

NOTES AND DISCUSSION

Syun Inoue

JAPANESE YOUTH CULTURE TODAY:

“PLAY” AS A WAY OF LIFE*

In recent years many essays have been made public and various opinions have been advanced on youth. I would like to conceive one of the salient characteristics in the consciousness and the behavior pattern of today's youth as “play-orientedness” and center my discussion on that particular inclination. “Play-orientedness” here is not intended to mean merely “activeness in sports and hobbies,” nor is it synonymous with “pleasure-orient-

* The chief books I used as material in preparing this paper are as follows: Kōhei Oku, *Seishun no Bohyō (The Grave-Stone of Youth)*, Tokyo, Bungeishunjūsha, 1965; Noboru Ishihara, ed., *Naze Watashi wa Gureta ka (Why I went Astray)*, Tokyo, Meijitoshō, 1965; Ichiyō Mutō, ed., *Gakusei Undō (The Student Movement)*, Tokyo, Chikuma Shōbō, 1969; Nippon Daigaku Bunri Gakubu Tōsō Iinkai, ed., *Hangyaku no Barikēdo (The Barricade of Revolt)*, Tokyo, Sanichi Shōbō, 1969; TBS Radio Co., ed., *Mo Hitotsu no Betsu no Hiroba (One More Plaza)*, Tokyo, Bronzusha, 1969; Mitsuko Tokoro, *Waga Ai to Hangyaku (My Love and Rebellion)*, Tokyo, Zeneisha, 1969; Masami Okamoto and Kōichi Muraō, *Daigaku Gerira no Uta (The Ballad of College Guerrilla)*, Tokyo, Sanseidō, 1969; Ryōsuke Hanabusa, *Rakugaki Tōsō (Graffiti Warfare)*, Tokyo, Seishun Shuppansha, 1970; Kazumi Takahashi, ed., *Asu eno Sōretsu (The Funeral Procession Marching towards Tomorrow)*, Tokyo, Gōdōshuppan, 1970; Isami Yoshihara et al., *Joshi Zengakuren Gonin no Shuki (Notes of Five Women Members of the National Federation of Student Self-Government Association)*, Tokyo, Jiyū Kokuminsha, 1970; Yomiuri Shinbun Shakaibu, ed., *Wakamono no Ikigai (The Life Worth Living for Young People)*, Tokyo, Eru Shuppansha, 1970; Ōsamu Kitayama, *Sensō o Shiranai Kodomotachi (Children Who Do Not Know War)*, Tokyo, Buronzusha, 1971; Etsuko Takano, *Nijussai no Genen (The Origin for a Twenty-Year-Old Youth)*, Tokyo, Shinchōsha, 1971.

tedness." It is a broader term and is rather close in meaning to what is commonly called "the spirit of play." We might perhaps define it as "play as a way of life," or an inclination to introduce elements of "play" into one's daily life and make his actual life "play-like."

When we thus assign a wide meaning to the term "play-orientedness," we can put under this category various peculiarities so far pointed out repeatedly as characteristic of today's youth: irresponsibility, inclination toward momentary pleasure-seeking, little commitment to ideals and ideologies, scepticism about stereotypes, easygoing attitudes, etc. The term "play-orientedness" is an analytical one, and hence does not include all the aspects of these characteristics. But it seems possible and in fact worthwhile to sum up those various characteristics from the point of "play-orientedness" and start our discussion from there.

Before stepping into that discussion, however, let us touch on "sense-orientedness," a characteristic which almost every commentator on today's youth equally emphasizes. Considering that this feature has been repeatedly emphasized since long ago in *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* and many other literary works on adolescence, it may not be labeled as peculiar only to the youth of today. But when we view their "sense-orientedness" as related to the socio-cultural conditions peculiar to our times, we notice that there are ample reasons why this characteristic receives special attention today. Generally speaking, in an age of rapid social change, one comes to have many chances to face experiences that he cannot grasp by his already acquired systems of cognition. One then tends to place no trust in the logical or cognitive systems that are powerless in understanding his experiences. And, in today's situation where values are manifold and relative, only actual feeling or sensation is considered "the only thing that one can believe." Moreover, unique personal experiences and sensations tend to be highly valued as a result of repulsion toward the standardized "mass society" or of resistance to the highly rationalized "managed society."¹ Thus, some youths

