could not be ignored.

From the above, two changes in ideological trends in the contemporary world can be seen, which is apparently inverting to secularization: 1. from secularization to religion, and 2. from religion to spirituality. In fact, spirituality is indispensable from religion. What I see among many people who are departing

from religions in today's world is that they are eschewing salvation religions. Therefore, the change from religion to spirituality can be more specifically stated as being a change "from salvation religions to spirituality;" seeing this, spiritual trends among contemporary people can be understood more clearly. In the following section, the connotations using the terms "religion," "spirituality," and "salvation religion" in this article will be explained.

Religion, Spirituality, and Salvation Religions

In order to understand the phenomena of religious revival and the rise of spirituality in the world, it is necessary to clarify the definition of terms such as "religion" and "spirituality," which is by no means easy. "Religion" and "spirituality" have been used in Christian civilization and they connote meanings connected with Christianity (ASAD 1993; 2003). Since the nineteenth century, the term "religion" has been used to express phenomena different from Christianity in different places in the world. There were cases where the application of the term was not easy. For example, "Are Islam and Judaism religions or social systems?," or "Is Confucianism a religion or not?" In Japan and India respectively, there is a persistent resistance to call Shinto or Hinduism a religion. Human society has not reached the stage when the concept of religion developed in the West can be applied to various phenomena in the world.

Under such circumstances, there is no definition of religion widely accepted in academia. No matter what definition is applied, there are some phenomena which cannot be covered by the definition. It is very difficult to define what religion is. Fully understanding such a situation, religion is to be defined here as the "system relating with something sacred" (WILSON 1966, 1982; BERGER 1967). What, then, is "something sacred"? First, it implies spiritual or supernatural beings, a power, or experiences that cannot be confirmed with the ordinary five senses. A spirit, a deity, the world of a different dimension (the other world), and something that can be felt through mystical experiences or spiritual enlightenment can be considered sacred. Something that gives deep meaning, that strongly influences people and continuously leads their thoughts and practices, is also sacred. In some cases, specific objects, words, and books can be sacred things. When people's day-to-day lives are structured upon a system relating to the sacred, or when a system relating to the sacred is incorporated in the communal life of people, such a system may be called a religion.

What, then, is "spirituality"? Spirituality is a term used to understand religion in accordance with a specific quality of humans that expresses human experience, a quality, or property that is associated with something sacred and beyond human control. In Japanese, the term *reisei*—originating in the Middle Ages—is the word with the closest meaning. In *Nihonteki Reisei*, SUZUKI

Daisetsu (1972) is strongly conscious of the term “spirituality.” While “religion” is an affair of individuals as well as a system outside them, spirituality has been considered as being found mainly inside individuals or something found through individuals. Both are closely related, and can be said to be the same but with a difference in emphasis, whether to give emphasis on the system or on individuals. In other words, where a religion existed, spirituality was always present. Where a stable religion was considered as a premise, and many people shared the same religion, the need for discussing spirituality was not felt. The term was only used, at best, as a term relating to a small number of people having strong spirituality.

In the twentieth century, and notably in the last quarter century, an understanding of spirituality as being independent from religion has been spreading. This new movement or cultural style can be called “new spirituality” (SHIMAZONO 1996, fn. 2; 2004a; 2007a, fn. 6). The New Age in the United States, the spiritual world in Japan, and the spread of grief work meetings and self-help groups are examples of new spirituality. In new spirituality, spirituality is often considered to exist separate from religion, and that this is suitable to modern life. While some people expend much energy facing their own death, or in spiritual interaction with the deceased, they are not convinced of the teachings of salvation in the other world taught by traditional religions. Others consider that psychology and psychological therapy can help one more accurately grasp the experience in the depths of one’s consciousness, and take steps on a path to be above themselves. These people find it difficult to follow traditional religions, in particular salvation religions, but they have a strong interest in spirituality and consider themselves to be “not religious, but spiritual.”

It is not a new spirituality alone that is on the rise today. Even within traditional religions, spirituality is increasingly discussed.⁴ In the tradition of Christianity, the opposing concepts of “spirit” and “matter” were established from an earlier time. Along with this, the term “spiritual” has long been used, although it is not directly linked with the use of “spirituality” as a matter of individual concern. It is understood that the term was used in France in the seventeenth century and had much in common with mysticism (CARRETTE and KING 2005; MCGRATH 1999). There, spirituality was typically found in monasteries. The use of this word to call upon some personal characteristics developed through undergoing special training such as that of monks under monastic life today. For example, an attempt to exchange training between Zen Buddhist monks in Japan and Catholic monks and nuns in the West has been implemented since 1979 in the name of an “East-West Spirituality Exchange.”

