

PART TWO

*The Establishment and Development
of Religious Studies*



Discourse on Religion and Social Reality

Questions about the nature of religious studies in contemporary Japan demand a return to the beginnings of the discipline in Japan. Every time an incident involving one of the so-called religious cults is reported in the news, interest spikes in the question “what is religion?” However, those who attempt to answer this question in the magazines and other media—the ones performing the analysis of those hard-to-fathom religions—are mostly lawyers and journalists. Not much is heard from the religious studies scholars whose responsibility it is to explain religion. An increasingly cynical public can only conclude that behind the absence of such voices must be some sort of intention to protect religion. Attention focused again on that ivory tower following the series of incidents involving the Aum Shinrikyō cult, in particular the subway sarin gas incident in 1995. Once more, the events provoked cold smiles from the public.

The Tasks for Religious Studies Today

The subway sarin gas incident and the Aum hostage incident showed us the horror of a religious group taking the lives of others in the name of religious principle. What was most noticeable was the large number of people who were killed and whose property was stolen. And even as the lawyers and journalists, adopting the perspectives both of victims and perpetrators, described the incident in terms of the responsibilities of individuals to society, scholars of religion gave the impression of being on the whole favorable toward religion. Only later—perhaps due to criticism from the general public—scholars began to refrain from overtly affirmative statements about religion and turned instead to analyzing the violence of religion and the social conditions that gave rise to it. One did not see scholars reflecting on the relationship of their own discipline to the world of religion. People still could not help suspecting that scholars in religious studies remained unaware of their own responsibility to society.¹

1 For works that stressed this point, see Egawa 1995; Kobayashi Yoshinori 1995; Mizoguchi 1995; Asami 1995.

The Aum Shinrikyō incident also resulted in severe criticism of the bystander attitude of the mass media, which on the pretext of pursuing social justice covered up their economic motives regarding audience ratings and turned harrowing events into public spectacles. Some religious studies scholars condemned these media tendencies, but what they really needed to do was critique the profession of which they themselves were part. Without looking back critically over the work they had been doing in the past, they themselves would surely stumble into new pitfalls again in the future. I believe the problems are not ones that can be attributed to any specific group of scholars, but rather derive from the hard-to-escape historical proclivities of the field of religious studies as a whole. Thus, I would like to examine why religion scholars give the general public the impression of being apologists for religion. Where did religious studies go wrong?

Anesaki Masaharu's Religious Studies

Religious studies became deeply involved in Japanese society during two historical time frames. One occurred in the Meiji and Taishō eras, at the time of the debates about freedom of religion; the other was the era of the Shintō Directives following the end of World War II. The former period was the dawn of religious studies in Japan; the latter was a major turning point in its history. The figures who played the central roles in these intersections were, in the former case, Tokyo Imperial University professor Anesaki Masaharu, and in the latter case, his colleague Kishimoto Hideo. This chapter focuses on Anesaki, who put in place the foundations of the discipline. Today, Anesaki may seem to have been forgotten. Yet he is the figure who first established religious studies in Japan in the strict sense, and who played the leadership role, not only at Tokyo Imperial University, but in the organization of academic associations and in Japanese religious policy all the way from the late Meiji era through the pre-World War II period.²

There emerged, of course departments of religion at other universities in Japan, reflecting a variety of traditions. A small number of them became successfully rooted, including those at Kyoto University and Tōhoku University and several other national universities of the old imperial system, and others in some of the Buddhist and Christian sectarian universities. However, in the case of Japan, the real core of religious studies should probably be sought in

2 On Anesaki's life and written work, see Anesaki 1951; Nonoyama and Satō 1992; Isomae and Fukasawa 2002.

the former, the national university system, where specialists declared themselves neutral and independent from the Buddhist and Shintō doctrines of religious organizations upon which such studies actually depend.³ Among these national universities the establishment in 1898 of lectures at Tokyo Imperial University was by far the earliest manifestation of academic religious studies.⁴ These lectures given by Anesaki were the starting point of the discipline, and are very useful primary sources in any discussion of the issues of religious studies in Japan.

The Essence of Religion

In his book *Shūkyōgaku gairon* (1900), Anesaki wrote that the purpose of his discipline was to discuss the essence of religion: “the starting point of research on religion must be the desire to identify the central driving force that forms the unifying essence of the concept of religion—that which develops into all sorts of religious phenomena.”⁵ He believed that essence lay “in the consciousness of the individual that is the basis of religious phenomena.”⁶ That is why he explained devotion to god(s) or the divine as “the natural result of the desire to emphasize, extend, enrich, and make eternal the existence of the self—the urge to seek kinship with a power higher than the self.”⁷ Religiosity, therefore, was something founded on an impulse inherent in human existence. Even a mystical state of self-transcendence that might accompany intense self-denial was the paradoxical expression of a desire for individual existence.

In reality there are considerable differences in the gods and systems of belief of different religions, some of which are quite incompatible. For Anesaki, however, who stressed that religion was an aspect of human affairs, such differences were not absolute, but rather only differences in “religious consciousness” manifested on the phenomenal level. He understood religion in terms of

3 Regarding the private-public ratio based on participants in the Japanese Association of Religious Studies, the proportion of the total number of such programs in Japan offered by universities of private religious groups is higher than that of the national universities. However, the religious studies scholars connected with national universities generally consider the religious studies in the private religious institutions as being of lower status and having a theological character. Yet it needs to be understood that both sides form the actual discipline of religious studies. See Hayashi Makoto 2001; Kimura Takeshi 2000.

4 Later establishments of religious studies programs in the old imperial university system included Kyoto University in 1905; Hokkaidō University in 1922; Kyūshū University in 1925; and Seijō (Seoul) University in 1927. See *Shūkyōgaku bunken tenrankai mokuroku*, pp. 2–4.

5 Anesaki 1900a, p. 556.

6 Anesaki 1900a, p. 15.

7 Anesaki 1900a, p. 53.

two layers consisting of phenomena and essence. The individual “established religions” were nothing more than the phenomenal form; he interpreted the underlying essence of religion as really residing in the consciousness of the individual. Of course, even in studying this essence, he did not treat the phenomenal lightly. Undertaking the careful comparison of all religions was the way to explore the essence of religious consciousness, and Anesaki believed that the appropriate place for each individual religion within *sui generis* religion could be found in that essence. In *Shūkyōgaku gairon*, Anesaki articulated his concept of religious studies:

In general, inasmuch as we recognize that human nature is fundamentally the same, we need to discover within the development and change of various religions their unifying essence and explain how these varieties came about. Then we must clarify how the particular developments fit into the general picture of the development of religion. *We must study the capacity of religion within the human heart as an aspect of human psychology.* And we must pursue research on how it emerges in society in both historical and comparative perspective.⁸ (my emphasis)

This “psychologistic” approach became the foundation of Anesaki’s religious studies. Operating from a position of not accepting as absolute the differences of the various religions, he sought the essence of religion in the human psychology or consciousness.⁹ This was apparent in his *Shūkyōgaku gairon*, the first chapter of which opens with a section treating religious consciousness entitled “Religious Psychology.”

