



HOKKAIDO UNIVERSITY

Title	Social Disparity and the Pop Spiritualism in Recent Japan
Author(s)	Sakurai, Yoshihide
Citation	Journal of the graduate school of letters, 6, 27-38
Issue Date	2011-03
Doc URL	https://hdl.handle.net/2115/44946
Type	departmental bulletin paper
File Information	JGSL6-3.pdf



Social Disparity and the Pop Spiritualism in Recent Japan

Yoshihide SAKURAI

Abstract: The content of this paper was originally presented under the title of ‘Fragmented Society and the Popularity of Spiritualism in Japan 1990-2000,’ as a presenter at the Meeting of International Society for the Sociology of Religion, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, July 25-31, 2009. Then I was invited to deliver special lecture under the title of “Spirituality Boom and Declining of Religious Order,” at the Research Institute of Humanity and Social Sciences, Sofia, Bulgaria, October 19, 2009.

This research examines the relation between spiritualism and contemporary society fragmented by globalized capitalism and neo-liberal reform in Japan. Since the end of 1990s the spiritualism movement has changed from the subculture of ‘Spiritualism Otaku’ to the mainstream culture represented by the extensive exposure of some fortune-teller and healer in the prime time TV programs. The cyber space as well as shelves in bookstores are occupied by various schools of thoughts and practices of spiritualism that include alternative therapy, slow life, and multi-level marketing.

This paper illustrates a case study involving a healing salon, called ‘Shin-Sekai (God World)’ and a spiritualist convention, ‘Spi-Con,’ in which young people as well as middle aged women joined and purchased the peculiar packaged fortune. They worry about the degradation of their relatively prosperous lives that were equally provided by the long-term economic growth and welfare in Japan. The more they become socially vulnerable because of job competitions and family problems, the more likely they are dependent on spiritualism. Since neo-liberalism policy imposes us self-help endeavor, we have to energize and comfort ourselves by means of positive thinking and various healing methods.

(Received on September 17, 2010)

1. Introduction: Research on Spirituality

In recent years a number of Japanese researchers have investigated the popularity of spirituality in various areas of society and have regarded those trends as alternatives to religious organizations. Although some noteworthy essays from journalism (Kentaro, 2007) and academia (Susumu, 2007) have passed critical judgment on the spirituality craze, I remain ambivalent about those perspectives, which have been created in a therapy-oriented society. In this paper, I will

critically examine the rise of spirituality as social phenomena, and the academic discourse of spiritualism. First, let me to outline the points at issue in Japan.

1) Fads in the world of Japanese academia and journalism seem to run in ten-year cycles (which have grown even shorter in recent years as the media exhausts them ever more quickly). Moreover, the attention of some researchers seems to create the emergence and disappearance of popularity regardless of the problems in actual society. When Aum Shinrikyo's indiscriminate terrorism was unleashed in the Tokyo subway system (ed killing 13 people and seriously injuring 5,500 others through sarin-gas attacks), both the media and the public became gripped by a fear of cults and discussed prevention and intervention of cults through public authority. However, peoples' moral panic and enthusiasm for the recovery of social order have subsided for more than a decade and at the same time researchers of religion have gradually lost interest in cult problems and have come to focus on the positive aspects of the popular spiritualism movement. (Yoshihide, 2008; 2009)

2) We cannot be optimistic about the future of a new spiritualism that offers remedies for those who are weary and in need of therapy. As the globalization of the Japanese economy has hollowed out the manufacturing industry, the labor market has differentiated into the financial and IT industries, which can generate high added value, and increasingly McDonaldized cheap labor. Consequently, the new working class, who subsist below the poverty line, and homeless people living in Internet cafés, has emerged. Full-time workers are under tremendous stress due to increasingly intense competition, while contingent workers must survive from day to day with no future prospects. Any society that has adopted American-type neoliberal policies grows to a large degree to be a therapy-oriented society where positive thinking, counseling, and therapy for depression are provided through market-based services.

3) It is true that spirituality can provide various ways of finding meaning in life that go beyond the limitations of modern science and culture. It can instill a sense of awe toward an entity greater than human beings, underscore the ties between man and nature, and between humans, and can serve as a motivation for personal growth; for many it holds a greater attraction than involvement in religious organizations.