4. See SHIMAZONO 2002 and 2007a, Chapter 3, part I, fn. 6. Wade Clark Roof has been conducting his research from this perspective; see ROOF 1993, 1999.

Later, from before the Reformation, a time came inside Christian organizations when the development of spirituality was sought not only in the secluded life of monasteries but also as something deeply associated with the daily lives of lay followers. Spirituality came to be considered not as the concern of a limited number of religious people but as being related to the inner lives of all followers; presumably, this was a development in the 1950s and 1960s (CARRETTE and KING 2005, fn. 15). Instead of considering that followers are unilaterally taught by clergymen, that they should abide by holy words in the Bible, or that they are passive beings with “faith,” followers should develop their spirituality themselves.

The meaning of the term “spirituality” was broadened based on this view. As a matter of fact, the training and development in the habitus of followers must have been carried out in the past without using the term “spirituality.” Such efforts were reorganized and further developed while respecting the diversity and voluntary practices of individual followers, and the term “spirituality” was applied to this process. Therefore, the process can be seen as the reorganization and reconceptualization of the spirituality of Christianity. There are increasing numbers of people who consider spirituality to be their own concern while maintaining their affiliation and faith with specific religious traditions. This phenomenon should be distinguished from “new spirituality,” but it is closely correlated with it. It constitutes a part of the rise of spirituality in the contemporary world.

As such, the relation between religion and spirituality is not simple, but neither are they independent of each other. Discourses on spirituality are increasing within Christianity, but it is a new spirituality outside the existing religious traditions and is more pronounced. Can spirituality be defined as something not religious? This would narrowly limit the term “religion” and close an avenue in the comparison of various forms of religion. Both terms concern “people’s relationship with the holy.” In religion, it is seen in terms of a system, while in spirituality it is seen from the aspect of individual experience, quality, and property. In the past, a “system” was more conspicuous, but now, “individuality” is gaining a stronger emphasis. Even with this change, both aspects are always seen, and there is spirituality where religion exists, and religion where spirituality exists. Therefore, a new spirituality can be embraced within religion in a broad sense. In other words, a new type of religion has become prevalent among people who are not in favor of defining it as “religion.”

In what aspects do participants in new spirituality consider their position to be different from religion?⁵ First, it is hard to indicate new spirituality as a firm system existing outside an individual. Those who are interested in new spiri-

5. WUTHNOW (1998) and FULLER (2001) point out the inclination toward new spirituality based on rich resource materials.

tuality consider traditional religions, with their solid systems and organization, to have characteristics that are disagreeable to them. Such characteristics are 1. they require followers to be members in a religious organization, and to follow the norm of the organization; 2. they require followers to believe in a single and supreme being such as Jesus Christ and Sakyamuni Buddha or a divine superhuman being; 3. they have self-righteous and exclusive attitudes and believe that only the religion they believe in is right while other religions and ideologies have little or no value; and 4. they have a dichotomy by which they teach of an after-life retribution by gods and superhuman beings and possible punishment for those who are non-believers in the teachings.

These characteristics of religion that connote negative meanings for the supporters of new spirituality do not apply to all religions. However, these are remarkably observed in the type of religions categorized as “salvation religions” in the theory of types of religions.⁶ What are “salvation religions”? In order to understand the spirituality of today, an understanding of salvation religions will be of great help.

Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam are considered to be “world religions” as they have followers all over the world, but they can also be characterized as “salvation religions.” Salvation religions urge people to realize that humans have difficult limits to overcome, and teach that there is a way to overcome the difficult limits by appealing to a supreme being or power in a different dimension. To escape from a difficult situation means “salvation,” therefore, they are religions focusing on the reality of suffering as well as the concept of “salvation.”

In Christianity, as a child of God, the falsely charged Jesus Christ expiated the crime of humans by being crucified. By believing this, followers believe that they who are sinful would be relieved, and according to traditional faith, to be relieved means that followers would be near God in heaven after their death. The original meaning might be that their souls would be fully purified. In the most frequently cited prayer in Christianity, the Lord’s Prayer, there are the following clauses:

And *forgive* us our trespasses,
As we *forgive* them that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
But *deliver* us from *evil*.