Later, after studying in Germany, Anesaki became greatly inclined toward mysticism. He self-critiqued his own earlier work in *Shūkyōgaku gairon*, saying it “only touched upon the outer shell of religion and did not reach into its deeper essence.”¹⁰ In his later article “Fukkatsu no shokō (The Dawning of Revival; 1904), which displays his interest in mysticism even more clearly, he wrote that “people who . . . sense the mystical presence of the divine in life, find it is easy to arrive at the notion of ‘identity of divine and human,’”¹¹ yet even such a mystical religious experience he saw as ultimately an interior event in a person’s life. That is, he consistently tried to grasp religion as an aspect of human psychology. Throughout his life, not only in “Fukkatsu no shokō” but

8 Anesaki 1900a, p. 21.

9 Fukasawa 1985.

10 *Kirisutokyō shinbun* 1906.

11 Anesaki 1904a, pp. 138–39.

beginning earlier with his *Shūkyōgaku gairon*, he maintained this psychological understanding of religion.

In the final, fourth chapter of *Shūkyōgaku gairon*, entitled “Religious Pathology,” Anesaki adds his strong criticism of organized religions that preach the exclusive absolutism of their school’s teachings and he observes that “[schools] that separate themselves with their churches and doctrines and, rather than being all-embracing, make themselves narrow, actually contravene wisdom, making people even more doctrinaire.”¹² For Anesaki, for a faith to assert its absoluteness in the form of a religious group would constitute nothing more than a relative differentiation at the phenomenal level—it would be refusing to look at the essence of religion. What was important for Anesaki was not the phenomenon of the religious group per se, but the depth of the individual religious consciousness that appeared through such groups. Religion ultimately had to be “based upon the destiny of the individual” and through that come to have the force for influencing the trends of society as a whole.¹³ We can see that Anesaki’s understanding of religion was not oriented to religious groups but was rather based on the individual.

Anesaki did not, of course, reject religious groups entirely. While he saw the basis of religion in individual interiority, he understood that when religion appears in the real world, it takes on the outer forms of groups, rituals, and so forth. He cautioned, however, that “exclusionism, bigotry, and forgery of scriptures” or other such stubborn adherence to one’s single faith was the root of “pathology” in religion.¹⁴

Anesaki’s stance separated him from previous religion research, i.e., the earlier genres of comparative religious history and the theologically oriented studies of Max Müller and others that were based on a particular view of religion and discriminated between what was considered religion and what was not religion.¹⁵ Anesaki included in his category of religion all the popular and folk religious beliefs disparaged in those days as “superstitious” along with religions of the so-called uncivilized peoples. In 1897 he reported in *Tetsugaku zasshi* on popular folk religion in the central region of northeast Honshū island (present-day Tōhoku). Although it was a project assigned to him by the university, it was the first organized field study of popular religion ever undertaken in Japan.¹⁶

12 Anesaki 1900a, p. 371.

13 Anesaki 1900a, p. 241.

14 Anesaki 1900a, p. 405.

15 Suzuki Norihisa 1979, chapter 4; Yanagawa 1974b; Tamaru 1984.

16 Anesaki 1897a. For works on Anesaki’s research on folk belief, see Yanagawa 1974a; Suzuki Iwayumi 1997.

There is no question that Anesaki's comparative and philological methods owed much to Max Müller. However, in his stance of equally including all the religions of every time and geographical place in the category of religion, Anesaki's scholarship offered something new that had not been seen in previous work in religious studies. What made that possible was his psychogistic approach that presupposed the common religiosity at the base of diverse historical phenomena. By including all such phenomena in the category of religion, however, he did not necessarily mean that he judged it all equally. The phenomena that Anesaki included in the category of religion were ranked according to the hierarchy of evolution. Regarding the "pure" and "ideal religion" that stood on the highest rungs of that hierarchy, he wrote:

The moral order of the world is sustained by the morality of religion. The ideals of secular morality are subsumed in religious ideals. Acquiring and practicing morality based on awareness of the divine... should be the ultimate purpose of religion, that is, the ultimate morality [of society]. Therefore, a pure and independent religion does not necessarily require acts of ritual worship of gods... accordingly, no priests or other mediators between the human and the divine are needed... Since all goodness is considered coterminous with the divine, all persons of faith, nay all persons of spirituality, become priests.¹⁷

Through these words we can see that he understood genuine religiosity not in the external appearance of religious organizations but rather in the high quality of human character (*jinkaku hinsei* 人格品性) of the individual himself or herself. He did not see the differences in the formal features of ritual and organization as decisive elements affecting a person's religiosity. The best exemplar of human character would be a religious master such as the founder of a historical religion. In later years, Anesaki sought his own embodiment of such exemplars in Nichiren and Prince Shōtoku.¹⁸ At the opposite pole of exemplar were the various "pathological" manifestations of religion. The extremes of the "exemplar" and the "pathological," however, were not completely unrelated: depending on the degree of his or her character development, an individual would shift positions somewhere between those poles. Religiosity, in any case, was not something that was found in the organizational dimension, but was ultimately achieved within each individual. In this shift from theological studies mainly centered on religious organizations towards an understanding of

17 Anesaki 1900a, pp. 191–92.

18 As representative works, see Anesaki 1916b; Anesaki 1944b.

religion as focusing on the human character of the individual, we can identify the distinctive feature of Anesaki's religious studies, which blended his ideas about the essence of religiosity as lying in the human heart and the cultivation of human character.