¹ On the Social background of "the cult of actual feeling," see Keiichi Sakuta, "'Jikkan Shinkō' no Kōzō" ("The Structure of 'the cult of actual

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even say, "Is it not only our actual feeling that we can show as something truly of our own?" and, "In today's circumstances, that is the only proof that we are humans."² The inclination of our youth toward sensations takes such various forms as the rather extreme "esteem for sensations" as above mentioned, general distrust of language, logic and reason, scepticism about the enlightening movements in Japan after its defeat in World War II, and a taste for new rock music and comic books.

We may point to "mobility," another of the present youth's characteristics, which is promoted both by "sense-orientedness" and "play-orientedness." The *feeling-acting* pattern now preponderates over the *reading-thinking* pattern. In fact, today's youth move around so much. And their mobility is observed not only in the form of geographical mobility, as in traveling, but also of mobility as regards occupation, as in changes of employment, or, more in general, of "spiritual mobility," a tendency to wish to leave oneself as amorphous or undetermined as possible. When this tendency is pushed further toward the extreme, they start asserting, "When the situation changes, it is quite natural that I change as well."³ Journalism labels such an attitude as "switching culture" or "cat's-eye culture" (based on a Japanese idiom, "as changeable as a cat's eye.")

Such a trend naturally has an influence on the youth's commitment to a particular set of values or ideology. Kenneth Keniston says that "non-commitment as a way of life" is becoming more and more prevalent among the American youth.⁴ This is true of Japanese young people, too. This trend may be a manifestation of "mobility," but, taken in the aspect of value consciousness, it is a decline of the value of *majime* (seriousness, soberness or faithfulness), which demand consistency through different situations. That is the reason why *tenko* (ideological conversion) or *zassetsu* (the collapse of one's ideal) is no longer taken these days so seriously as it used to be before.

feeling") in *Haji no Bunka Saikō (The Shame Culture Reconsidered)*, Tokyo, Chikuma Shobō, 1967, pp. 187-214.

² Isami Yoshihara *et al.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-37.

³ Yomiuri Shinbun Shakaibu, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 206.

⁴ See Kenneth Keniston, *The Uncommitted: Alienated youth in American Society*, New York, Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965, pp. 84-103.

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The several distinctive tendencies so far discussed suggest what it is that today's youth strongly want and yet cannot gain. In a word, it is "freedom." Many of the youth feel that there is but little freedom in the present society. They would not be convinced if the adults attempted to persuade them saying that objectively speaking the present Japanese society is to a great extent a free society. For, what they want is such freedom as they can actually experience for themselves.

In today's "managed" or "softly structured" society, where its shock-absorbing mechanism has highly developed, or in a "society without the father," where the paternal authority has considerably declined, it is truly difficult for a young person to get the feeling of freedom. Most of his attempts end in vain and he is left only with irritation. If he does something beyond certain limits, however, he then receives too strong a reaction for him. A "managed society" though ours may be called, it does not maintain its order only by soft manipulative control. Rather, the clever use of both hard and soft means of control is its distinctive feature. "In the constrictions made of cotton wool," in the words of Reuel Denny, the youth have fewer and fewer chances to ascertain by "challenging things" and "confronting with the adults" that they are free and independent.⁵ One of the major forms of the youth's response to such circumstances is their attempt to feel freedom in a negative form: by way of an "exodus." Such a leaning is observable in their ardent desire to travel, particularly abroad, and in the popularity of what Roger Caillois calls *jeux de vertige* such as go-go dancing, solvent-inhaling, marijuana or LSD-using, etc. Traveling is an "exodus" from the space of daily life and the other vogues from their "selves" in their everyday life, *i.e.* an "exodus" from usual consciousness or perception-structure.

The result of this "tendency to exodus" on the level of actual life is "dropouts," typical of whom are the hippies. They try to gain such "freedom" as they want by dropping out of the

⁵ See Reuel Denny, "American Youth Today: A Bigger Cast, a Wider Screen," in Erik H. Erikson, ed., *Youth: Change and Challenge*, New York, Basic Books, 1963, pp. 131-151.