Still, considering that Aum Shinrikyo sprang from the New Age movement in Japan, it is meaningless to discuss the potentiality of spirituality per se. This religious group might heal individuals or coerce them into perpetrating acts of violence by indoctrinating them in the belief that the destruction of this world ensures our salvation. We have to consider how the religious leader incorporates individual spirituality into disciple training and how spiritual elements are reflected within the hierarchical organization.

2. The Spirituality Fad and Widening Disparity in Japan

Let us proceed to examine the modern spiritual fad in terms of the relationship between religion and social class. From 2006 to 2007, an unusual number of discussions on "spirituality" were featured in general-interest magazines. During this period, *Ronza* (Jan. 2007) ran a special feature article entitled "Modern Poverty," while *Chuo-Koron* (Feb. and May, 2007) featured "The Age of Lower-Class Colleges" and "The Breakup of the Lower-Class Family," respectively.

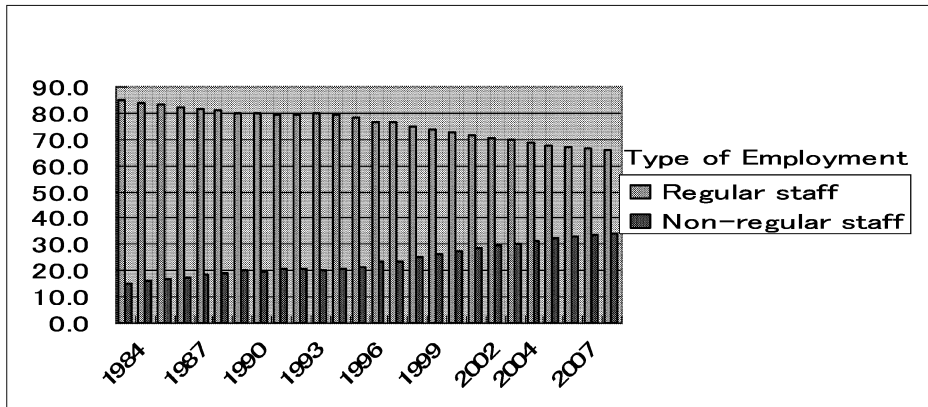


Fig. 1 Change of the Type of Employment in 1984-2008

Young day laborers whose permanent dwellings are 24-hour Internet cafes, contingent workers whose earnings are below the poverty threshold (as of 2005, the 16.33 million contingent workers accounted for one-third of the 54.07 million workers), and the increased number of small businesses (the working poor) — those cases symbolize Japan's income-gap society. Who could have predicted the spectacle of aging day laborers and foreign workers, as well as young men, who had tumbled down from the middle class, fighting over menial laboring jobs? (Michiko, 2002) Yet, in North America and Western Europe, where manufacturers relocated their plants overseas and the service industry employs low-wage workers, the widening disparity has proceeded apace for the past twenty years.

With regards to the various ways of viewing the gap issue, in addition to the practical economic gap (Toshiaki, 2006) and education gap (Toru, 2006), the cultural interpretation of disparities is currently in vogue in Japan. Several critics have argued that the culture of middle-class society has become increasingly standardized into a lower-class culture (Atushi, 2005; Tazuru, 2007). They extended their lower-level standardization to the lower-class standardization of universities, which have discarded liberal arts education and focused solely on practical science in response to the diversification of students' academic performance due to rising university advancement rate, more than 50%. The other lower-class standardization is in the increase of dysfunctional families: young and middle-aged singles fail to find a partner and even give up on it; relatively lower class families cannot control excessive consumption and find themselves in debt; underage mothers, struggling with childrearing and unreliable young husbands, divorce (Masanobu, 2006). Furthermore, recent TV media also seems to be overflowing with low brow programs such as fortune-telling, quiz, and cooking shows, and a parade of TV personalities and comedians who babble ceaselessly from morning till night.