Anesaki's perspective was very likely shaped by trends in philosophy in those times. It is certainly not a coincidence that in 1898 Anesaki translated Eduard von Hartmann's *Religion des Geistes* (The Religion of the Spirit) and in 1910–1911 Schopenhauer's *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (The World as Will and Representation; Japanese edition published in three volumes).¹⁹ Backed by his broad scholarship, his idealism was a consciousness-oriented, transcendental type of thought that aimed to discover the fundamental nature of religion and morality in the human impulse of piety. In a context where nationalism was already established on the political side and materialism, utilitarianism, and other modern rationalisms held sway on the intellectual side, intellectuals may not have wished to take up the nationalist cause. Rather, while no longer feeling affinity for the ideas of the existing religions, they sought freedom and peace of mind in the interiority of the individual.²⁰ Anesaki's tendency towards the psychological approach and focus on human character was his own response to that trend. He wrote the following about the relationship of scholarship and belief:

Scientific thought, which had been used as a tool of religion, ended up questioning and critiquing it to the point of undermining its dignity and authority. But that situation, rather than reducing religion to dry and detailed scholasticism, allowed it to freely serve the purpose of providing people's hearts with peace of mind.²¹

Anesaki took as the natural conclusion that scholarship was meant to serve not the purposes of organizational doctrine but the spirit of the individual. However, what must be recognized here is that even though Anesaki might criticize religious groups when they became pathological, he did not intend to reject religion itself. Rather, he criticized what religion had once been and tried to present alternative images of what it ought to be like. In that sense, Anesaki's religious studies was clearly religion-affirming, and this position was distinctively his own. His position, however, created a gap with scholars who

19 Hartmann 1899; Schopenhauer 1910–1911.

20 Miyakawa Tōru 1962, part 3, section 2; Inoue Tetsujirō 1932b; Hyōdō 1990. On the meaning attributed in the West to Schopenhauer's ideas about Buddhism, see Droit 2003, chapter 6.

21 Anesaki 1900a, pp. 382–83.

did not wish to push religious belief forward. In any case, the scholarly activities of religious studies thereafter continued to some extent or other to pursue the ideal image of religion that Anesaki had sought.²²

Here we have looked at the two pillars of Anesaki's vision of religious studies—"religious psychology" ("the study of the religious heart") and "the study of religious pathology"—presented in *Shūkyōgaku gairon* from the viewpoint of the individual religious consciousness. He also discusses two other such pillars of his ideas under "religious ethics" and "religious sociology." These two other pillars will be treated next, from the viewpoint of a communalization of religious consciousness. First, however, I would like to consider the relationship of Anesaki's brand of religious studies emphasizing individualism to what was going on in Japanese society at that time.

Critique of Power and Authority

The policy of the Meiji government had initially been to make Shintō the "national religion" (*kokkyō* 国教), but gradually evolved beyond that. When the Meiji Constitution was promulgated in 1889, its articles stipulated, along with the sovereign rights of the emperor, freedom of religion. In the end, that guarantee proved little more than a formality, for the Imperial Rescript on Education promulgated in the same year spelled out the government's policy declaring that all Japanese must follow the "national morality" (*kokumin dōtoku*), the doctrine that replaced the *kokkyō* policy.²³ Anesaki, meanwhile, was very busy: in 1896 he organized the Association for Comparative Religion with Kishimoto Nobuta and others; in 1898 he was appointed to lecture on "Theories of Religious Studies" in the Tokyo Imperial University Department of Philosophy; and in 1905 he took charge of its chair of religious studies.²⁴ Through such activities, Japan's discipline of religious studies was established under Anesaki's guidance, both as an intellectual tradition and in terms of institutions, in the years after 1897. Viewed from the wider standpoint of the social

22 For summaries of the history of religious studies in Japan, see Hayashi and Isomae 2008; Oguchi 1956; Wakimoto 1984b.

23 In the strict sense, the theory or discourse of National (People's) Morality (*Kokumin dōtoku*) was promoted by the government movement aimed at the inculcation of morals launched in the fourth decade of the Meiji reign, but here it should be understood to refer widely to the various ideas and actions following the separation of the religious and the secular which accompanied the enactment of the Meiji Constitution. See Unuma 1979. In any case, the use of the English term "morality" throughout the following discussion must be understood in terms of the specific Japanese historical context and the unique political semantics involved.

24 Fujii Takeshi 1982.

system of the Meiji era, the discipline was launched just at that step when the national morality doctrine and freedom of belief were first established.

The national morality doctrine was in the broad sense a policy through which the government and the conservative elite sought to indoctrinate the people. The doctrine represented the other side of the bargain of allowing “freedom of religion.” The government reasoned that, despite the fact that the constitution had granted people freedom as far as their religious beliefs were concerned, the aim of national indoctrination could still be achieved without violating the constitution by operating through the realm of moral education. In that context Sect Shintō or Denominational Shintō, which was considered religious, would be gradually separated from Shrine Shintō. The national morality would be spread by indoctrinating the people with their “moral duty” to pay their respects at shrines and conduct rituals of reverence to the official portrait of the emperor in schools. And this became the government policy in the late 1880s.

As might be expected, voices questioning these policies as violations of religious freedom were raised: Is not shrine worship an act of religious faith? Do not rituals of reverence for the emperor’s portrait interfere with the principle of freedom of individual faith? Various incidents of the clash between education and religion occurred beginning in 1891 with the Uchimura Kanzō *lèse majesté* incident.²⁵ Some debate developed over the relationship of religion to the *kokutai* between Tokyo Imperial University professor Inoue Tetsujirō and followers of Christianity, and later the issue of whether shrines belonged to the category of religion drew the attention of members of the intelligentsia.

If shrine worship were considered a religious act, making it compulsory would be an infringement of the law guaranteeing religious freedom and the government would have to retract its entire indoctrination policy. It was also the general premise at the time that Shintō consisted of belief in *kami* as spirits or deities, and rituals related to *kami* were clearly perceived as religious acts. Shintō lacked clarity with regard to founders, sacred texts, or enshrined deities, and there was a tendency to judge it as inferior to Christianity and Buddhism since its doctrines did not address the problem of individual salvation. These were weaknesses pointed out not just by Christians and Buddhists from their own critical standpoints; even those who viewed Shintō favorably were concerned, such as Inoue Tetsujirō and the conservative politicians.²⁶ If Shintō were acknowledged to be just another religion, it would be left defenseless to

25 Seki Kōsaku 1893; Ozawa 1961; Ikimatsu 1963. Regarding the Uchimura Kanzō incident, see chapter 1, footnote 77.

26 Katō Genchi 1930; Sasaki Kiyoshi 1985; see also chapter 7 below.

contend with other religions without government protection. It was easy to predict that it would be overwhelmed by Christianity and Buddhism. For the government, which had been planning to capture the people's hearts for the emperor-institution state through the shrines, such a defeat would be a fatal blow. So the government could not allow shrine worship to be deemed a religious act and thereby unconstitutional.

Thus from the second decade of the Meiji era (from late 1880s) religion emerged as a social issue involving the very root and trunk of the *kokutai*. The launching of the government program to promote national indoctrination was shackled as before by the concept of religion, which was defined in terms of the individual's freedom of belief. At the same time, because technically religious freedom had already become part of the formal legal system, the new debate did not focus on the previous issues of making a specific denomination into a national religion or banning proselytization, but instead developed around the issue of the religious character of Shintō. The environment surrounding the study of religion, whether or not scholars themselves were aware of it, was extremely politicized.