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existing society and trying to restore their humanity in that freedom. Although those who actually live as hippies are small in number in proportion to the entire youth population, the vague longing for dropping out as the hippies do prevails to a considerable extent among today's youth. On the other hand, there is another type of youth who resorts to radical attacks on the existing society on account of the same "thirst for freedom" and "longing for humanity." Despite the apparent contrast between the two types—the dropouts and the aggressive youth, or the hippie type and the activist type—both share the same root and are, so to speak, twins.

Probably those types of people together constitute only a minority. The majority is occupied even now, as it has been so far, by those who are, from the standards of the adults, of the "wholesome" conformist type and of the "moderate" and "serious" reformer type. Nevertheless, it is difficult, or even impossible, to understand today's youth ignoring the above two rather deviant types.

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In order to narrow down our subject, let us go back to the question of "play-orientedness."

Well known among the works on play is Johan Huizinga's *Homo ludens*. Stimulated by this work, Roger Caillois added, to the usual *sacré-profane* dichotomy, *jeu (ludique)* as another fundamental category, and analyzed the interrelation of *sacré, profane* and *jeu*.

The sacred and play are alike in that both are headed away from, and stand in contrast with, the actual everyday life. But the two are opposite to each other in the directions in which they are headed and in the ways in which they are in contrast with the profane life. The superhuman power of the sacred must be treated very cautiously in accordance with the fixed procedures (*i.e.* rites). Man cannot get this force under his control. He must revere it, tremble in its presence, and supplicate it in humility. The domain of the sacred is a solemn one where no mistakes are tolerated and the individuals who take part in the domain are not free but have more restraints than they do in their ordinary lives. It is "the domain of internal tension," more serious and

more rigorous than the practical life. Play, on the contrary, is activity that is an end in itself, and "free activity par excellence." It is thus far freer and more easygoing a domain than the profane life, not to mention the sacred world. "In sum," Caillois says, "One feels as relaxed in passing from sacred activity to profane life, as when passing from profane preoccupation and vicissitudes to the climate of play."⁶

We may assert, therefore, that the youth by nature have a sort of familiarity with "play." That is because one of the prominent characteristics of the youth as a social stratum is that they are relatively free from the so-called "burden of life" and various social obligations and restraints, and because they are thus in a situation where it is easier for them to depart from the "profane" world, which is ruled by the "reality principle."

But this sort of "departure," if we apply the Caillois scheme, may be one for the sacred as well as for play. Departure for the sacred, a domain characterized by irrational devotions to some transcendental being, is associated in general with the attitude of "seriousness" or "soberness" as contrasted with "play as a way of life." But at times, when too strong an emphasis is laid on the solemnity, which is the fundamental attribute of the world of the sacred, departure for it leads to fanaticism or dogmatism.

Formerly, the Japanese youth showed a greater tendency to departure for the sacred. Those who adopted a course toward "play" had to submit themselves to being labeled as "rakes" or "hoodlums." One of the important functions of the sacred is to criticize or judge by detached standards the profane world, which is full of compromises and easy half-way settlements. In that sense, the young people of the past were very much of idealists. The attitude of idealistic "seriousness" was the distinctive characteristic of the youth.

Up to now, the youths' idealism vs. the adults' practicalism has thus been the diagram showing the contrast between generations. Of course this basic pattern has not yet been completely broken. But, on the other hand, we cannot deny the growing tendency among the youth of the present day to depart in the

⁶ See Roger Caillois, "Jeu et sacré," in *L'homme et le sacré*, seconde édition, Paris, Gallimard, 1950, pp. 208-224.