In Buddhism, a fundamental limit for humans is that they cannot save themselves from suffering. It is said that in his first sermon after attaining enlightenment,

6. The term “salvation religion” was first used in Germany toward the end of the nineteenth century, and became a key term to be frequently used in religious sociology (KIPPENBERG 1997). It had an impact on the religious sociology of Ernst Troeltsch and Max Weber.

Gautama Buddha explained this in terms of the Four Noble Truths. First, human life is full of suffering (truth of suffering); second, suffering is caused by endless attachment to the objects of desire (as the cause of suffering); third, one should seek enlightenment through ceasing these desirous attachments (the truth of quenching desire); and fourth, one should practice the eightfold path (that leads to the cessation of suffering). The goal (or salvation) in Buddhism is to overcome suffering. This state of mind is called “enlightenment” and the resultant nirvana (wherein the fires of desire are vanquished) is another expression of salvation.

Finally, Tenrikyo will be cited as an example of a salvation religion that originated in Japan.⁷ Tenrikyo was initiated in 1838 by Nakayama Miki, a housewife of a farming household in Yamato province (present-day Nara prefecture) who experienced divine possession, and it is called a new religion. Some new religions have not expanded outside their place of birth. Usually they are not categorized as world religions but are considered as salvation religions. Every morning and evening, Tenrikyo followers cite the words of the prayer *mikagura-uta* to a melody while gesturing with their hands. The standard prayer clause cited every morning and evening is *Tenri-o-no-mikoto*, “please save us by wiping away evil.” The “evil” resembles “sin” in Christianity. It means that a person soils one’s heart with evil thoughts, and that such evil conduct is accumulated in one’s heart, preventing the innate function of the heart. It is often likened to “dust.” When dust is wiped out and the heart is purified, followers can spend their days in happiness. This is called “relief.” The terms “relief” and “salvation” have almost the same meaning.

In salvation religions, “evil,” “suffering,” and “sin” are considered to be the limits of humans. Some evil and suffering may not have been caused by humans, but they come from nature and some invisible beings. The important elements here are that humans must confess, repent, and apologize to God, or must reflect on their sins and try to get rid of them. The first thing that comes to mind as evil or a sin that humans tend to commit is to cause others pain, and in most cases, this means violence. Salvation religions, therefore, can be defined as religions that are concerned with evil and suffering, and further, violence.

How can violence be overcome? Salvation religions preach that as human capacity is limited, followers should entrust it to the love or power of God, or the wisdom or mercy of the Buddha. They recommend praying, and looking at and calming one’s mind. On the other hand, they urge followers to take action in order to control violence or go beyond violence. They imply the observation of precepts, and the practice of love and mercy. In addition to the requirement of attaining a peaceful state of mind, they require followers to actually practice love and mercy in their social lives through their physical activities. The concept of

7. For an attempt to understand new religions in Japan as the modern form of salvation religions, see SHIMAZONO 1992.

virtue recommended by salvation religions may vary widely, but keeping away from violence is the essential element.

According to the teachings of salvation religions, the path leading to salvation is open to everyone by having faith in the religion. Salvation religions urge individuals to make decisions independently. Every person stands before salvation religions—in a manner of speaking—at the same start line, implying a universalism and egalitarianism that does not discriminate against individuals by their birth (status, social class, or caste) or circumstances. Here, salvation religions have something in common with democracy and human rights ideology. However, a difference is emphasized between leaders—those who acquire deep understanding of the doctrine and faith after training (masters)—and those who are led by them (lay general followers). Individuals are encouraged to experience being leaders or general members based on their spiritual rank. Some organizations have a large gap between monks and lay members, which was also strong in premodern society. Around the beginning of modern times, the idea not to emphasize the difference between clergymen and lay members became strong, and universalism and egalitarianism in salvation religions became increasingly stronger.

As universalism does not discriminate against any person, it helps break the walls of a closed community. The chance to reconcile conflicts will increase among families and tribes by sharing faith in the same salvation religion. When people are conscious that all people are human beings, they can encourage cooperation between people both inside a family or a tribe, and people outside a family or a tribe. Furthermore, they can help interaction between people within a country and outside the country. Salvation religions are characterized by their power to remove the walls between people, and therefore they expand individual freedom and facilitate more open human relations.