The Religious Friendship Gathering held in 1896 reflected the need felt among some (primarily Buddhists and Christians) to respond to this situation. The aim of this conference, besides calling on all the religious groups to put the conflicts of the past behind them and accord mutual respect to their various principles of belief, was to encourage religious activity to be more social and cooperative in character. Anesaki, who participated in his capacity as a columnist on religion for the journal *Taiyō* ("The Sun"), was deeply impressed by this new movement to transcend institutional boundaries. He recorded his reflections: "Religions that emerge in these times really cannot go on being sectarian and doctrinaire; their activities must be directed toward the morality of society."²⁷ Immediately afterwards, along with Kishimoto Nobuta and others, he formed the Association for Comparative Religion, in effect an academic version of the Religious Friendship Gathering.

At the time Anesaki was a student at Tokyo Imperial University, he was studying Indian religious history and German philosophy under Inoue Tetsujirō, one of the principals involved in the debates on education and religion. For Anesaki—who was the son of a family that operated a workshop providing religious art and images to the Bukkōji branch of Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism, and was thus raised in a family of Shin Buddhist followers—the two events of the debates on education and religion and the Religious Friendship Gathering

27 Anesaki 1896c, pp. 585–86.

demonstrated the political difficulties inherent in the issue of religion and the potential for breaking through those difficulties.²⁸

These were the circumstances that prevailed when Anesaki began to teach religious studies at Tokyo Imperial University in 1898. In his institutional position transcending sectarian lines and as a specialist familiar with both the theory and practice of religion, he was expected to provide answers to the issues of religion. In 1900, in answer to his long-held hopes, he received orders from the Ministry of Education to undertake study in Germany. We can get an idea of the expectations people had of him by reading the following passage published in the Tokyo Imperial University's *Tetsugaku zasshi*:

These days, matters of religion are finally awakening people's interest. It is not uncommon for them to air their views on theory and practice. However, extremely few reach the point of wanting to do impartial research based on the fundamentals, and without leaning towards one religion or sect. Thus much is expected of Professor Anesaki.²⁹

Anesaki was not the first to lecture on religious studies at the Imperial University. In the "Comparative Religion and Eastern Philosophy" series of lectures given from 1891 in the Department of Philosophy, his teacher Inoue Tetsujirō had drawn comparisons among various religions including Brahmanism, Buddhism, and Christianity. Inoue's purpose had been to explore the possibilities of an "ideal religion" that could be extracted from established religions. For Inoue, however, "religion" did not go beyond being a form of ignorance, which he thought in the end had to be elevated to the level of national morality. The Imperial Way (*kōdō* 皇道)³⁰ would ultimately constitute for him such an ethicized ideal religion, and would transform the passions of religious reverence into loyalty and filial piety associated with the *kokutai*.³¹

In 1897 Inoue passed the baton in the teaching of the Comparative Religion and Eastern philosophy lectures to Anesaki, who the following year proceeded to lecture on "Theories of Religious Studies."³² The degree of Inoue's expectations for Anesaki can be seen in the arrangements for his niece Inoue Masa to become engaged to Anesaki in 1898. However, Anesaki's scholarship ended up betraying Inoue's expectations. Anesaki's view was that a religious

28 Anesaki 1912a; Anesaki 1896c.

29 *Tetsugaku zasshi* 1900, p. 400.

30 See chapter 1, page 53.

31 Inoue Tetsujirō 1930b; see chapter 2 of the present book.

32 Inoue Tetsujirō 1973, p. 45.

awareness existed in every single person. For him it was obvious that Shintō and shrines involved a belief in the existence of spirits and that the phenomenon was religion. As an associate professor at Tokyo Imperial University, his views came to have a great influence in society, and were unsettling to the political camp that sought to make shrine worship into a purely secular moral duty. Even his teacher Inoue, when speaking about his pet doctrine of secular “morality” through shrine worship, had had to qualify himself by saying, “In religious studies, scholars deal with Shintō by including it among other religions; that is a matter of course.”³³

Since Anesaki’s religious studies adopted a position defending religion, he inevitably opposed the view of Inoue Tetsujirō and government officials who wanted to designate shrines as non-religious, place them in a position superior to other religions, and regulate freedom of religion. What made Anesaki’s thinking stand out were his remarks at meetings of the government’s Investigative Committee for Religious Institutions (Shūkyō Seido Chōsakai) in 1926 and 1929. This organization was an advisory group; under the pretext of treating the three religions Christianity, Buddhism, and Shintō equally, its purpose was to draft laws aiming at standardizing state intervention in religious belief as well as the organizational forms of religious groups.³⁴

As a committee member, Anesaki made remarks that did not conform with the position of the government, much to the discomfort of other participants, including chair of the committee Hiranuma Kiichirō, the Minister of Education and the head of the Shūkyō Kyoku (Bureau of Religion). Anesaki’s questions arose from his misgivings: How is shrine worship different from religious ritual? What to do about Shintō deities that were by their very nature often morally inappropriate as far as public morals were concerned? Is not shrine worship being made compulsory?³⁵ All of these questions arose from Anesaki’s concern that the Shintō as non-religion theory would be in essence a scheme to revive the earlier Meiji national Shintō indoctrination scheme threatening the people’s freedom of religion.

In his remarks in the Committee Anesaki was especially at pains to point out that the legislative bill that was being prepared ought to be named the “Religious Organizations Law,” not the “Religion Law” as planned. In the Committee’s second conference, on 3 June 1926, Anesaki stated as follows:

33 Inoue Tetsujirō 1930a, p. 14.

34 Akazawa 1985, chapter 3.

35 Shūkyō Seido Chōsakai 1926, third meeting, pp. 29–31; Shūkyō Seido Chōsakai 1926, fourth meeting, pp. 31–33.

The following relates to what would be controlled by this bill should it become law. Essentially, this law deals with the social phenomena resulting from religious belief, and the religious organizations and rituals that come from that faith. It goes without saying, I believe, that the contents of religious faith itself cannot be dealt with under this law. Now, since that is the fundamental truth, is it not really the case that this bill as a whole should be understood as a law concerning so-called religious organizations?³⁶

Anesaki had detected a concealed problem that was not confined to simply a difference in wording suggested for the title of the bill.³⁷ He thought that even if it were a matter of just religious organizations, the nation-state should not intrude into the realm of the interiority of the individual. Anesaki repeated the same questions later, and an extremely tense exchange took place with the government side, which believed that individual religious belief *should* be controlled.³⁸ In the end, the “religions bill” was submitted in the House of Peers in two separate years but each time failed. Perhaps because of Anesaki’s strenuous efforts, in 1929 the name of the bill submitted was revised to read “Religious Organizations Bill.”