Presently, those who watch TV during the prime time hours are mostly children, the middle-aged and older people who lack the technical and financial means to handle the Internet, and hundreds of cable and satellite TV channels. Therefore, program directors have transformed "subcultures" (viewing audiences segregated by age and class) into "mainstream" culture, and "spiritual" programs that were formerly deemed ridiculous as entertainment began to appear in prime time. The classes that are TV-media literate and are able to discern quality in media have

long since declined to watch such dumbed-down fare. Meanwhile, other classes and children with no alternative have become accustomed to watching those spiritual programs.

According to the “Religious Consciousness Survey Project” conducted in 2000 and 2005 by the “The Japanese Association for the Study of Religion and Society (nearly 5,000 college students in Japan were surveyed during class hours), there was a curious finding on fortune-telling. Astonishingly, nearly 50% of the students believed in fortune-telling by blood type. Considering that approximately 40% of Japanese people have A type blood, nearly 50 million Japanese people presumably have a similar personality. Equally nonsensical is that, in name-fortune-telling (based on the number of strokes in each Chinese character in surname and given name), more than 50% of college students responded that it was credible. Both are typical cases of the Barnum effect (the tendency to accept a certain description as accurate and applicable to only one even when the description is vague and generic).

Even more fascinating is the change in the ratio of those expressing credibility. The above diagram shows a 10% decline between 2000 and 2005 in the total number of respondents who

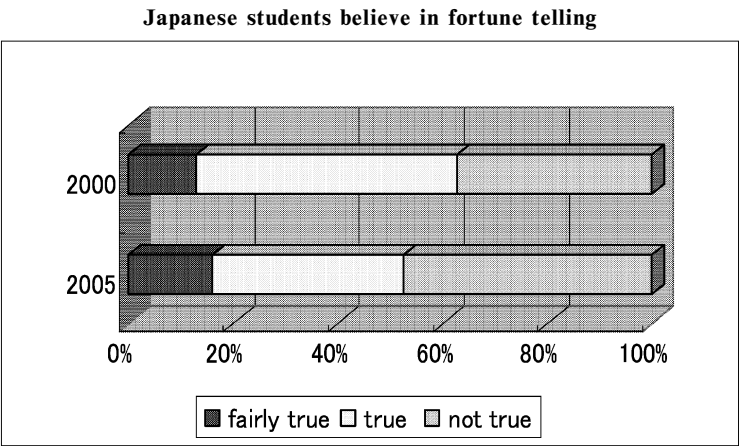


Fig. 2 Credibility of Fortune Telling by Blood Type

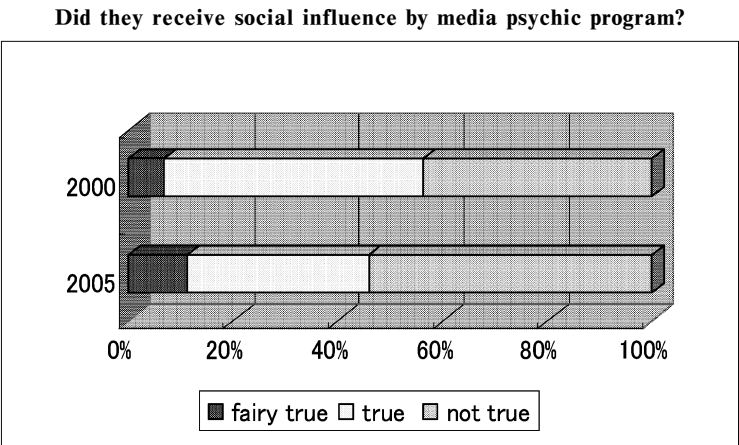


Fig. 3 Credibility of Fortune Telling by Name

expressed belief in the credibility of blood-type and name fortune-telling. Yet, the total number of respondents who said “very credible” increased in comparison. The same number in blood-type fortune-telling increased from 20.7% to 28.6% and the number in name fortune-telling almost doubled from 12.5% to 24.6%. Of course, this was not a panel survey and random sampling was not conducted, so the differences cannot be said to be statistically significant. Still, why is it that so many students assumed that fortune-telling was accurate?

One possibility is that they grew up watching TV programs and reading magazines of this nature in their junior and senior high school years. In those days, they had very few choices when it came to TV programs. And rather than their preferences all being uniform, the real reason could be this: their fundamental rule in associating with friends at school was to “conform to the majority” in conversation topics so as not to be bullied.