However, salvation religions may be seen to potentially divide people. This is because they establish a system of discrimination between those who follow the “right” teachings and those who do not. Even though they may break down the walls of a communal society including family, tribe, and nation, they create a system of discrimination based on good and evil between people who have accepted the “right” truth and those who have not. Salvation religions regard people who do not accept the “truth” that a religion advocates, as belonging to an evil group, or to be lower-level people who have not yet understood the “right” teachings. It is impossible not to make a value judgment of another persons’ thoughts, attitudes, and behavior. The act of evaluating one’s own behavior and others’ behavior to be good or evil does not necessarily lead directly to discrimination. However, salvation religions tend to determine whether people are good or not, or to be friends or not, simply by the yardstick of whether they adhere to a specific faith or not.

Salvation religions sometimes cause or amplify violence as an aggressive expression of this characteristic, and often consider it good to expand their influ-

ence. In principle, it means that the number of people who are saved by obeying the teachings increase. In fact, it implies gaining greater communal interest by increasing the membership. Looking back in history, salvation religions were accepted by a wide range of people because their universalistic and expansionistic properties were appropriate to political governance by empires and large-area states after the ancient times. When colonialism spread in early modern times, Christian missionaries first landed in a country to lay the foundations for later militaristic and political domination.

Relatively well-off people in industrialized countries today are likely to have a sense of discomfort at the aspects of salvation religions as described above, and this is one reason for the alienation from religion among them. In this context, it may be most appropriate to understand the phenomenon of the transition “from religion to spirituality” to be an evolution—“from salvation religion to spirituality” or “from salvation to spirituality.”

The Future Direction of Salvation Religions

So far I have discussed that the trend in world views in the contemporary world contained dual movements from 1. secularism to religion, and 2. from religion to spirituality. Further, the movement “from religion to spirituality” could rightly be understood mainly as a trend “from salvation religion to spirituality.” One key to understanding these tendencies among people nowadays is to understand how the functions that the characteristics of salvation religions play have undergone change in present-day society, and what changes have occurred in the way people have accepted salvation religions.

Karl Jaspers named the the period between 700 and 200 BC the “age of axis,” a point in time that salvation religions began to occupy a central position in people’s world view. In this period, people in various societies around the world found that they had to face fundamental limits and began to strongly assert the existence of a dimension specific to the human spirit. These ideas can be seen in salvation religions such as Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, or Judaism before Christianity, Greek philosophy, and ancient Chinese thought (by scholars and ideologists in ancient China). JASPERS (1949) states that this thought offered philosophical principles to support the “civilization of axis” that would develop later.

Succeeding Jaspers’ concept that salvation religions played a great role in the most important spiritual revolutions in human history, Robert Bellah discussed how “historic religions” promoted decisive progress in religious history.⁸ The historic religions that Bellah cites are salvation religions that later became the

8. See BELLAH 1964. My criticism against religious evolution theories by Talcott Parsons and Robert Bellah can be seen in SHIMAZONO 2004b.

state religion of empires, or which came to be positioned at the core of the civilization that supported the empires. Jaspers and Bellah highly appreciate salvation religions in that they established a dualistic world view to distinguish this world from the transcendental world, gave a foundation for individuals' autonomous morality, treated people as equal and mutually cooperative beings, and presented a perspective to criticize the political order based on power differences in this world. They considered that the resources achieved by this ideological breakthrough would be effective up until now.

On the other hand, there are some elements which can hardly be accepted in the contemporary world view. A feature of salvation religions that is remarkably observed in historical religions is the emphasis on the deep-rootedness of evil. They teach that an escape from suffering can be attained by entering into a dimension beyond this world. In Christianity, humans bear an original sin, and are finally emancipated from this burden after their death, in paradise. In Buddhism, humans cannot avoid having earthly desires, and therefore cannot escape from the chain of suffering in this world. Buddhism teaches that it is only at the time of nirvana, when the fire of earthly desires is finally extinguished, when life ends and humans reach far beyond the world of life and death, that they can escape suffering. The fact that Gautama Buddha left his family to live a priest's life may be because he wanted to keep himself away from earthly desires and violence, which was difficult to overcome in life as a layman.

Why was the view to deny this world widely accepted? One factor may be that people felt it hard to overcome suffering caused by uncontrollable natural elements, such as disasters, pandemics, and famine. Before the modern era, humans had only limited scientific and technological means to control unfavorable natural phenomena. It was a matter of course that people felt that they were living cheek by jowl with unbearable suffering and death. Even so, aren't suffering and evil overly emphasized? The excessive level of treating suffering and evil cannot be separated from the strong urge of people to choose the path for salvation. Is this not in exchange for submission by people who are far away from political power? Because the promise of salvation has an absolute value, evil and suffering must be emphasized as being unbearable. This is a matter concerning the authority of religion-related organizations.