Under the circumstances in which the government coercively imposed the practice of shrine worship regardless of the personal convictions of religious believers, scholars supporting the protection of religion like Anesaki who could not go along with the government’s policies were forced to adopt a critical position towards the state. The same situation was faced by socialists and communists during the Meiji era, many among whom were Christian. Anesaki, who was committed to the development of human character as the goal of human life, did not want to bend from his convictions even should he be disadvantaged by opposing the government. For that reason, the religious studies research center at Tokyo Imperial University drew together followers of Buddhism, Christianity, and Sect Shintō groups and nurtured a “mutually sympathetic ethos in which sectarianism differences were put aside for the sake of mutual understanding.”³⁹

36 Shūkyō Seido Chōsakai 1926, second meeting, pp. 16–17.

37 Shūkyō Seido Chōsakai 1926, seventh meeting, p. 27.

38 Shūkyō Seido Chōsakai 1926, seventh meeting, pp. 15–16, 29–34; Shūkyō Seido Chōsakai 1926, second meeting, p. 17 (statement by Shimomura, head of the section for religion); Shūkyō Seido Chōsakai 1926, second meeting, p. 21.

39 Anesaki 1896b, p. 545.

The National Community Theory

The “religions bill” failed twice in the House of Peers because for the sake of national indoctrination policy it was necessary to guarantee more freedom of activity for followers of religion.⁴⁰ That is, even in the conservative House of Peers, the bill proposed by the Investigative Committee for Religious Institutions was judged to be too state-oriented and unsuitable to the climate of the day. At the same time, in his statements in the Committee, Anesaki seems to have been inclined to approve the supervision of religious organizations by the state. He wrote that as soon as “one speaks to others as third parties and tries to draw them toward one’s own [beliefs],” the beliefs of the individual “become social phenomena, and thus come within the scope of the law.”⁴¹ These statements may be read as indicating his belief that at the stage at which beliefs move from the individual’s private sphere to the public sphere of communality with other people, the state has the right to supervise religion. This understanding seems incompatible with the individualism-oriented stance from which Anesaki presented a valiant defense of personal belief in the Committee. There is an aspect of Anesaki that cannot be explained through individualism alone, as we will observe from the Teiyū Ethics Association in 1903, where he noted that his idea of personal character development (*jinkakushugi*) was distinct from both individualism and nationalism:

If I should say that nationalism is groundless, there is a great fear that you might immediately misunderstand me as an advocate of individualism. Rather, I believe that character building cannot be achieved through such a one-sided approach.⁴²

As already mentioned, Anesaki’s view was that the fundamental impulse for religion emerges from the individual. Yet this did not mean that the individual dimension was the beginning and end of religion. In *Shūkyōgaku gairon*, he had written (1900), “Although the root of the religious phenomenon is individual consciousness, its performative expression exists in social culture.”⁴³ His understanding was that individual religious consciousness was connected with social communality. The second chapter on “Religious Ethics,” and the third chapter on “Religious Sociology” discuss how individuals form a religious community.

40 Akazawa 1985, pp. 142, 156.

41 Shūkyō Seido Chōsakai 1926, seventh meeting, pp. 15–30.

42 Anesaki 1904b, p. 6.

43 Anesaki 1900a, p. 15.

The basic solidarity of religious groups stems from the same revelation of divine power and the same shared rituals in its honor. Religious groups large and small—from small groups based on family rituals to the official churches of nations evoking universalism—all move according to their shared aspirations to the same ideals and toward the realization of their common longing for salvation by forming unified groups. Their purpose is to more objectively increase the efficient accomplishment of their goals.⁴⁴

Through the construction of communities mediated by common faith and ritual, the “interior religious consciousness” of individuals moves into “religions of objective power and social power.”⁴⁵ Anesaki’s “religious ethics” focused on the first half of this process by which the individual religious consciousness is embodied as action. Through the mediation of acts of expression in ritual, recognition of individual religious consciousness by others for the first time becomes possible. That process becomes the nodal link between the individual and the community. In academia, the discipline that took as its subject the resulting religious community was the sociology of religion.

In Anesaki’s idea of religious studies, individuals were joined together in this way and established religious communities by “their shared aspirations toward the same ideals.” He understood that all of these so-called religious communities—ranging from the family up to world religious groups—were matters of the expansion or turning outward of the religious consciousness of individuals. The community and the individual were seen as originally harmonious. Yet in reality Anesaki did not treat all types of communities equally.

Shūkyōgaku gairon unfortunately does not address the specific issues of the community. After it was written, Anesaki’s own personal interests moved away from the kind of systematic construction of scholarship represented by *Shūkyōgaku gairon* and began instead to lean towards more real-life practice of faith and political practice. Anesaki from this time onward maintained the premises of his views on the community, but his concerns evolved towards the practical tasks of integrating people in Japanese society and achieving peace in international society.⁴⁶ Below I will verify his view of the community by examining the circumstances of the Conference of the Three Religions (Sankyō Kaidō) and the Association Concordia (Kiitsu Kyōkai) organization;

44 Anesaki 1900a, pp. 107–108.

45 Anesaki 1900a, p. 108.

46 See chapter 5 below; see also Isomae, Takahashi, and Fukasawa 2002.

both were strongly linked to him, and through them he actualized the ideas of his scholarship in society.

The Conference of the Three Religions was a meeting held in 1912 that had been encouraged by the government centering on Vice-Minister Tokonami Takejirō of the Ministry of Home Affairs. Consulting with Anesaki, Tokonami invited chief administrators of Shintō and Buddhist organizations along with representatives of Christianity as he aimed at a national indoctrination program working through all religious groups. The Association Concordia, which also carried on the objectives of the Conference, was led by Shibusawa Eiichi and drew on prominent scholars, religious figures, and people in government and business who wanted to provide ideological guidance for the people. Anesaki served as secretary, and he single-handedly undertook the drafting of the association's prospectus and other tasks including the editing of its journal.⁴⁷

The rapprochement of government and religious organizations orchestrated through the Conference of the Three Religions, however, ignited suspicion among those who were concerned about incursions on religious freedom, and the Conference became the target of charges of "politicians exploiting religion!" while the Association Concordia was derided as "the ghost of the Conference of the Three Religions."⁴⁸ Since Anesaki had played the role of promoter, he himself was ridiculed as "Minister Tokonami's lackey" (*Tokonami-kun no sanbōchō*) or as the "Tokyo University scholar in government pay" (*Akamon no goyō gakusha*).⁴⁹

Ironically, Anesaki himself saw these points of criticism as indicating the value of the Conference of the Three Religions. He actively hoped for a monism of state and religion, believing that "through the ideals to which religions are committed, it is the *raison d'être* of religion to discover the deep meaning of the nation's history, to elevate the ideals of the state, and purify them."⁵⁰ Of course, considering the basis of the tenets of Anesaki's religious studies, that monism was not to be found in the establishment of a national religion, but rather based on the idea, which had existed since the Religious Friendship Gathering of 1896, that various religious groups, each retaining its independence, would be involved in the indoctrination of the nation. But a fundamental difference in views of the state separated Anesaki, who sought government

47 Dohi 1967–1969; Lee 1992; Yamaguchi 1996a; Nakajima Kuni 1987–1988; Takahashi Hara 2003; *Shibusawa Eiichi denki shiryō*, vol. 46.