I wonder when it was that we first saw sought-after personalities of spirituality TV programs such as Kazuko Hosoki and Hiroyuki Ehara? When did they begin appearing in the mass media? Let us examine the spirituality craze next.

3. The Mechanism of the Spirituality Boom

I will explore the spirituality boom using the religious information database of the Religious Information Research Center (from the mid-1980s to the present; religion-related articles from more than 40 national, regional, and religion-related newspapers as well as Japan’s main monthly and weekly magazines). The first time fortune-teller Kazuko Hosoki appeared in weekly magazines was in the late 1970s. In the early 1980s, she wrote a book on the Rokusei Senjutsu (Four Pillars of Destiny) which quickly set off a fortune-telling boom. In the 2000s, Hosoki broke out by launching several regular programs on flagship TV stations. Rather than the accuracy of her fortune-telling, Hosoki’s main appeal consists of preaching based on her strong personality and conservative moral values.

Hiroyuki Ehara is a spiritualist. Ehara has published books on spiritual fortune-telling and counseling, and has hosted various events which also included collective counseling for audiences.

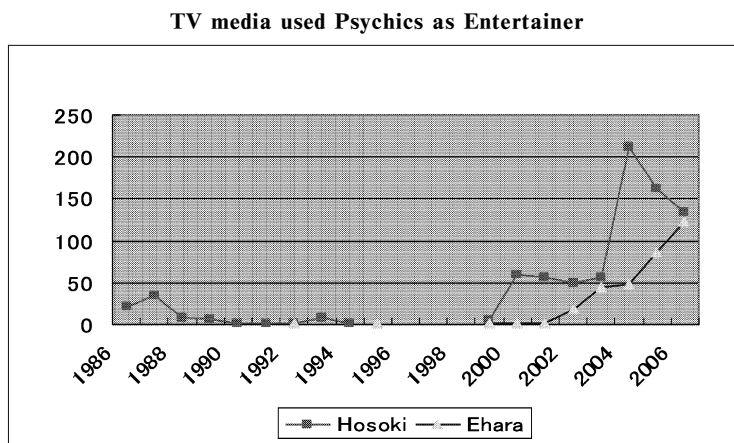


Fig. 4 Appearance of TV Psychics in 1986–2007

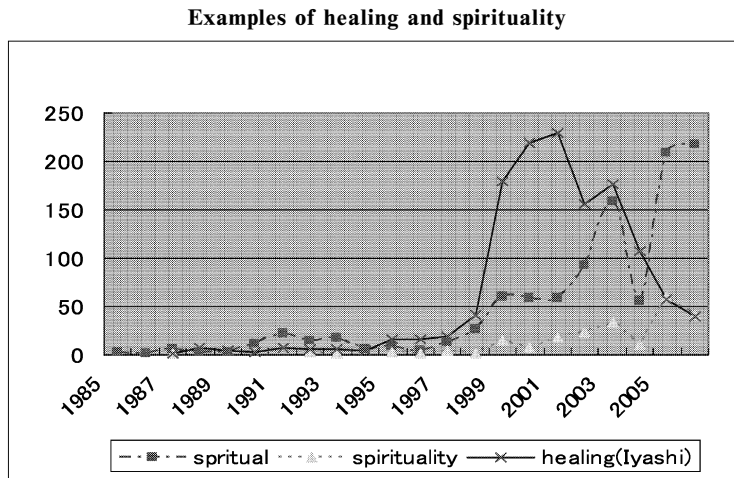


Fig. 5 Appearance of the Word “Healing” and “Spirituality” on Media

On TV, Ehara appeared in a variety of spiritual-power programs prior to the “The Spring of Aura.” Except for his comments on clairvoyance and guardian spirits, his words, flow softly and gently over both reader and viewer alike, and seem to be harmless.

In broad terms, their emergence in the media was a kind of jumping on the “healing” bandwagon in society. As one can clearly see in the following diagram, the healing boom and the spirituality boom coincide. In each case, using the religious information database, I searched articles that included words such as “healing” and “spirituality” or “spiritual.”

