

IN CONSIDERATION OF 18th CENTURY JAPANESE “KOKUGAKU” STUDIES IN HARMONIZING OUR CULTURAL IDENTITIES WITHIN A HOLISTIC EDUCATIONAL APPROACH FOR THE 21st CENTURY

Ruby Toshimi OGAWA *

Abstract : From the early formation of “Kokugaku”(Nativist Studies), the significance of this national narrative known as the “Kojiki-den” had valorized the intellectual movement for cultural self-determination in Japan. One of the most well respected nativist Japanese scholars exemplifying the intellectual movement of “Kokugaku” was the author and literary master, Motoori Norinaga. He originally started this work in 1764, and had authored the “Kojikiden” (“Commentaries of the Kojiki”) in 44 volumes as his life’s work. Within the extensive writings of the “Kojikiden”, Norinaga supported the view of the “Japanese mind” and coined the term, “magokoro” or “pure mind.” Based on Naganori’s idea of forming a distinct cultural identity that characterized human existence, the innate part of an individual’s national identity was potentially recoverable through a deeper sense of Japanese perceptions, judgments and values. In this regard, there is merit in establishing a formal identity whereby learning can flourish and take root to include our most common and universal value systems.

In the last few decades, the traditional educational goals are being redefined by incorporating a more holistic approach based on our values by integrating our culture-based nationalism. In part, our social identity has been determined by our cultural milieu and social mores. Within a holistic philosophy, the educational system can be explained from the total sum of its component parts from our national, cultural and ethnic identities. Specifically, famed psychologist Abraham Maslow refers to this part of holism as “self-actualization” of a person’s system of cultural and nativist values. Thus, the holistic perspective is primarily concerned with the development of a person’s potential as defined by various levels such as brain intellect, emotional intelligence, communication, physical abilities, artistic creativity, and inner spirituality. Each of these parts that define us create our “holistic” selves within our environment.

For this research inquiry on mobilizing a more “socially responsive” consciousness among learners in response to our environmental crisis, the ever-evolving role of an education system has been focusing on the harmony between the inner life and in embracing one’s cultural and personal identity. In taking strides for a more integrative, holistic approach toward education, this would enable the learner to understand the importance of social responsibilities with others from the community to global levels of connectivity based on our social and cultural personhood.

Key Word and Phrases: Nativist Studies, Holistic Education, Social Movements, Wholeness.

* ルビー Toshimi 小川 文教大学生活科学研究所客員研究員

INTRODUCTION : THE BEGINNINGS OF ANCIENT MATTERS AND THE KOJIKI



In the early developments of Japanese history, the literature of Shinto describes the formation of the islands of Japan from a mythological creationist point of view. The two gods, the male Izanagi and the female Izanami descended down from the heavens to carry out the task of stirring the true beginning of the Japanese identity. The Kojiki tells us of our mythical beginnings and how the islands of Japan came into existence long ago. Like the other 8th century literary texts, the writings were entirely in Chinese characters that led to the stronger influences of Confucian discourse on the assumption of universalism which unifies each of us to natural phenomenon.

The cultural differences embedded in the Chinese writings of the “Kojiki” were originally discussed by Keichu, a Buddhist priest employed by the Tokugawa Mitsukuni in the 1680’s (Tsunoda 2001). This had lead to other scholars interested in the discourse on Chinese writings and the school of Confucianism. There were new concerns for the conceptualizing of the differences between the ancient Japanese language and the burgeoning interests that question the moral principles that originated in the essential unity of the laws of nature. This particular stream of academic departure stemmed from the varying interpretations that formed the distinct cultural differences between Chinese and Japanese culture and society.

One of the notable formations in the development of the concept of “Kokugaku” can be attributed to Kamo no Mabuchi (1730 – 1801). He may have been the initial inspiration for Motoori Norinaga for his work on the “Kojikiden”. From historical archives, there is some evidence that indicate that Kamo no Mabuchi had met Motoori Norinaga in a single meeting (Isomae 2000). This single meeting had greatly influenced Norinaga’s life-long dedication to the importance of the ideological value systems of the Japanese ancient language based on the “Kojiki”. For Norinaga, the theory of Japanese cultural uniqueness and an authentic national identity rose like the ashes of a phoenix to be reborn and re-written according to the Japanese kana syllabary. This masterpiece was re-written by Norinaga into syntactical consistency. This repetitive level of literary consistency created the meaningful symbols that were to be vocalized for comprehension rather to be read (Burns 2003).