48 Akashi 1912, p. 74; Takashima 1912, p. 215.

49 Kawamura Gohō 1912, p. 136. On critiques of the Shin Bukkyōto Dōshikai, see Wakimoto 1984a.

50 Anesaki 1912b, pp. 548, 553.

participation with the Ministry of Home Affairs as the agency of mediation and liaison,⁵¹ and those who were his critics:

A condition of instinctive bonding gradually formed a familial, tribal way of life . . . Towards this way of life arose the idea of a duty to put it in order, by providing a rational faculty and adding a rational imperative. Then, for the sake of making this obligation towards order into a whole, in the form of law, the solidarity known as the state came into being.⁵²

Here the state was considered indispensable in order to actualize the desires of individuals and also to arbitrate the conflicts among those desires. As noted elsewhere, the state was also conceived along the lines of a traditional polity that “implements the practice of broad loyalty and filial piety.” It simultaneously provides a universal “place of solidarity for the sake of civilization” that labors for “world humanity.”⁵³ Anesaki understood the state as a rational, open-minded entity that harmoniously tied together individuals and, in the name of humanity, created solidarity and mutual interactions with other states. He makes no reference to any state power that produced individuals or class oppositions damaging to such integration. In sum, Anesaki frequently used the “state” as a synonym for “society” and envisioned a natural community based on the extension of the family.⁵⁴

Observing this line of his reasoning, we can see how Anesaki came to emphasize the state as the substratum of the community embracing the individual. It was because he believed in an intelligent state that affirmed the individual that he formed an alliance with the Ministry of Home Affairs through the bureaucrat Tokonami and laid out the plans for Ministry intervention in the religions. It thus appears that his later statements in the Investigative Committee for Religious Institutions supporting the administration of religious groups was intended to eliminate dogmatism in religious groups through the *raison d'état* of constructing the communal society of the state.

It is well known that in 1903, on the occasion of the death of his close friend Takayama Chogyū, Anesaki became a devoted admirer of Nichirenism, the fiercely nationalistic ideological blend of Nichiren Buddhism and State Shintō associated with the Buddhist scholar Tanaka Chigaku (1861–1939).⁵⁵ When

51 Anesaki 1912b, p. 566.

52 Anesaki 1919b, p. 252.

53 Anesaki 1912b, pp. 77, 300.

54 On the relationships of state and society in the Meiji period, see Matsumoto Sannosuke 1996a.

55 On his Nichirenism, see Tamura 1974; Tamura 1972, pp. 162–65.

digested from the perspective of Anesaki's mode of understanding of the state, the nationalist character of Nichirenism, too, was probably something he could accept without much resistance. In 1911, at the time of the Northern and Southern courts legitimacy dispute, Anesaki was an unyielding supporter of the legitimacy of the Southern court cause.⁵⁶ His passionate attachment to emperor and the *kokutai* could be understood as inevitable in order to protect what he considered the true form of the natural community of the state.

To summarize the key points of the above: in Anesaki's version of religious studies the foundation of religion was situated in the individual consciousness. While he made the individual the constitutive unit of religion, he also adopted a posture of strongly criticizing the exclusive character of religious groups, a position that could be understood as the manifestation of a convergence upon the state without any divisions into separate religious bodies. In fact, Anesaki's attraction to nationalistically oriented Nichirenism and his immersion in individual interiority through mystical experiences occurred at roughly the same time, soon after he had returned home in 1904 from his period of study in Germany. The implementation of the linking of all the religious groups at the national scale in order to achieve the education of society was undertaken by the Association Concordia and the Conference of the Three Religions. Since Anesaki had been deeply impressed by the Religious Friendship Gathering in his younger days, he must have thought that if the government would show more understanding towards religion and intervene in a positive manner, religion could achieve more influence in society.

Anesaki's understanding that communality presupposes individuality remains valid today. At the same time, contradictions exist in any community, the state included. Despite the fact that the community is the premise for the existence of the individual, internal relations of domination necessarily arise. Indeed, conflicts arise in mutual relationships because each community is pursuing its own interest. This is the unavoidable struggle we live with.

Anesaki, of course, knew about the clash of the individual and the state and class conflict, which were the social issues of his time. Even in terms of ideals he must have known that harmony was not easily achieved. However, the trump card that Anesaki drew on to solve the problem was the practice of "self-cultivation" (*jinkakushugi*), a theory of character development of which he himself was an originator in Japan. In the welcoming remarks below that he delivered for the Teiyū Ethics Association, a group that took as its purpose the study and practice of self-cultivation, Anesaki's views were well articulated:

56 See also chapter 1, page 63. Anesaki 1911a and 1911b; for details on this controversy, see Shigaku Kyōkai 1911; Yamazaki and Horie 1912.

To sustain a lively spirit in every direction and feel vigorous sympathies—which when directed toward one’s country take the form of patriotism, when shown towards one’s fellow human beings are manifested in charity, and when directed towards the self allow control of moral behavior through contemplation of one’s true nature and cultivation of character—such nurture of the capacity to at the same time cultivate one’s nature is called “following the heart’s desire without transgressing the rules.”⁵⁷ Cultivating such a heart and mind so as to be able to bear responsibility for the advantages and disadvantages, joys and sorrows, of the family and nation as they are, and engaging one’s own mature feelings and sincerity while attending one’s character: we believe that is what is called genuine ethical cultivation.⁵⁸

He thus believed that if each individual underwent such positive changes in character, all manner of contradictions and conflicts would be resolved. Anesaki’s interest in social movements derived from his belief that the awakening of character would reach “down to the many in the lower strata of the people”⁵⁹ where it would bring about qualitative change from the people at the bottom of society. The above passage also illuminates Anesaki’s statement mentioned earlier that his idea of *jinkakushugi* represented neither nationalism nor individualism: through the intervention in the awakening of individuals, he believed the opposition between those two approaches could be overcome. Anesaki’s doctrine of religion was that “The moral order of the world is religious morality; the ideal of secular morality is ultimately embraced in religious ideals; all morality is pursued based on an awareness of the divine . . . The ultimate purpose in religion becomes achieving the norm of morality.”⁶⁰ Thus Anesaki’s ideas on religion could hardly be distinguished from Inoue Tetsujirō’s ideas on morality.