It is worthy to note that rather than the phonetic *katakana* word “spirituality,” the Japanese word for “healing” was used more frequently. Healing in the 1980s was literally about healing a disease, or the heart in the Christian sense. At the time of the Aum Shinrikyo incident in 1995, newspapers wrote that the scars of the victims’ hearts would not be “healed.” In the second half of the 1990s, however, “spiritual healing” became the main definition of “healing,” and in the 2000s, a variety of “healing” goods came to be sold.

By contrast, “spirituality” was a special term from the beginning. Except among some religious scholars, the word was used most frequently in the 1980s in relation to the spiritual world as well as during the occult boom years such as the New Age movement. By expanding the outer boundary of the word, which had been used in academic fields and subcultures, “spirituality” was redefined as a concept symbolizing “mentarite” of present-day.

4. Spiritualism Conventions in Japan

The Spirituality Market

A spirituality convention, abbreviated as “Spi-Con” in Japanese, is a trade show of spiritual products and various therapies. 48-year-old Yoshihito Koizumi, who had been running an IT-related company, launched “Teddy Angel’s Spiritual Link” and then began to plan trade shows in 2002. Presently, his company stages approximately fifty trade shows per year in major cities. Spiritually-inclined volunteers in each area run those shows as organizers; they rent

Table 1 Numbers and Classification of Tokyo and Sapporo Spi-Con

Type of Shop	Tokyo	Sapporo
Reiki (Spiritual Power) Therapy, Vibration-Wave Therapy	16	5
Healing Power Stones	15	4
Tarot Cards	21	2
Health Improvement Equipment & Products	7	12
Aura Photography	7	6
Aromatherapy, Color Therapy	8	8
Chiropractic Manipulation, Massage	4	13
Reading	30	12
Healing	27	14
Channeling	14	4
Spi-Con Products	21	4
Fortune-Telling	9	5
Coaching, Counseling	0	5
Misc.	5	3
Total	184	97

conference rooms for dozens of exhibition booths in public facilities. Profits come from the approximately \$20 (US) admission fee, and the booth fee, from which organizers pay a site usage fee as well as royalties to Koizumi. A Spi-Con is operated under this franchise system.

Table 1 is a comparison between the Sapporo Spi-Con (investigated by the author and his students on July 15, 2006) and the Tokyo Spi-Con (investigated by Naoko Hirano on April 29, 2006). Despite the difference in the number of booths between Tokyo and a regional city, the trend of opening shops is similar. Let me to detail what types of shops and booths there were, beginning with the three most common types: Spi-Con products sales, fortune-telling, and healing. 1) What are sold at Spi-Cons are mainly Chinese medicine, health food products including diet foods, health improvement products such as a foot-massage device, healing power stones, and good-luck products. Treatments include Reiki ("spiritual power") (a healing-hand practice developed by Mikao Usui in the Taisho [1912–1926] period); Western Reiki (the original Reiki spread to Hawaii and the United States and was then re-imported to Japan; it is similar to a healing-touch practice); and Hado "vibration-wave" treatment (a practice of healing by harmonizing the vibration waves in food or products with those in the body). Also sold nearby was an approximately \$1,300 (US) vibration-wave transfer machine the size of a notebook PC. Although its mechanism was totally incomprehensible to me, its function was quite simple. First, you place a hand on the device. After having it memorize your specific physical vibration wave, you place a plastic bottle of water there so that the wave will be transferred into the water. Once it's done, this water is health-enhancing water; if transferred to a necklace, it will help improve your blood circulation. The *hado* vibration wave can be transferred to anything, any object. There were also booths for alternative therapy such as lymph massage therapy and homeopathy, the sales of related products, and reflexology (East Asian foot massage), some of which were equivalent to quasi-medical practices.