Here the theory of authority, to which Marx and Nietzsche attached so much importance when looking at religions, must be referred to. Contrasting evil with salvation to emphasize the weight of both elements will help strengthen the dignity of religious organizations and their clergy and heighten their ruling power. Why do people admit the authority of religious power structures? It relates to the acceptance of political domination that is prevalent in society as a whole. How do these differences between people on the strong side—who exercise power over the rest, and who can satisfy more of their desires—and the people

who cannot do so become acceptable, if these differences occurred not simply by coercion? People who exercise power do not necessarily have high human qualities. This-worldly things have absolute limits and things that can be obtained through exercising power are, in fact, momentary. Far more important things exist in the dimension beyond this world. There is an aspect to this that by being taught like this, people may foster attitudes to accept political class domination.

From the perspective of the theory of power, the denial of this world or the excessive emphasis on evil and suffering in salvation religions can be understood as having significance to compensate for the imbalance of power in this world. Karl MARX looked through this when he stated that religions were like opium to people (1844).⁹ Religion acts to help people make up for defeat and/or inferior positions in their actual lives by imaginary or conceptual victories or superiority, to some extent subjectively or actually. Nietzsche expressed this *resentment* to mean a reactionary emotion containing jealousy to a fulfilling life (NIETZSCHE 1887). Love of one's neighbors and the apparent egalitarianism in Christianity are meant to oppress and depress people's intentions to fulfil their lives, and to submit to the authority of the clergy. Nietzsche's criticism of salvation religions is sharp, but it is too severe to see a reactionary emotion behind love and egalitarianism. Nietzsche did not attempt to present a clear prescription on how to live for humans who can hardly escape from a ruling power or violence.

In the above, the reasons for denying this world in salvation religions have been examined. People today do not often see the denial of this world and its excessive emphasis on evil and suffering observed in historic salvation religions to be agreeable. This is endorsed by salvation religions that have developed since early modern times and which are often positive in nature about this world. Salvation religions that emerged in modern Japan are categorized as new religions, many of which are positive about this world (SHIMAZONO 1992, fn.19). Tenrikyo, for example, teaches that gods created humans in order to enjoy seeing humans "living joyfully" in this world. After death, the souls of humans return to gods, but then are reborn in this world. Therefore, in Tenrikyo, death is regarded as "passing away for rebirth." They believe in the attainment of salvation through life in this world.

Nevertheless, salvation religions that are affirmative about this world contain elements which are hardly accepted by people in the industrialized countries of today, the same as those salvation religions which are negative about this world. Even though they are positive about this world, salvation religions herald "salvation" which often involves teachings inconsistent with the commonly accepted world view. For example, they teach that the fate of individuals will definitely turn for the better through faith, or that society will dramatically change to bring about collective well-being. These teachings may be positively accepted as

9. Shimazono discusses this point in relative depth; SHIMAZONO 1996, fn. 2, and 2007a, fn. 6.

the implication of possible alternatives to modern society. It is not only the difficulty of accepting what “salvation” ensures that prevents people nowadays from accepting salvation religions.

An important reason for people in industrialized countries to consider salvation religions to be unacceptable is that they will potentially divide people. Salvation religions draw a strong line of division between the followers and non-followers of the teachings. Although salvation religions break the walls of communities down, including families, tribes, and nations, they create discrimination between those who have accepted the “right” truth and those who have not. They often see those who do not accept what they advocate as belonging to an evil group, or a lower-class of people who cannot understand the right teachings. It is not necessarily wrong to make a value judgment of others’ thoughts, attitudes, and behavior. Value judgments may be necessary both for oneself and others if they are based on a proper yardstick of virtue. However, salvation religions tend to determine whether a person is good or a member of their group simply based on the yardstick of adhering to a specific faith or not.

When this is aggressively asserted, salvation religions may increase the possibility of causing and amplifying violence. Salvation religious groups tend to consider the expansion of their strength as a good thing because it means that the “truth” of salvation spreads in the world, and that the number of people to be saved will increase in number. As a matter of fact, it cannot be denied that salvation religions have been accepted broadly because they had expansionist features, which was convenient for imperial domination.

The Gospels according to Matthew and Luke convey the teachings of Jesus Christ, who said “A sword not peace.”

Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth;
 I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.
 For I have come to set a man against his father, and
 a daughter against her mother, and
 a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and
 a man’s foes will be those of his own household.
 He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who
 does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.
 He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it.
 (Matt 10: 34–39).