Anesaki’s explanation, however, never went beyond the level of principles. He never offered explanations about how to mediate the realization of the ideals or answer such questions as: Could anyone actually become a person of better character? Could the contradictions we struggle with be made to disappear through the improvement of character? Underlying his awareness of reality was an idea of preestablished harmony, as revealed in the statement, “The lives of the myriad things in heaven and earth all unfold in relationships

57 From opening lines of the *Analects of Confucius*.

58 Anesaki 1904b, p. 8.

59 Anesaki 1900a, p. 372.

60 Anesaki 1900a, pp. 191–92.

of compassion and communion; these relationships develop according to an order unchanging since time immemorial.”⁶¹ At the earlier time of the rise of the Nipponshugi (Japanism) of Takayama Chogyū and others who championed ultra-nationalism (*kokusuishugi*) and opposed religion, Anesaki had initially criticized their assertions for not being backed up by documentary evidence.⁶² However, the same kind of criticism might have been directed at his own ideas.

From the latter half of the Meiji era onwards Anesaki’s way of thinking could be considered a variant of the “the phenomenal is the real” doctrine present in the idealism which was then fashionable. According to its advocate Inoue Tetsujirō, who was closely associated with this neo-Hegelian philosophical phase in Japan, in “the-phenomenal-is-the-real” doctrine “the discriminative aspect of the world is called phenomenon, and the equal and uniform aspect of the world is called reality; yet furthermore it can also be said that the discriminated is the real, which is synonymous with the idea of the phenomenal is the real.”⁶³ Because the real world is established in the inner realms of the phenomenal world, conflict on the level of material things is no more than superficial. In its true essence everything is harmonious. It can be said then that in such an idealist posture it was as if Anesaki’s gaze was not touching the ordinary actualities of life; it treated those actualities as pathological, or treated his own visualized thoughts as more like the “more real” essence of the real. Thus Anesaki’s conception of religion, too, was somehow dissociated from the “harmonious” totality’s reality that included both good and evil; it was always assumed to be something of perfect goodness. All of this derived from his idealistic mode of thought.

Anesaki’s idealist tendency was not confined to this idea of “the phenomenal is the real.” In their devotion to Schopenhauer and Hartmann, it seems that Anesaki and his teacher Inoue Tetsujirō were alike. In particular, both were devoted to the unification of the nation in spirit that could serve as the reference point for the sentiment of reverence within the individual. In fact, in the Association Concordia, the Teiyū Ethics Association, the Conference of the Three Religions, and others, not only Anesaki but also Inoue were active members involved in their management. The two differed only on the matter of whether this sentiment of reverence represented religiosity or morality.

There was no difference between the two in their placement of the sentiment of reverence, in their acceptance of the subjective identity of human

61 Anesaki 1912b, p. 166.

62 Anesaki 1897d.

63 Inoue Tetsujirō 1932b, pp. 74–75.

interiority, and in how that identity was thought to revert to the nation as the community. However, as Anesaki concisely explained, such sentiments when understood as secular morality “directly become the standard basis of the nation, molding people for the sake of the nation,”⁶⁴ drawing the argument towards the side of the nation. On the other hand, if the sentiment of reverence is understood as religious, “Individual religion will be put into contact with a uniform, universal ideal,”⁶⁵ which was an idea that hinted instead at world citizenship. Thus Anesaki’s view of the state could be made into a pillar of the *kokutai* doctrine, but it was also consistent with an open, universal civilization. The apparent difference lay only in that they were evaluated as belonging in separate camps, with Inoue labeled a nationalist and Anesaki an individualist.

Certainly Anesaki was different from Inoue. He rejected the notion of an individual who would be buried in the logic of the nation and instead emphasized the inner dignity of the individual. However, even while adopting the awareness of the individual as his foundation, he also believed in the goodness of the established state and the logic of making religious consciousness converge on it. In the final analysis he stood on the same horizon as Inoue. Indeed—unlike the clash of religion and education that Anesaki had experienced as a student—there was no structural pattern of otherworldly religion versus secular state in his thinking.

Consequently, when Anesaki’s religious studies assigned to religion the educational role of national indoctrination, to some degree he was drawing religion, with its inherently anti-state power tendencies, into the state and giving it an established role in secular society. The overall outline of Anesaki’s religious studies really did have a design that acted in concert with such values. His religious ethics served as a watershed among the disciplines, with religious psychology corresponding to the individual and religious sociology to the community. Also, he distinguished the genuine form of religion from its pathologies and aimed at achieving a harmony of the individual and the community by means of the cultivation of human character.

To the religionists and intellectuals who felt uneasy with the statism of the national morality, Anesaki offered a nationalist discourse that allowed the individual to secure the interior realm while still being loyal to the state. In other words, by way of the channels of religious studies he discovered the potential for more deeply integrating national identity into the interiority of individuals than had been done in the earlier era of national morality

64 Anesaki 1912b, p. 80.

65 Anesaki 1912b, p. 125.

indoctrination. However, religion as he explained it was not something that concretely reflected the contradictions of actual conditions. It remained only something idealized and conceptual, lying far beyond such realities.

Making the Discourse Relevant to Society

Following the incidents mentioned at the beginning of this chapter revolving around Aum Shinrikyō, religious scholars were criticized for seeming to condone the activities of the cult, simply giving out empty conceptual comments on its doctrines. The criticisms generally pointed first to religion scholars' defense of religion per se, and second to their seeming indifference to the actual deeds of the cult followers. The roots of the problems associated with these two points go deep. I think in large part they have their origins in how the composition of religious studies in Japan was consistently understood back at the time of its establishment by Anesaki. In closing this chapter, I would like to discuss these two points.

In the prewar period beginning with Anesaki, to take the position of defending religion meant protesting the invasion of individual rights by the national morality doctrine and State Shintō. As we have seen in Anesaki, although power relations are not consciously recognized, which leaves the individual to be assimilated into the state, still, some power to criticize was retained at least in the invisible realm, namely the criticism that considered it improper for the state authority to impede freedom of religion. After the end of World War II, State Shintō was dissolved under the Shintō Directives issued by the Allied Occupation (through General Headquarters or GHQ) and the authority that had oppressed religious communities completely vanished. Once the forceful authority of the previous era had been removed, religious communities were freed from the position of victims, but this laid bare the authority structures with their organizations all too starkly. Although religious studies stuck to its standpoint protective of religion regardless of such changes in the social context, the circumstances in which such a protective role had functioned were changed and occasionally its perspective became simplistically religion-affirming.