2) Therapy healing consisted mainly of therapy by aura-chakra photo therapy, fortune-telling,

spiritual power ("inspiration," "mythical power," etc.), card reading, channeling (messages from space aliens or one's Previous Life), and spiritual counseling. I tried the \$10 trial course of aura photography to learn that my health and luck were excellent. But an extra-fee session on my chakra (energy centers where "chi" is concentrated) revealed a problem in the stomach region of my body. They suggested that I take another diagnosis for \$20, but I declined. Particularly popular was the aura photo booth. The photography equipment, which looked like that at airport customs, was connected to a PC and a photo printer. I asked the set price of the PC and printer. The clerk said it would cost about US \$10,000. Judging from the lines of people that day, 50 customers a day would probably bring in at least \$500, and possibly \$1,500 or more. They can easily break even less than 20 days' work. What caught my eye were the young women; they listened very seriously to the staff in spiritual counseling after taking the initial fortune-telling. The counseling fee ranged from free of charge to \$30 for 20 minutes.

3) Lectures by healers and psychics were held at multiple sites. Attendees listened to their chosen lectures (about angels, Gaia, the universe, a pyramid power demonstration, etc.) very attentively. One of the lecturers was a healer named Masako Sato. According to her, if you make a triangle-shaped pyramid with your index fingers and thumbs over your head, the universal energy will enter via the pyramid into the chakra on the top of your head, which will help maintain your mental and physical health.

Although most participants were women in their twenties through fifties, there were many men among the shop operators and their ardent Spi-Con supporters or "the Spi-Con reserves." A \$100 bill wouldn't last half a day if you took a course of fortune-telling, diagnosis, counseling, and healing - even without buying anything. Those participants were not followers of particular religious groups, but they tended to regard life, the natural environment, and world peace very seriously. In some cases, they had been struggling with chronic diseases. Others visited those sites in order to discover their "true self" or gain health or increased energy. But why did they not go to public counseling centers, citizens' lectures or workshops, or specialized healthcare institutions? Why did they pick Spi-Con sites to seek salvation?

Consideration of the Spiritual Convention Boom

Based on newspaper articles and discussions in academic conferences, analyses of the "Spi-Con" by journalists and researchers may be summarized as follows.

1) In recent days, increasing numbers of people seek "spiritual development and healing of the soul" through mysterious powers, ties, and experiences while, at the same time, distrusting closed and authoritarian religious institutions. In response to those needs, a "Spi-Con" sells spiritual worldviews, magical techniques, and miracle-working products in small packages at reasonable prices. The organizers (Koizumi and other regional representatives) claim that the market principle ultimately weeds out low-quality spiritual products, which boosts convenience for spiritual customers. However, they do not always insightfully evaluate those spiritual goods and services, which may have severe drawbacks such as causing mental and physical dissatisfaction, and being a waste of time and money. Furthermore, there is no self-regulation by business groups of the shops in the Spiritual Market. Thus, consumers are at risk.

2) "If I change, so will the world." This is what Spi-Con participants say. They believe that

through positive thinking and the help of spiritual goods, one can adapt to a stressful and competitive society. Such comments reveal some of the anxiety of modern persons seeking spiritual healing. In addition, the idea of positive thinking, which was imported to Japan from the therapy-oriented culture of America, is embedded here. The idea that their philosophical and physical changes will directly change the world beyond the conventional concept of change of heart or in mood is a kind of optimistic mysticism that disregards social relationships mediating between the self and the world, and collective and organizational changes.

3) The popular search for one's "true self" is idiosyncratic not only in youths but also in more mature age groups — is this because our society still retains the youthfulness of adolescence? Or because there are more adults who have not completely matured? Some people want fortune-tellers or counselors to tell them, "You're this type" or "This is your fortune." The present "self" is a temporary figure, so you must meet your "true self." Someone spiritual will give you a gentle push so that you can start a new life. Those people will perhaps be stuck in an infinite loop of self-searching. In other words, Healer A will acknowledge you as a person possessed by spirit 'A' while Counselor B will help you rediscover yourself as a person having inner-self 'B'. If they continue to go on a self-searching spree, I wonder if they can ever be satisfied, for instance, if they visited Spiritual Counseling #N booth, N would tell them that they had been 'N' class persons in a Previous Life.