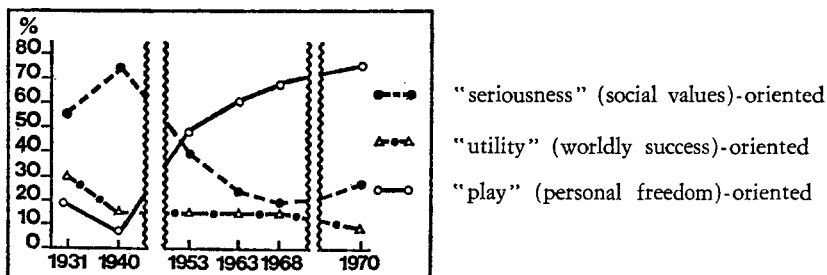
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direction of "play" rather than the sacred;⁷ even in the new-left student movement which accuses the adults' society of being deceptive, seemingly a typical manifestation of the "seriousness" of the youth, there are elements of "festivity" to be seen; and they often show the spirit of "self-satirizing," which means that they can, even when they are being serious, look at themselves from the standpoint of "play" and give themselves only relative significance. Their inclination to esteem or allow individual "freedom" in their organizations, especially among the non-sect radicals, may also indicate that the "play-element" has penetrated among today's youth.

It has been repeatedly asserted by many scholars from Schiller to Huizinga and Caillois that the essence of play consists in "freedom." But freedom as symbolized by play is freedom *from* something, or personal freedom, rather than freedom *for* something; it is freedom as actual feeling or sense of freedom rather than freedom as an abstract idea. As I have said, there is a

⁷ The figure is based on the often quoted data obtained from surveys on people's aims in life. Those who answered, "I want to live a pure and just life," or, "I want to devote myself to society," are classed as being "seriousness (social values)-oriented." Those who answered "I want to be wealthy," or "I want to be famous," are classed as being "utility (worldly success)-oriented." Those who answered, "I want to live an easy life taking each day as it comes," or, "I want to live a life to my taste leaving wealth or fame out of consideration," are classed as being "play (personal freedom)-oriented." Of course these items do not accurately cover all the aspects of our categories of "seriousness," "utility" and "play." The figure, therefore, should be taken only as showing rough trends.

Changes in Japanese Youths' Aims in Life



Source: Tōkei Sūri Kenkyūsho, *Nihonjin no Kokuminsei (The National Character of the Japanese People)*, Tokyo, Shiseidō, 1970; Sōrifu Kōhōshitsu, *Gekekan Yoron Chōsa (The Monthly Report on Public Opinion Polls)*, Vol. 3, No. 7, July 1971.

close relationship between the present youth's desire for freedom and their inclination toward "play."

Being play-oriented, on the other hand, helps the youth defend their fragile selves. One of the prominent characteristics of play is that it is relatively not serious or grave. Play is something where "it basically makes no difference" if one wins or loses, while in our actual life it does make a big difference. If a loss or disappointment in play struck one seriously, there would be no difference between play and actual life and there would be no *raison d'être* of play as an easy and free domain. Conversely, therefore, introducing the "attitude of play" into some kind of stress situation, such as one with a keen competition or estrangement among people, can be a means to ease the stress and defend one's self. For example, stress is reduced when one regards the competition in his actual life as a game or makes believe that the real human relations were ones in a drama. Such an act helps lessen the seriousness or gravity in our real lives and makes possible defeats and disappointments more tolerable by assuming in advance that they are fictitious.

It takes no great effort to notice, from the predominance of such defensive responses, the weak and spoiled modern youth, who cannot face the seriousness of life to the last. But at the same time, we should not overlook the possibility that such a character of the youth develops to form a kind of "autonomy," not confined to a passive "defence." The ability to regard life, which "does matter to them," as something that "does not matter" gives rise at times to a posture ready enough to cope autonomously with the actual life or with the utility principle which governs it.

Take some of the high school students, for instance, who have given up the ordinary student career, saying, "What good is there in studying faithfully for examinations, entering a noted university, getting a job in a first-rate business firm, etc.?"⁸ They "drop out" of the "success course," a course a good student is expected to follow, by quitting school or committing themselves to student movements, thinking that they can lead a freer life if only they throw away the idea of giving a supreme

⁸ On such high school students' cases, see Makoto Toyoda, "Jōshō Shikō no Sōshitsu" ("The Loss of an Aspiration to Climb the Ladder of Success,") *Asahi Journal*, Vol., 12, No. 12, Mar. 1970.