For scholars such as Haga Yaichi (1867-1927) and Muraoka Tsunetsugu (1884-1946), the extensive volumes of the “Kojikiden” by Norinaga were the beginnings of modern humanistic study and the preservation of “Intellectual Histories”. According to these scholars in the last century, the major points that were embraced for this inquiry was the acknowledgment of Norinaga’s level of objectivity, and how he had captured the intrinsically “Japanese” cultural values. This is the authenticity of *yamato gokoro* (Japanese mind), and the psychological state described as *magokoro* or “pure mind” that strips away and distills the truth about the essence of Japanese culture and identity as an enduring national identity (Tsunoda 2001).

What was discussed by these scholars were that Norinaga’s intrinsic nature of Japanese culture and national identity had nothing to do with the ethos of individualism that is so often characterized by Western societies. Instead, the essential core of Norinaga’s scholarly works can be recasted to be the start of a movement that defines the “modern” and “humanistic” views for ethnic self-determination and original cultural identity. In view of these scholarly pursuits for the true meaning behind “Kojikiden” after his death in 1801, there was a great departure from Chinese and Buddhist religious interpretations of the universe that formulates the core of the Japanese soul or mind. Thus, the “Kojikiden” as a literary revision of original Chinese universalism created the tenets that gave way to “Kokugaku” studies in contributing to the greater issue of cultural identity. To place this inquiry on a continuum of evolvement, the “Kokugaku” studies becomes a part of an integral collective development to the intellectual education movements of modern societies.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE KOKUGAKU FOR MODERN JAPAN

Throughout Japan, the instructional goals of “Kokugaku” studies are rooted in a modern version of national consciousness. This certainly may apply to other countries as well, and presents the age-old question of the definition of education within our public and private schools to meet the evolving tide of global change. Recent academic inquiries have been concerned about the increasing interest in providing more learning opportunities for social responsibility within the curriculum (Best 1996). In order to consider the vacuum that may be needed to be addressed for society, most committed educators realize that the educational institutions are often the last best hope for many young people to learn the essentials of family life, community service, ecological preservation as well as conflict resolution, character development and social responsibility. In part, the answer may rely on the importance of identifying “who we are” as a cultural identity or to understand oneself in relationship to others from global connections as a collective “people of the planet” instead of a country or nation confined to territorial and physical borders.

The scope had widened and broadened considerable due to the innovations of high technological advances where information and communication can be done at an instance due to the Internet and social media. The levels of connectivity can be realized immediately as a virtual reality today. In fact, the once-defined borders that separated a nation can no longer divide and separate us as individuals, families, groups, organizations, businesses and governments. The gap between the racial and cultural divides that stem from traditional and religious viewpoints have given way to the crown of creation: humanity. This

may be found in the periods of the Enlightenment movement during the 14th and 15th century in Europe where the painter, the architect, the musician or the scholar had fulfilled their divine purposes by exercising their intellectual powers to recapture the tools of antiquity in their lifelong works. By doing so, these founders of the Enlightenment educational movements had reshaped their own future with a stake in a more meaningful and wholesome existence for everyone in greater society. The immense impact of the legacies of such great works of art, literature, and architecture continue to influence us even today. In fact, we continue to study and learn from these artifacts of the past as they hold the key to our very future (Kessler 2000).

DEFINING SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE EDUCATION

To begin the question of what “socially responsible education” may mean from an educational standpoint, we may need to consider the context of our goal as educators within society. Would it be to ensure that the young children we educate are responsible citizens or that they are more empathic and compassionate of others to ensure a cooperative and harmonious society? Would it be enough for our rooted beginnings to celebrate our human capacity so that society can overcome the many challenges of creating a better world for the future? This may be especially true for the sake of future generations to sustain ourselves indefinitely with the recent domino-like effect of one ecological crisis after another within the last several decades (Forbes 1996).

While the impending consequences of global warming and climate change had riveted our attention to restoring and saving our planet from impending disasters and potential tragedies, the greater challenges are the considerations for the educational content that would enhance young learners to be more socially responsible. In fact, the contents of education imparted by instructors are not necessarily separate for the student’s own circumstances in life. Moreover, the teacher who imparts those words or information that promote behavior, ideas and thoughts that contribute substantially to the product of childhood to adult level socialization in public education are vital for our survival. In view of this analysis, we would need to distinguish that self-knowledge should be claiming an insight from an intrinsic value that centers us in our own vision of our cultural and social identities. Thus, Norinaga’s writings that had propelled the movement of “Kokugaku” studies may have merit for consideration in this regard (Miller 1993).