4) Under the logic of self-determination and self-responsibility, life's difficulties are the result of one's own actions and thus, one has to accept responsibility. Yet, that is a little too burdensome a reality to shoulder. So, "Spi-Cons" come to the rescue. One can achieve a certain peace of mind from hearing that one's difficulties stem from the relationship with a guardian spirit or past life. You are not to blame; the cause was somewhere you or your power could not reach anyway. This type of oracle is functionally equivalent to pop-psychology counseling. The counselor offers excuses for life's problems such as remaining an "Adult Child" or suffering from unconscious repression of traumatic childhood memories.

The above points have already been discussed. I would now like to consider two other points at issue.

1) A "Spi-Con" encourages followers to become more ardent members by going through the process of becoming a "Spi-Con" dealer. "Spi-Con" sites are merely venues for showcasing spiritual products. Those who want full-fledged counseling, therapy, seminars, and courses are advised to visit the shops directly. Incidentally, if one takes all the courses, it will cost quite a lot. To college students, young workers, and housewives, it is a considerable amount to pay. However, while you commute as a client, you realize that there are a lot of others who have interests similar to your own. On top of that, this type of seminar usually has a joint training course for future dealers. Dealers conduct direct sales to clients, cultivate new clients via networking and educate new participants. Some of those who witnessed and understood this system, especially the business-savvy, might think about becoming successful by jumping on the "Spi-Con" bandwagon. As a result, novices can easily participate in professional fields such as medicine, counseling, and education where, normally, highly advanced specialization and certification are required. If something unexpected happens, who will take responsibility for the damage? The organizers say that their basis for everything is self-responsibility. I don't think

anyone who could take complete responsibility for his or her choices would go to a “Spi-Con” in the first place.

2) I would like to note the relationship between “searching for one’s true self” and the trend of sinking down into the lower-class. Miura stated that it is highly possible that the self-searching generation who had been dragged down by the bubble economy of the 1990s will continue to stagnate in the lower class of society. The reason, according to Uchida, is the collapse of fundamental values in terms of education and career-shaping. In other words, children who wanted to do only as they pleased and parents who wanted to allow their children to do this began to view education as a tool of self-fulfillment or a target of consumption. If those people did not see any results at the time of study (if they are not interesting or they see no purpose in them), they don’t study. However, in learning, we can never tell whether there will be any value in learning or what we are learning will satisfy our intellectual curiosity. It is therefore sometimes necessary to keep laboring patiently (through rote memorization) until we get it. This aspect is similar in career-shaping. No newcomer can be given a rewarding, complete job from the beginning. And if there were many youths that were so gifted, they would know what to do with their ability and have a hard time making use of it. If most are only willing to study or work at things directly connected to their values based on their interests or sense of satisfaction or what they consider worthwhile, no decent learning or work could be done.

In short, we are beginning to see lower-social-class reserves among youths and the middle-aged still searching for their “true self” and not able to find stable work. In fact, “Spi-Con” visitors are not necessarily idle-rich women or female office workers with ample disposable income. Even among shop participants in what some may consider “niche industries,” many are small business managers who probably won’t be successful.

While viewing the “Spi-Con” spiritual exhibitions and seeing the joyous expressions on the faces of visitors, the possibility presented itself that there could be a rise in spirituality in popular culture and that its market could be further cultivated and even grow more sophisticated. Yet after considering more deeply the realistic side of managing those shops, the lives of the clients, and the future outlook, it is impossible to view it as promising.

5. Conclusions

To the ordinary person, the establishment of identity means positioning oneself within the axes of social coordinates. Through each stage of human and social development - going to school, finding employment, starting a family- the relationship between ourselves and society is confirmed. The very people and groups who are close to us such as family, and others in our area, at school, in the workplace, and social gatherings, offer social proof of our existence. However, in modern times, there are many who are directly connected with the world or the global environment without actually having those intermediary social relationships.

One recent example is the LOHAS (lifestyles of health and sustainability) fad, whose adherents believe that individual ways of living or lifestyles are directly linked to the interconnectedness of the earth and the world. While they may be correct, there are extremely complex ecosystems, with agricultural and economic systems in between. Even in recycling, individual

ideas and the overall efficiency of the system are not always consistent with each other. This preference disintermediation (with nothing in the middle) can be regarded as economized thinking toward a complicated modern society.