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place to college entrance examinations. The Japanese educational system, characterized by a keen competition for admission into top-ranking schools, tends to cast most high school and junior high school students into a heavy stress situation, *i.e.* the ordeal of the examination. The high school students above mentioned may have departed toward "play" originally for the purpose of defending themselves against the stress situation. But the origin and the function must be distinguished. In a case where one sees the absurdities of the realities of life from the viewpoint of "play" and develops an attitude to cope with them, their departure for "play" obviously has a new significance not limited to a mere means of defense.

In general, the attitude of "play" may work as a force of relativization both on practical utilitarianism and on idealistic solemnity; it has the function of checking so that neither the aspect of "utility" (*profane*) nor that of "solemnity" (*sacré*) gets excessive or rigid. The viewpoint of "play" may also work to deprive the existing authorities and the value systems that are supported by the combined operation of "utility" and "solemnity" (or "seriousness") of their significance. "Seriousness" and "utility" are essentially incompatible. But as Keiichi Sakuta pointed out, we cannot deny that the two had gradually come to collude. When, as a result of collusion, "seriousness" becomes an excuse to justify "utility," there arises hypocrisy. It is this collusion and the resultant hypocrisy that the young people, especially ones of the activist type, have attacked.

If we push a little further our above-stated point, we arrive at a view that what we call civilization may be the result of the unification of "seriousness" and "utility." If so, the attitude of "play" contributes to gaining a viewpoint to take "civilization" to a certain degree as being relative. In that sense, there may be a closer relationship than we have expected between the often discussed "anti-civilization" tendency of the youth, or their tendency to drop out of modern civilization, and their "playorientedness." The adults blame today's youth for being so easygoing. But, in the very trait of "easygoingness" T. W. Adorno found an "anti-" or "ex-civilizational" element. As is well known, he pointed out the "easygoing" syndrome as one of the syndromes which characterize a non-fascist, non-authoritarian personality. The "easygoing" syndrome, according to him,

stands opposite to the "manipulative" one. While the "manipulative" type of person regards all things and all other persons as a sort of "tool" and tries to manipulate them as he wishes, the "easygoing" type of person does not have the desire to do so; he is afraid to hurt others or spoil things. Negatively, such a trait appears as "a reluctance to make decisions" or as a tendency to "let things go." But positively, it can take the form of an inclination to "live and let live." The persons of this type are relatively free from the worldly desires for such things as wealth, fame, power, prestige, etc.; their desires "seem to be free of the acquisitive touch." "Easygoing" people are, at the same time, free from the rigid "serious" or "solemn" philosophy of life, and they do not adhere compulsively to logical consistency through various situations. They show "a capacity for enjoying things, imagination, a sense of humor which often assumes the form of self-irony." They are thoroughly "normal" from the psychoanalytic point of view; but for that very fact of normality, they cannot help being regarded "immature" in our civilization. Thus, in a certain sense, they represent the "folk" element as against our rational civilization.⁹

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Let us point out a few of the implications of our argument in relation to theories on youth culture and on identity.

From the points so far raised, youth culture may be characterized as a culture of "departure." Youth culture is worth its appellation only when it has its uniqueness as compared with adult culture; and that "uniqueness" is based on "departure." Youth culture is distinguished from adult culture by its "departure" from the principle of the "profane" world (the utility principle or the reality principle) that underlies and governs adult culture, or the adult society, and social life in general. "Departure" sometimes takes the form of "deviation" but we should not mix up the two.

There are two essentially distinct directions of "departure" toward *sacré* and *jeu*. The former appears as the attitude of *majime* (solemnity, seriousness, or faithfulness), the latter as the

⁹ See T. W. Adorno *et al.*, *The Authoritarian Personality*, New York, Harper & Brothers, 1950, pp. 767-771, pp. 778-781.

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attitude of "play" or "play as a way of life." There may be a tendency for the former direction to be predominant over the latter in one period in history and *vice versa* in another period. Historically speaking, there are thus changes in relative importance between the two; but it is impossible that either of the two has no existence in youth. Such being the case, what characterizes adolescence and adolescent culture is the element of "departure" in *both* of the two directions.