RESPONSIVENESS FROM THE HOLISTIC EDUCATION PERSPECTIVE

In comparison to “Kokugaku” studies from a Japanese nativist perspective, the holistic educational movement does not have a major form of expression nor a single source for its proponents. The advocates claim that holistic education is not new but are, in fact, timeless. The tenets of holistic education can be found in the words of Rousseau, Emerson, Pestalozzi, Froebel and more recently from Krishnamurti, Montessori, Jung, Maslow, and Rogers as well. The major shift from the traditional viewpoints are given way to an international grass roots movement as a vision of what humanity is supposed to be, and not to the rigors of religious traditions. Instead, there is a paradigm shift since the 1960’s that promotes an

ever-increasing acceptance of holistic education due to the prospect of nuclear annihilation, chemical and radiation pollution, the breakdown of family values, and the rise of a consumer-minded materialistic society. Indeed, we are more cognizant that our earth's resources are finite, and a newfound appreciation for nature has taken on a more desperate, yet practical approach for a change in human behavior. In the last few decades, there are more educators who are focusing on having students become more aware of global circumstances within our environmental surroundings.

The professional viewpoint of human nature has changed dramatically, and Gestalt's slogan, "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts" correspond to the daily, common sense realities that most people have today. Based on the shift to the greater whole, the narrow traditionalism seems inadequate to meet the world's realities, and it seems as if a particular ecological crisis does not have any boundaries. In fact, each ecological crisis contributes substantially, and there has been a greater realization of global impact than ever before. In this respect, the earth is being seen as a whole, and the parts that have been created and contributed to the root of human survival has been redefined to "whole earth ideas," or "wholeness." In this way, the foundation for a new mindset for interconnectedness to the world has been the first concern for responsibility of educational objectives in embracing the "whole" of everything around us.

THE CONCEPT OF WHOLENESS AND CONNECTIVITY

According to Forbes in his 1996 article, "Values in Holistic Education", he states that "many people began saying that looking at "wholes" was necessary to understand other things as well: the economy (which has become global), human interchange (where satellites and computers had made the global village a reality), and cultures (which were increasingly international). For example, he further states "nationalities like the French speaking of cultural imperialism find difficulties encountering a movement that is literary coming at them from all directions. The youth culture is global. The computer culture is global. Many modern cultural icons such as popular products are global such as Coca Cola. It may not be so uncommon to see Marlboro smoking teenagers in Mongolia drinking Coca Cola." Forbes reminds us that the larger whole involves the extension of thinking about questions relating to our human existence. He continues his dialogue "that each smaller part of observed and realized behavior and thought are not discrete bits of reality, but comprise the connections that extend beyond the individual in society."

Perhaps the notion of the largest "whole" brings us to the inherent approach to spirituality. This may apply to the traditional thinking of our relationship to everything. The universal order or common threads running through all religions are the archetypal mythologies or what may be referred to as "perennial philosophy" according to Aldous Huxley (Krishnamurti 1990). These timeless and perennially insights are said to be experienced in different times and places, and thus gives rise to the many interpretations of religion and spiritualism. From one end of the historical spectrum to another, the rediscovery of ancient truths found in such works as the "Kojikiden" give rise to this level of popularity of holistic education based on the integrity of our personhood. This over-arching movement in finding ancient, well preserved mythical truths about our human existence has gain momentum and continues to sprout new schools throughout the world.

According to Norinaga's "Kojikiden", the truth may be defined and centered on our cultural identities as a person within one's physical environment. These rediscovered narratives of literary value echo the truths and provide the individual with an implicit understand of his or her place and role within a community as well as the greater social networks that educates us about the environment. Nowadays, our environmental sphere has an ever-widening circle of the wholeness with our connections to our existence on earth with different nations. This general emphasis on self-knowledge based on perennial truths is the part of holistic education formulating the key to an elevated consciousness of universal truths. This kind of realization for our social responsibilities resonates the calling for this new consciousness movement. In consideration, there may be some merit in the continuing influence of an holistic social consciousness as this approach does provide a more broader, over-arching, and more inclusive basis for education in this new millennium of global climate change.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In revisiting the transcendent and remarkable scholarly works of Motoori Norinaga, there are merits in acknowledging and embracing the ideas relating to cultural identity as a basis of reclaiming ancient truths of human existence. The viewpoint based on humanity itself and the world as it is changing over the last century has certainly brought our attention to our vital connections with nature. Whether this realization is virtual or based on reality, the paradigm had shifted the role of society to consider new ways to educate young people. What is recognized among holistic educators is that there needs to be an understanding of what it means to be human and this not only defines us as a whole, but also mirrors our uniqueness as well. In understanding oneself from a source of deeper, intrinsic level of values, a person may be able to arrive at his or her own realities. In fact, this is what connects the individual to society as a whole rather than an isolated, disjointed member of a fragmented worldview.