The act of throwing away one’s life can be regarded as a beautiful deed, or a revered religious deed. But such a deed may result in threatening others’ lives without justified reason. People in industrialized countries today are becoming more aware of how salvation religions strengthen solidarity and unity among their followers on the one hand, and exclude or divide people on the other. As

mentioned at the end of the last section, this critical view is prevalent behind the alienation from salvation religions in many industrialized nations.

Where New Spirituality is heading

In the contemporary world, people who are skeptical about secularism are on the rise, and people's minds are directed to religion in a broad sense. Even so, many people feel that salvation religions are unacceptable. New spirituality is attracting interest among these people. On the assumption of this observation, the trend in industrialized countries has been reviewed. So will the evolution "from religion to spirituality," and in particular, "from salvation religion to spirituality," be further accelerated? It may not necessarily develop that way because new spirituality has difficulties that prevent its development, and so it is difficult to predict a steady increase in supporters.

In comparison with salvation religions, new spirituality lacks, first, the ideological structure to squarely accept ultimate human limits such as evil and death (SHIMAZONO 1992). Salvation religions preach that there is a dimension where evil is completely overcome and there is eternal life far beyond death. If one can believe in this, he or she would not keep asking questions like "Isn't there nothing beyond death?", "Why do people in difficult situations continue to bear suffering?", or "Why can't I escape from sin?" New spirituality does not always present clear answers to the questions of evil and death. Unless one believes in salvation, he/she would have to accept that the ultimate answer to evil and death cannot be provided. In the face of evil and death, humans may naturally require an ultimate response that salvation religions offer.

In comparison with salvation religions and other traditional religions, new spirituality is lacking other aspects—firmly established communities, and a system of educating followers. New spirituality has an individualistic inclination, and prefers loose networks to structured organizations or groups. It is in relation to this point that those who sympathize with new spirituality entertain a feeling of discomfort about traditional religions and new religious organizations. They are greatly interested in spiritual pursuits and their own growth, but they are not in favor of maintaining long-term relations with leaders, or going through hard training for these purposes. They see that these things will lead to the loss of their autonomy, to unwilling restraint, and to submission to authoritarianism.

How do people develop their interest in, acquire, and enhance spirituality? The media perform an important role here. Unilateral communication media, such as books, cartoons, movies, videos, and the Internet, are predominant. People obtain information through these media, and take part in seminars and lecture meetings. But sustainable communities or person-to-person relations are rarely developed.

Instead of forming communities, the initiation into spirituality, education, and training are often carried out in a commercial manner. If leaders do not hold professional positions in public institutions such as schools, hospitals, or care institutions, or do not serve as volunteer leaders while having the means for living, they should support their everyday lives by providing spiritual information and skills in exchange for monetary considerations. Actually, the number of people who are engaged in spirituality in such positions is increasing. Even when an organization is formed, it needs to be commercially successful by approaching interested people. The livelihood of leaders and the expenses of the management of the organization are supported by the proceeds of the sales of books, participation fees from organizing seminars, and other events. In such a commercial style, there is no means to rectify a consumers' arbitrary understanding of spirituality, setting aside the question of the quality assurance of merchandise. This is somewhat like selling products without after-sale services.¹⁰

On the other hand, self-help groups maintain relatively sustainable communal relationships. Twelve-step groups¹¹ originated by Alcoholics Anonymous, a self-help group of alcoholics, were introduced to Japan in the 1990s among people suffering from various problems, including eating disorders and psychological problems. Some of them partnered with feminist spiritual movements.

Twelve-step groups encourage followers to realize one's limits, and to abandon oneself to entrust everything to a "god" or a being known as a higher power. At meetings, anonymous participants narrate their spiritual experiences. A meeting often closes with the citation of the "serenity prayer."¹² The group Adult Children was founded by the children of alcoholic patients, and later evolved into a movement of survivors of traumas of various causes. This movement was spread in the mid-1990s in Japan by psychiatrist Satoru Saito (SAITO 1995).

Saito says that the self-help movement can form "a family of soul." It is not a family by kin but one linked by the relationship through a problem. Using this term, a self-help group consists of people who share a specific difficult problem that they have to cope with, and because of this, want to form sustainable

10. Ehara Hiroyuki and Iida Fumihiko produced a number of best-selling books on spirituality in Japan from the 1990s through to the first decade of the the twenty-first century. Shimazono discusses Iida in SHIMAZONO 2007b. CARRETTE and KING (2005, fn. 15) also note the commercialism in new spirituality from a critical viewpoint.