As is well known, E. H. Erikson asserted that adolescence is characterized by two contrasting tendencies: "Shiftiness" and "durability," or "diversity" and "fidelity."¹⁰ S. N. Eisenstadt says that adolescence is a period of "role moratorium" and a period in which "one may play with various roles without definitely choosing any." At the same time, he says that it is also the period when maximum identification with the values of the society is stressed.¹¹ The assertions of both Erikson and Eisenstadt can be paraphrased in our context to mean the twofold orientation of the "departure" tendency in adolescence. This pattern of "departure" is also reflected in discussions on typology of youth culture. For example, Burton Clark recognized three types in the youth subculture typically found at American high schools: "Fun subculture," "academic subculture" (also called "serious type"), and "delinquent subculture."¹² The first two obviously correspond to the basic directions of "departure." For the last one it is possible to include the elements of both, since it concerns the *distance*, not the direction, of detachment resulting from "departure." On this point, my opinion is close to that of Talcott Parsons, who says that not only the "frivolous" youth culture but also the "serious" youth culture includes leaning to deviation as well.¹³

Adolescence, a period of "departure," is at the same time said to be a period of search for and establishment of identity. The

¹⁰ See Erik H. Erikson, "Youth: Fidelity and Diversity," in Erikson, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 1-23.

¹¹ See S. N. Eisenstadt, "Archetypal Patterns of Youth," in Erikson, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 24-42.

¹² See Burton R. Clark, *Educating the Expert Society*, Chandler publishing Co., 1962, cited in D. Gottlieb and C. E. Ramsey, *The American Adolescent*, The Dorsey Press, 1964, pp. 26-27.

¹³ See Talcott Parsons, *The Social System*, The Free Press of Glencoe, Illinois, 1951, pp. 306-307.

term "identity" is used in various meanings today, but this concept is always supported by the concepts of "wholeness" and "autonomy;" they are basic components of "identity." In this context, the tendency of "departure" in adolescence and the establishment of identity are deeply related. Integrated consolidation of a personality is difficult without experiencing the whole realm of life, not only the domain of *profane* but also that of *sacré* and *jeu*. "Wholeness" on the level of life experience provides a matrix for "wholeness" on the level of personality integration, although there always is a possibility of a premature birth or a stillbirth of course.

As for "autonomy," I have already pointed out that "departure" toward *jeu* and the resultant attitude of "play" can at times develop into acquisition of "autonomy." The same is true with "departure" toward *sacré*. The ability to criticize and make relative the practical life (*profane*) from the viewpoint of *sacré* or *jeu* can, no doubt, be the source of "autonomy" against the demands of *profane*. Being "autonomous" or trying to be so may bring about various real and possible deprivations on the dimension of *profane*, but one can compensate for them and bear them, if he can find a reasonable reward on a different dimension (*i.e.* *sacré* or *jeu*). For the sake of commitment to some transcendental value, one may even ignore the urge for self-preservation; or for the sake of his esteem for a sense of "freedom," one may sacrifice his worldly "happiness" and "security." When only the *compensation* for deprivations is given special attention, this sort of reward finding is regarded as the "tension management" mechanism. But, at the same time, we should not overlook the fact that it can function as the basis for the formation of "autonomy." For, "autonomy" is in a sense the ability to draw a reward from a reward system on a different dimension. When we conceive *sacré*, *profane* and *jeu* as mutually independent reward systems respectively built on their own principle, we can theoretically assume several forms of "autonomy" as combinations of those systems. But, since it is the *profane* that has the greatest influence as a reward system, "autonomy" to resist the demands of *profane* is most often called in question. That is the reason why an experience of "departure" is of a deep significance for the formation of "autonomy."

