

Comment

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Thank you very much, Kondo-sensei and Kikuchi-sensei. Yours were great presentations and I think we can all agree that we learned a lot, though they have raised a couple of questions.

According to Kondo-sensei, the point at issue is modernity that began 400 years ago – some 200 years if we count it from the Industrial Revolution – involving Western Europe, the U.S. and others. That argument was somewhat dichotomist. The story must be more complicated. First of all, we have the question of how to deal with religion, for example. The thinking on this subject is quite different in the U.S. and Europe. In the U.S., religion still has a place in the modern public sphere, as is evident by the use of the Bible at the Presidential Inauguration. In the case of France, we need to be cognizant of the issue of *laïcité*, a form of secularism particular to France, where, in contrast to the U.S., it is necessary to exclude religion from the public sphere. Another point to consider is the resentment over the colonization, felt by those colonized against the colonizers in our modern age. However, even inside the first modernizers such as Europe and the U.S., a variety of questions were raised about modernity, creating a myriad of complexities. There are the issues of Romanticism and in Japan it took the form of a famous symposium titled “Overcoming Modernity.” Even today, controversies persist over modernity. This fact itself is seemingly characteristic of modern times. It seems that one important feature of modernity is that it continues to remake itself, correct itself, with recurrence of events such as one we face now. It is one important feature of this modernity.

Following the incident in question, some 3-4 million French citizens participated in demonstrations and rallies with what was widely interpreted as a showing of solidarity with the *Charlie Hebdo* victims. I believe that this interpretation is open to question. Amongst those gathered had different opinions. When they say that “*Je suis Charlie*,” there were a variety of meanings. Some probably agreed simply with this expression, but for many others, it meant freedom of expression marks a fundamental value that is strongly connected to the high esteem in which we hold freedom. I can’t help but be fully

cognizant that this will also be important for countries that are still on the road towards modernization.

You discussed universalism of modernity, but the problem with *laïcité* is the fact that it is not universal. The case is the same with the religiosity of the U.S.. A look at journalism from around the world shows us that there was a variety of responses to France's reaction to the incident. Multiculturalism is one aspect of modernism and countries with multicultural systems such as the U.S., Canada, Australia and other countries that model themselves after the U.S. found themselves bewildered by French reaction even as their worries regarding freedom of expression, speech, and modernity itself deepened. This became abundantly clear as a result of the incident at hand.

I would like to raise yet another question. There are limits placed on *freedom of expression/speech* by a variety of reasons. For those that work in this area, the assumption is that suppression of freedom of expression/speech by terror and violence is never to be allowed. However, in reality, freedom of expression is hemmed in by a variety of other considerations. Originally, [individual] freedom was only recognized to the extent that it did not infringe on others' freedoms. I believe that is a foundational principle that dates back to the time when modern liberalism took root. In other words, individual freedoms were restricted by others' freedoms and were therefore restricted by various other frameworks.

One of these was *public order and morality*. An example of this is when somebody [as a prank] shouts, "fire!" here and now. This would obviously cause turmoil. Should this be protected as freedom of speech? There are also issues of public order, libel, and legal restrictions to deal with here, as well as the issue of hate speech. In Europe, the law against anti-Semitic speech acts as a check on freedom of speech. In the case of France, this also raises issues such as religion, race, ethnicity, nationality, disabilities, and gender, with all language that is slanderous and/or fans the flames of hate in these areas prohibited. The U.S. has taken a stern view of these French laws, [taking the position that] enactment of such laws is really not the best way to further present-day freedom of expression. While it is accepted that freedom of speech is limited by a variety of peripheral considerations, the question before us now is what shape should future forms of *freedom of expression* take?

Voluntary self-regulation is exercised under certain circumstances, which became a big problem for the U.S. media during the Iraq War. You Takeuchi, a sociologist at Kyoto University, notes that Japan is often referred to as a society "with a general public that forces self-restraint." This is a phenomenon that is readily apparent in modern society. It

is not only in our own. In the case of the U.S., this is not a legal problem but rather one of “political correctness.” In France, the questions of how the issue of *laïcité* works to balance religion and freedom of expression is a big problem. This seriously restricts *freedom of expression*. *Freedom of expression* is one of the absolute values in modern age. Still, without confirming the boundaries involved, we cannot know how we should maintain the tense relationship that exists between these rival concepts. This is especially true for those who work in journalism. By making these boundaries vague and arbitrary, one can sense a buildup in pressure if you are in this business. If there is not a constant state of tension (in pushing towards expanding the freedom) we may feel a great sense of fear. This is a big problem when it comes to freedom of speech.

At the forefront of this incident is the issue of *laïcité*. What will become of the relationship between *separation of church and state* and *freedom of expression*? The two revolutions of modern times remain the French Revolution and American Revolution of Independence, but the French idea of separation of church and state is totally different from that prevalent in the U.S.. In France, the separation of church and state involves the desire not to allow the church to get involved in government. Conversely, in the U.S., there is a desire not to allow the government to get involved in religious matters; the thinking in the U.S. is that people should be able to worship freely and that churches and other places of worship should be free to go about their business and, therefore, government should not interfere in these areas. This is a reverse take on separation of church and state. There may be some fundamental controversies that erupt between countries with a similar outlook to that of the U.S. and France over this incident. This is an aspect of *laïcité* that is strongly connected to secularism. In the U.S., this is so much the case that atheists struggle to have their rights recognized, which would be unthinkable in France. So then, what should we make of these two kinds of separation of church and state that have taken center stage as a result of this incident?

Another matter that I believe needs to be revisited is whether these depictions of Muhammad amount to an attack on religion. There is the idea that true religious believers do not pay attention to criticisms of their religion. We would seem to thus need to determine whether these involve religion. One can, to a certain extent, get a feeling for the immediate connection between the incident and religion. I believe we need to revisit the question of whether the offending images violated religious dignity or not. The questions of whether a newspaper should carry a given illustration or not, or whether the media should report something or not carry with them far-reaching implications. As expected, we ought to determine whether this is really the case; this is yet another

important role of journalism. I am very skeptical of the decision not to report, publish or reprint such things.

In Japan, most newspapers chose not to carry the illustration from *Charlie Hebdo* without even discussing the matter. My current thinking is that these publications should clearly state to readers why they decided not to carry this illustration.

I look forward to hearing all of your opinions on this matter. That ends my comments.