From a sociological perspective, it can be posited that since the intermediate society connecting individuals and the world has been weakened, individuals are left no choice but to directly address themselves to both their nation and nature. Thus, in cyberspace, individuals are apt to be imbued with semi-nationalistic sentiments or be highly sensitive to the notion of being friendly to the global environment. It is logical that a nation, a comprehensive total society as opposed to one's self, and nature, can easily become an object of one's awareness. It is no mystery that those two abstract concepts are revered as something spiritual. Here, we can see a glimpse of the mental state of modern people that "Spi-Con" implies.

The question is this: should we not do something about it? Will our society change simply through back and forth discussions on abstract concepts such as the sanctified self, the world, and nature or through the refinement of our sensitivity? Will I be able to change myself as well? Needless to say, we cannot see our own face with our own eyes. Sometimes, you must allow someone else to see you so that that person can tell you what you are or what you should do to improve yourself. That way, we can see specifically how the world works or what we should be doing.

Self-awareness requires others close to oneself who can play the role of a mirror to reflect one's mental activity. Yet, those who do not have relationships with others and those who believe that the words of spiritual experts have more credibility will discover at a "Spi-Con" their "true self" or the self as rough cut with underdeveloped potential. Even that "self" is sold in the "Spi-Con" Spirituality Market. At the risk of sounding rude, if their vacillations and problems in life over the last twenty to thirty years can be easily resolved through spirituality workshops of this kind, then they must have easy lives. Of course, if they are aware that they simply enjoy these workshops as entertainment, that's fine, too.

The spirituality fad has something in common with postmodernism. Yet, one characteristic of people caught up in this seems to be the idea of disintermediation. They regard humans as just "individuals" who are not attached to interpersonal relationships and the surroundings they are in; they place importance on their value as individuals. The collective social model of human beings that conventional religious cultures and religious ethics have preached — people living within the norms and ethics of relationships — seems deconstructed here. Also, "spiritual people" tend to value nature, the earth, and the universe from afar rather than things close to them such as specific social relationships in their community, or the familiar natural landscapes they see on a daily basis. I believe this to be the result of overexposure to a mass media that is fixated on fads and sensitivities far more than on thinking based on the natural and social sciences.

Considering these circumstances, it is time that researchers of religion examined the spirituality boom from a critical perspective. I have no problem with the new research trend of regarding spirituality as part of the vicissitudes of religion since this view simply acknowledges the present condition. However, questions still remain as to whether we will be able to live a good life under these "spirituality-oriented" circumstances within a safe community where we can live with peace of mind. To determine those points will require investigations based on accurate insights and

analyses from research in both the humanities and the social sciences. These tasks, therefore, are the very projects researchers of religion must undertake.

References

- Atushi, Miura, 2005, *Lower Class: New Class Emerged*, Kobun sha (in Japanese).
- Kentaro, Isomura, 2007, *Why was the Spiritualism Booming?* PHP Shupan (in Japanese).
- Masanobu, Yamada, 2006, *New Equity Oriented Society: Overcome of Gap Society*, Bungeishunshu (in Japanese).
- Michiko, Miyamoto, 2002, *Young Generation Declines to the Week*, Yosen sha (in Japanese).
- Naoko, Hirano, 2006, "Popular Spiritualism," oral presentation at annual meeting of Japan Sociological Association.
- Susumu, Shimazono, 2008, *Prosperity of Spiritualism*, Iwanami shoten (in Japanese).
- Toshiaki, Tachibanaki, 2006, *Widening Gap: What is the Problem?* Iwanami shoten (in Japanese).
- Tazuru, Uchida, 2007, Preference to Lower Class, Children Not Studying Young Not Working, Kodan sha (in Japanese).
- Toru, Kikkawa, 2006, *School Career and Disparity in Class: Matured Japanese Society and its Diplomaism*, Tokyo University Press (in Japanese).
- Yoshihide, Sakurai, 2008, 'The Cult Problem in Present-Day Japan,' *Journal of the Graduate School of Letters*, vol. 3, pp. 29–38.
- Yoshihide Sakurai, 2009, 'Conflict between Aum Critics and Human-Rights Advocates in Japan,' *Cultic Studies Review*, vol. 7, No. 3, pp. 254–278.