Let us go on to the question of relative importance of the

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two directions of "departure." The question is a matter of little concern to us when we treat youth culture and adolescence in a general way. But it becomes an important clue when we try to grasp the changes in the consciousness and behavior pattern of the youth in history. I have mentioned that in recent years the pendulum is swinging from "seriousness" or "solemnity" to "play as a way of life" and thus the basic pattern of the conflict between generations is beginning to change. Perhaps I should add, however, that this "conflict" was not so sharp and, in fact, generally mild when compared to that in Western societies. Junzo Karaki asserts, giving mention to Ogai Mori's novel *The Youth*, that "there has been no ground for the adolescents to entitle themselves to expression of adolescence" in the Japanese society, which has always been hurrying to catch up with the advanced Western countries since the Meiji period (1868-1912), and that, "because of the practicalism which characterizes the Meiji period, an action without any calculation of the consequences, *i.e.* an essential action in the true sense of the term, has not been possible as a social reality."¹⁴ "Practicalism" born out of the demand of the "catching-up country" for its quick modernization restricted the youth's "departure" and shortened the distance of their detachment. And, a shade of this tendency has been carried on down to this day.

It is true that many youths dared to "depart" in the direction of *sacré* during World War II. But that departure was naturally related closely to the national aim of carrying out the war and was, for that reason, of a different nature than "idealism" as an attitude of *majime* in a universalistic form; conversely its particularistic aspect was predominant. In our modern history, it is probably in the period of "Taisho Democracy" that the youth's idealism as contrasted with the adults' practicalism had the greatest power.¹⁵

The youths commonly called *apure* (an abbreviation of the *après-guerre* generation) came into our society after defeat in World War II. What was the characteristic of them that astounded the adults in those days? Roughly, there were two

¹⁴ See Junzo Karaki, "Kaidai," ("Explanatory Notes on *The Youth*") in Ogai Mori, *Seinen (The Youth)*, Iwanami Bunko, 1948, pp. 214-215.

¹⁵ Emperor Taishō's era extending from 1912 to 1926.

elements: In the words of the adults who described them, one element consisted in “bad manners, lack of common sense, carefree adventures in sex, lighthearted strolls to degeneration and easy investments in death,”¹⁶ and the other in the tendency that “instead of idealism and pureheartedness of the youth, pragmatism and monetary calculations become the kind of morality without morality that governs everything; even friendships become what one could call Dutch treat friendships based on monetary calculations; and even love becomes only part of one’s life plan so scrupulously worked out.”¹⁷ Both elements may be a little exaggerated here, but at any rate the former can be understood as pointing to the “departure” tendency for “play” and the latter to the shorter distance of detachment after the “departure” for “seriousness,” or, in other words, to the tendency to approach *profane* (“utility”). We may say that these two elements have lived on since the *après-guerre*. The first element was inherited by some groups of youth in the 1950’s. But it is only in the latter half of the 1960’s that the element of “play” became notable as a general trend. Until that time the second element had been more prominent. This is clear when we look through various essays on youth written before the middle of the 1960’s. Almost without any exception, they point out the youth’s tendency to approach *profane*, i.e. the decline of their idealism; and this trend is labeled as detestable by many of these essays. When we look back on that period of time, we may say, at the risk of oversimplification, that it was a kind of transitional period in our modern history when the youth’s tendency was undergoing a change from “departure” for “seriousness” to that for “play.”

Anyhow, the leaning toward “play-orientedness” has been getting stronger gradually since the latter half of the 1960’s and youth culture has shown a notable tendency to differentiate and become independent from adult culture. Since so much has been said about youth culture’s achieving its independence or strengthening its relative uniqueness, in relation with the changes in various social conditions for the youth, I do not think it

¹⁶ Isamu Togawa, *Sengo Fūzoku Shi (A History of Japanese Life and Manners after World War II)*, Tokyo, Sekkasha, 1960, p. 181.

¹⁷ Tomitarō Karasawa, *Nihonjin o Rirekisho (The Curriculum Vitae of the Japanese People)*, Tokyo, Yomiuri Shinbunsha, 1967, p. 300.

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necessary to repeat the same thing here. Nevertheless, I must add that the inclination to "play-orientedness" is one of the major factors that cause youth culture to increase its uniqueness and intensify the conflict between youth culture and adult culture. If our civilization and social order themselves are essentially built on the union of "seriousness" and "utility," then it is obvious that departure for "play" causes more friction than departure for "seriousness." In other words, the point of "deviation" is nearer in the case of departure for "play." Departure for "seriousness," therefore, is not considered a "problem" unless one goes extremely far; while departure for "play" is conceived as a "problem" even when the distance of detachment is rather short.