What seems clear about contemporary discussions among committed educators is that the traditional ways of preparing students for life have not solved our personal, social, national and international problems. On a general level, many are searching for some answers or solutions that are do-able and work-able and applicable to our multiple needs for survival to reaffirm the basis for life and our families. We need to re-evaluate our needs as educators and to consider personal growth as something more than a philosophical point of view, but in terms of the essentials for our planetary survival. There is some merit in rediscovering our connections to the world from ancient truths that Norinaga had re-interpreted for us in his "Kojikiden". Upon deeper reflection on the definition of new thinking about human nature as a whole, it should not be based merely on a vision that is an idealized version of a universal world view, but rather, our thoughts should be grounded in on our common sense knowledge of social reality as it pertains in our own neighborhood and community. The shaping of our common identities depends on how informed we are, and to be someone who may be viewed as a critical thinking human being. This may very well be the divine message from the Gods itself as we continue to find the enlightening truths that are embedded within our intrinsic human nature through our multiple, holistic experiences in life.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, L. F. (1931). *Pestalozzi*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.
- Best, R.(Ed.).(1996). *Education, Spirituality and the Whole Child*. London: Cassel.
- Burns, S., (2003), *Before the Nation: Kokugaku and the Imagining of the Community in Early Modern Japan*, Durham: Duke University Press.
- Cajete, G. (1994). *Look to the Mountain: An Ecology of Indigenous Education*. Durango: Kivaaki Press.
- Emerson, R. W.(1966). *Emerson on Education*. New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University.
- Forbes, S. (1996). *Education, Spirituality and the Whole Child*. Presentation at the Rochampton Institute on the “Values in Holistic Education”.
- Froebel, F.(1890). *The Education of Man* (W. N. Hailman, Trans.) (Vol. 5). New York: D. Appleton and Company.
- Isomae, J., (2000), ‘Reappropriating the Japanese Myths: Motoori Norinaga and the Creation Myths of the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon Shoki*’, *Journal of Japanese Religious Studies* 27: 15:39.
- Jung, C. G. (1954a). *Child Development and Education* (R. F. C. Hull, Trans.). In H. Read & M. Fordham & G. Adler (Eds.), *The Development of Personality* (2nd ed., Vol. 17). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Kessler, R. (2000). *The Soul of Education: Helping students find connection, compassion and character at school*. Alexandria, VA.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Krishnamurti, J. (1953, 1990). *Education and the Significance of Life* (Gollancz Paperback). London: Victor Gollancz Ltd.
- Maslow, A. (1975). *Some Educational Implications of the Humanistic Psychologies*. In T. B. Roberts (Ed.), *Four Psychologies Applied to Education: Freudian, Behavioral, Humanistic, Transpersonal*. Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman Publishing Co.
- Miller, J. P. (1993a). *The Holistic Curriculum*. Toronto: OISE Press.
- Miller, R. (Ed.). (1993). *The Renewal of Meaning in Education: Responses to the Cultural and Ecological Crisis of Our Times*. Brandon, VT: Holistic Education Press.
- Nakagawa, Yoshiharu (2000). *Education for Awakening: An Eastern Approach to Holistic Education*. Volume Two of the *Foundations of Holistic Education Series*. Brandon, VT: Foundation for Educational Renewal.
- Tsunoda, R., et al., compilers, (2001) *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, vol. 2, New York: Columbia Press. (2nd edition).

INTERNET RESOURCES

- <http://www.2.kokugakuin.ac.jp/ijcc/wp/cpjr/kami/ueda.html> (Magatsuhi no kami and Norinaga’s theology).
- <http://www.2kokkugakuin.ac.jp/ijee/wp/cimac/uchino.html> (Early Modern Kokugaku “National Studies”and New Kokugaku: Their Growth and Significance).
- http://public.wsu.edu/~brians/hum_303/enlightenment.html.