11. A reference book on self-help groups, in particular self-help groups in line with the twelve steps, is KATZ 1993.

12. The serenity prayer was written by Reinhold Niebuhr, a Protestant theologian, but it is widely used even outside the Christian context. The prayer is "O God, give us/serenity to accept what cannot be changed,/courage to change what should be changed,/and wisdom to distinguish the one from the other (know the difference)." In Japan, twelve-step groups cite this prayer in Japanese translation.

relations.¹³ In order to overcome the suffering that humans had in common, salvation religions addressed all human beings, and organizations of believers were formed. In contrast, in self-help groups, participating in communal organizations formed by salvation religions is not favored, and sustainable relations can hardly be formed unless a limited number of problems are faced by a limited number of people. New spirituality is spreading only in this context.

A weak point for new spirituality is the difficulty encountered in developing communal organizations and traditions, which are considered a natural prerequisite for salvation religions. Being unable to deepen or stably maintain their spiritual pursuits in thought and practice, people who are involved in new spirituality often harbor feelings of frustration.¹⁴ This is related to the inclination among seekers of new spirituality to have familiarity toward traditional religions, be it salvation religions, non-salvation religions such as Confucianism, or Hinduism, Taoism, and Shinto which embrace elements of salvation religions but which are not salvation religions as a whole. The New Age and spiritual world movements initiated by young people in the 1970s advocated the denial of religions. However, since the 1990s, the tendency to call for the denial of religions has declined. Rather, spirituality and religious traditions are considered as being complementary.¹⁵

Such complementarity may take different forms depending on regions and religious traditions. In the West, a tense relationship tends to stand out between new spirituality and Christianity, the mainstream religious tradition. Books criticizing new spirituality from the standpoint of Christianity abound. Like the New Age and spiritual world, new spirituality evaluates religious traditions in Asia highly, and some new spirituality movements have introduced elements from them. In Japan, for example, new spirituality and the revival of animism have been actively advocated since the 1980s. Animism is considered the core of Shinto and traditional folk religions. A certain type of new spirituality was understood to be behind the revival of traditional religions.¹⁶ This corresponds with the global current of “religious revival.” Qigong, the traditional Chinese breathing exercise, continues to play a strong role in new spirituality. Spirituality and religious traditions were perceived as being innately affinitive.

The perception that traditional religions are affinitive and complementary with spirituality has been increasingly noted in Christianity. It is true, on the

13. *En* (a turn of fate, affinity, relation) is a term relating the fundamental doctrine of Buddhism and is associated with Buddhist spirituality.

14. Many research studies have been published on this issue. The result of my research is included in SHIMAZONO 2007a.

15. SHIMAZONO 2002, fn. 14. MCGUIRE also presents similar concepts, with rich examples and a historic perspective (2008).

16. Representative advocates of this are well-known cultural anthropologist Iwata Keiji and philosopher Umehara Takeshi. SHIMAZONO 1996, fn.2; 2004a, fn. 13.

other hand, that a tense relationship remains between the concept of salvation and new spirituality. With the expansion of capitalism the individualization of society progresses, but at the same time, the shift “from salvation to spirituality” can be observed. However, new spirituality has its limits, and may be pushed back by the current of “religious revival.” Relations among salvation religions, non-salvation traditional religions, and new spirituality are complicated, and should be looked at carefully while paying attention to differences in religion and religious traditions.

REFERENCES

ASAD, Talal

1993 *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

2003 *Formation of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.

BELLAH, Robert

1964 Religious evolution. *American Sociological Review* 29: 258–74.

BELLAH, Robert, et al.

1985 *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

BERGER, Peter

1967 *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. New York: Doubleday and Co.

CARRETTE, Jeremy, and Richard KING

2005 *Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion*. Abingdon, Oxford: Routledge.

CASANOVA, José

1994 *Public Religion in the Modern World*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

DEMERATH, N. J., III

2007 Secularization and sacralization deconstructed and reconstructed. In *The Sage Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, James A. Beckford and N. J. Demerath III, eds., 57–80. London: Sage Publications.

FULLER, Robert

2001 *Spiritual but not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

HEELAS, Paul

1996 *The New Age Movement*. Oxford: Blackwell.

JASPERS, Carl

1949 *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte*. München: R. Piper.

JUERGENSMEYER, Mark K.

1993 *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

KATZ, Alfred H.

1993 *Self-Help in America: A Sociological Movement Perspective*. Detroit: Twayne Publishers, 1993.