When youth culture is permeated by the element of "play" and, on the other hand, the adult society loses its significance as a reference group for the youth, a tendency arises among young people to wish to become adults as late as possible and stay in the youth culture as long as possible. The "independence" of the youth culture is encouraged all the more. I will not say any more about this point, because on another occasion I have already discussed it as the permeation of "undecidedness" consciousness, in which the youth dislike to put themselves in a "decided" state.¹⁸

Such actual trends have aspects that cannot be grasped by the existing theories on youth culture. Particularly the traditional view that emphasizes the youth's "dependent status" and defines the youth as an "under-privileged minority group" will have to be more or less modified. The same may be said with the well known argument of Parsons, who conceives youth culture as the "safety valve of the social system" or as the "secondary institution" and emphasizes its function of social control.¹⁹ For the smooth functioning of the "permissive" social control of this kind, it is imperatively necessary that the permission is given only under strict restrictions and thus the "permissive" part is insulated from other areas to prevent its damaging effect. But if there are more and more youths who are objectively placed

¹⁸ See Takuzō Isobe and Syun Inoue, "Seishinteki Shitsugyō no Jidai" ("An age of Psychological Unemployment,") *Bessatsu Keizai Hyōron*, No. 4, Spring 1971.

¹⁹ See T. Parsons, *op. cit.*, pp. 304-305.

in the "decided" state by getting a job or getting married and yet subjectively continuing to have the "undecidedness" consciousness, then part of the youth culture will be brought into the adult's world and "insulation" will inevitably be incomplete.

On the differentiation between youth culture and adult culture, if we conveniently distinguish the level of "value" (*i.e.* the "cultural" level as contrasted with "social" one) from the level of "role" (*i.e.* the "social" level as contrasted with "cultural" one), then it is a characteristic feature of the youth culture-adult culture relation today that there is *more* discontinuity on the level of "value" and *less* discontinuity ("insulation") on the level of "role." Youth culture is thus becoming more of a "contraculture" or a "counterculture" than a "subculture," which is functionally integrated in the general social system.

That of course does not mean that this tendency immediately relates to the incoming of youth culture from the status of a subculture to the main part of general culture, or to a "consciousness revolution centering around youth culture," while journalists have sensationally proclaimed such a trend. It is a fact, as is often pointed out, that the "invasion" of youth culture to some extent is within the latitude of "permission" and is actually nothing but "utilization" of youth's power in production and consumption. But we cannot ignore the possibility that it has some influence on or causes some change in the adults' world even though, or perhaps because, it is "incorporated into" the adults' society.

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It is beyond the range of this paper to tell the future of youth culture. But I must point out, at least, that there is a strong latent inclination to *sacré* or "seriousness" behind a tendency to "play-orientedness," and that this potential leaning will be an important factor that will affect in various ways the future of youth culture. We must recall Erikson's argument that, despite "shiftiness" or "diversity" in adolescence, "fidelity" is "a strength inherent in the age of youth." If today's society is one in which the energy of the youth who want to devote themselves has gone astray without finding the appropriate object, then where this "wandering energy of devotion" leads to is of great

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significance for the future development of what is called the "youth problem."

Of course the youth problem is always related to the problems of the entire society. It is said that the youth is litmus paper for their society. Different people will see a different response on litmus paper, but we should not abandon our efforts to read the underlying meanings of the responses on the paper. Some say that, "Hippies are the result of the affluent society. They will disappear at once when a depression comes." These words may be right but they do not clarify the "meaning" behind the existence of hippies. Hippies may disappear with the coming of a depression, but what underlies them will live on to appear again in a different form. What we need now is the view, as presented by a certain young man, that, "The fact that hippies have been around for about ten years is not a matter pertaining *only* to the youth." This point applies not only to hippies or those youths who, either from the left wing or the right, raise objections in loud voices. The situation is all the same with youths who "drop out" silently of ordinary paths of life for a respectable youth, or those who shrug their shoulders and adapt themselves to the existing social order. It is one of the important roles of youth study to read tacit meanings in the various gestures of the youth and relate them to the question about the entire society.