As a postwar example, Anesaki supported the dissolution of State Shintō, but he showed practically no concern about the content of Shrine Shintō.⁶⁶ He did not include in his work any critique of the vestiges of the feudal community that lingered in Shrine Shintō nor commentary on its dependency on

66 Anesaki 1945.

the emperor institution. His successors in religious studies at the University of Tokyo, including Kishimoto Hideo and the latter's student Murakami Shigeyoshi, do not seem to have questioned that stance. Kishimoto became a figure linked to the Shintō policy of GHQ; Murakami became known for his criticism of State Shintō. Both appeared to assume that State Shintō and Shrine Shintō were in opposite camps. State Shintō was to be criticized as representing the state's oppression of religion, but Shrine Shintō was praised as the national religion, as if it had had no connection to authoritarianism.⁶⁷

But it should be noted that postwar religious studies did not turn to the state—the entity in which Anesaki had placed his confidence in the prewar period—as the community in which people would feel a sense of belonging. In the postwar era, people were not only wary of the authoritarian aspects of the state but felt in it no reality as the locus for their sense of belonging. Instead, people sought out religious groups or geographical communities that were closer to them and with which they could more readily establish affinity. Anesaki had once criticized such affiliations as potentially obstructing the unity of the individual and the state. Under the postwar conditions, however, in which the state did not arouse any sense of belonging, other communities that could embrace the individual were regarded as suitable. Religious studies, too, changed: the religious consciousness of the individual extended to encompass equally the family and world religion. And because now qualitative differences in communality were not seen as a problem, the scale of the community to which one belonged could also easily change.

In this way, the dissolution of State Shintō paved the way for a more favorable situation in religious studies, which now advocated the equal treatment of all religions. Yet the proclivity of religious studies to shelter communality came to light. As communal and kinship bonds rapidly broke down in the postwar period of rapid economic growth, there had been a great deal of searching for communities in which individuals could feel a sense of belonging. The attempts of religious studies in this direction were praiseworthy on their own terms, although they still operated on the premise of the positive, unifying function of the community. The negative side of the community, namely the way it functions in the oppression of the individual, was never made a key issue.⁶⁸ Certainly in the 1970s, there was a reappraisal of the community as a

67 Kishimoto Hideo 1976; Murakami Shigeyoshi 1970; Toda 1965; Isomae 1996, pp. 29–30.

68 Criticism of the views of religion scholars on community has been widely seen in the United States in the form of critiques of Durkheim. See Masuzawa 1993. However, regarding the community's function in unifying individuals, Durkheim continues to exercise a strong influence over Japanese religious studies scholars.

form of thought to overcome modernity and transcend the rationalism that extolled the individual. In cases where intellectuals failed to be cognizant of the inescapable modernity of their own position, ideas about “overcoming modernity” sometimes tended to end up as naïve arguments favoring reversion to premodern feudalism.⁶⁹

The Aum Shinrikyō incident thrust into the public eye the gravity of the issue of community. Within the cult, a hierarchical structure had been established in which scientific knowledge or property assets determined status in the group. Persons who expressed dissent were eliminated; many members became blind to the values that governed the group. The ideology with which the cult was ruled was exactly the same as that of the secular society the cult had rejected, but in starker form. The group that formed the community was secular to an appalling degree, despite their declarations condemning the norms of ordinary life in society.

The dimension of the community that religious studies saw as the primary focus of social belonging shifted from era to era. For Anesaki it had been to the nation; for his successor Kishimoto it had been the village; and for later religion scholars it first became the New Religions and then smaller scale spiritual communities. Throughout, however, on whatever the dimension, religious scholars presupposed an ideal community and espoused an optimistic view of communality.

Today, however, the time has come to turn toward a critical analysis of communality itself. The notion of a preestablished harmony in which individual and community could supposedly easily coexist needs to be treated objectively. Just as Anesaki sought the essence of religion in the theoretical harmony of the individual awakened to the quality of human character and to the community, in general, religious studies speaks of communality in an abstract manner. For that reason the actual problems of the communities that oppress the individuals within it and exclude the Other outside of it have continued to be concealed. Have we not by now sufficiently suffered from the oppression of individuals by communities? Religious scholars have described communality and religion as something basically good, but this may be simply because such people are in socially favorable positions, locations where they hardly end up feeling the kind of oppression of a community that smothers the socially weak.

The values presented so far by religious studies in defense of religion are not persuasive enough for people outside the discipline. This is not to say that communities are unnecessary or that one can live without a community. Precisely because we cannot survive without communities, what I want to point out is:

69 Wolfart 2000.

rather than building expedient bridges between the community and the individual, do we not need to make the nature of communities as they actually exist the object of analysis?

Regarding the second point about the actual behavior of religions, I would bring up the lack of a sense of reality that emerges in many cases when attempts are made to understand religion. In such instances the discourse on religion promoted by religious studies is strongly tinged with idealism, namely the idealism of Anesaki represented in views of the community assuming a preestablished harmony. As already pointed out in the case of Anesaki, the idealistic approach is such that the ideal is made superior to reality, and reality comes to be discussed in terms of how things *ought* to be. As a result, what researchers *want* to see as reality ends up trumping actuality. When the image religions are endowed with from the outset is that of the good, the various problems they may cause in the real world are likely to be treated not as essential flaws, but as mere deviant pathologies whose very existence is made marginal in the scholar's awareness.

Until now scholars of philosophically idealist views—not only in religious studies—have separated thought from its historical context; they tended to believe that they could understand ideas within their own closed worlds. For example, there might be something worth considering, as some said, in Aum Shinrikyō's doctrines, but, the subway sarin gas poisoning incident illustrated the great danger in treating this kind of problem of thought in abstract terms. We must bring back the social conditions in which thought serves actual social functions. What will happen when ideology comes in contact with society? In other words, we must look at sites where ideology is transformed into a dynamic "social phenomenon."⁷⁰



It is not enough to pay attention to such questions only when we are intellectually analyzing objects of research. The same mindfulness ought to apply on occasions when we as researchers address society about our ideas. Beyond simply carrying out our business of research on religion, our words and our statements as specialists may possibly reach out and have a wide influence; they might even result in the justification of certain specific viewpoints. We

70 Hall 1985. Roger Chartier of the Annales school had already directed similar criticism against the outmoded dichotomy of "popular" and "elite" maintained by the Arthur O. Lovejoy school of intellectual history and by much of the Annales school itself. See Chartier 1982.

should therefore be aware that we have a duty to make persuasive statements, ones that not only apply to those who want to believe in religion but also to people who have no special interest in religion.

Because awareness of how ideology can become a social phenomenon is thus lacking, the issues caused by religious groups have been evaluated only in terms of the text of their doctrines and testimonials. So far, that kind of approach has not produced investigations at the level where religion has impacted society, even to the point of kidnapping and murder. This is why statements from religious studies scholars seem so incongruent with those of lawyers and journalists. Perhaps it is because until now religious studies scholars have been much concerned with their aspirations for an idealized “religion.”