KEPEL, Gilles

1991 *La revanche de Dies*. Paris: Editions du Seuil.

KIPPENBERG, Hans G.

1997 *Die Entdeckung der Religionsgeschichte: Religionswissenschaft und Moderne*. München: Verlag.

Marx, Karl

1844 *Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie*. Einleitung. Paris, Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher.

MCGRATH, Alister E.

1999 *Christian Spirituality: An Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell.

MCGUIRE, Meredith B.

2002 *Religion: The Sociological Context*. Fifth Edition. Belmont: Wadsworth.

2008 *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

MELTON, John Gordon

1990 *New Age Encyclopedia*. Detroit: Gale Research Inc.

NIETZSCHE, Friedrich Wilhelm

1887 *Hymnus an das Leben für gemischten Chor und Orchester ... Partitur*. Leipzig, E. W. Fritsch

ROOF, Wade Clark

1993 *A Generation of Seekers: The Spiritual Journeys of the Baby Boom Generation*. New York: Harper Collins.

1999 *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

SAITO Satoru 斎藤 学

1995 *Tamashii no Kazoku o motomete: Watshi no serufu herupu gurūpu ron* 魂の家族を求めて—私のセルフヘルプ・グループ論 [Seeking a family of soul]. Tokyo: Nihon Hyōron-sha.

SHIMAZONO Susumu 島蘭 進

1992 *Gendai Kyūsai Shūkyō ron* 現代救済宗教論 [Contemporary salvation religion theory]. Tokyo: Seikyū-sha.

1996 *Seishinsekai no yukue: Gendai sekai to shin-reisei undō* 精神世界のゆくえ—

- 現代世界と新靈性運動 [Direction of the spiritual world: The contemporary world and the new spirituality movement]. Tokyo: Tōkyōdō Shuppan.
- 2000 Gendai shūkyō to kōkyōkūkan: Nippon no jōkyō o chūshin ni 現代宗教と公共空間—日本の状況を中心に. *Shakaigaku Hyōron*, 541–55 (March).
- 2002 New spirituality culture and religious tradition. In *Traditional Religion and Culture in a New Era*, ed. Reimon Bachika, 155–69. Piscataway: Transaction Publishers.
- 2004a *From Salvation to Spirituality: Popular Religious Movements in Modern Japan*. Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press.
- 2004b Shūkyō no shinka o ronjiuruka: Parsons Shūkyōron no genkai 宗教の進化を論じうるか—パーソンズ宗教論の限界 [Can it be seen as the evolution of religion? Limits of Parsons' religious theory]. In *Parsons Renaissance eno Shōtai: Talcott Parsons seitan hyakunen* パーソンズ・ルネッサンスへの招待—タルコット・パーソンズ生誕百年を記念して [Invitation to Parsons' renaissance: Commemorating the 100th birthday of Talcott Parsons], Tominaga Ken'ichi and Tokuyasu Akira, eds., 103–18. Tokyo: Keisō Shobō.
- 2007a *Spirituality no kōryū: Shin-reisei bunka to sono shūhen* スピリチュアリティの興隆—新靈性文化とその周辺 [The rise of spirituality: New spirituality culture and its surroundings]. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.
- 2007b Reiteki sekaikan o toku riyū: Iida Fumihiko to “Umarekawari” no ikigai ron 霊的世界観を説く理由—飯田史彦と「生まれ変わり」の生きがい論 [Reason to advocate a spiritual world view: Iida Fumihiko and his reason for living of rebirth theory]. In *Rei wa dokoni irunoka* 霊はどこにいるのか [Where are spirits?], Ichianagi Hirotaka and Yoshida Morrio, eds., 48–61. Tokyo: Seikyūsha.
- 2008 Contemporary religions and the public arena: Centering on the situation in Japan. In *The Centrality of Religion in Social Life: Essays in Honour of James A. Beckford*, ed. Eileen Barker, 203–13. Surrey: Ashgate.
- SUZUKI Daisetsu 鈴木大拙
- 1972 *Nihonteki Reisei* 日本的靈性 [Japanese spirituality]. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten. (Originally published by Daitō Shuppansha, 1944)
- WILSON, Bryan
- 1966 *Religion in Secular Society: A Sociological Comment*. New York: Penguin.
- 1982 *Religion in Sociological Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- WUTHNOW, Robert
- 1998 *After Heaven: Spirituality in America since the 1950s*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- YORK, Michael
- 1995 *The Emerging Network: A Sociology of the New Age and Neo-Pagan Movements*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.