

Reappraising Keiichi Sakuta's Sociology of Values

Beyond Galapagosized Sociology to a General Sociocultural Theory of Solidarity

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Abstract

The aim of my presentation is to elucidate the moral structure in postwar Japanese society by reconstructing Keiichi Sakuta's Sociology of Values.

Since the Meiji Restoration in 1868, nearly all sociological theories that have been adopted to analyze or criticize society in Japan have originated overseas. However, attention should be paid to the fact that Japanese sociologists not just applied Western sociological concepts directly to Japanese society but also appropriated and reused Japanese non-sociological terms to explain the modernization characteristics of their own society. By doing so, they could gain a deeper understanding of the uniqueness of sociocultural structures in Japan, as well as the Japanese way of thinking in contrast to the West.

Such use of these terms can be referred to as "galapagosized," a fashionable expression in today's Japan. "Galapagosized" has been coined from English, and refers to a product that is too local and nonstandard to be available outside Japan. Originally, the term was used for a Japanese mobile phone that had many unnecessary functions. In contrast, I argue that galapagosized concepts of Japanese sociology, which consist of both specific and general elements, can describe the local condition of society at large.

In my presentation, I will highlight the way in which Japanese non-sociological terms can be reused, especially those in Keiichi Sakuta's Sociology of Values. Sakuta is a well-known translator of Erich Fromm's and Talcott Parsons' works, who has also reexamined the research conducted by Ruth Benedict, Talcott Parsons, and Robert Bellah. Based on their findings, Sakuta reinterpreted traditional Japanese terms: *honne* (one's real intention), *tatemae* (one's public stance), and so on. With these concepts he then clarified the uniquely Japanese way of living and thinking much better than Benedict and Bellah did. What is more important here is that in his analysis of Japanese society, the theoretical framework of value analysis also became more sophisticated.

In the first half of my presentation, I reconstruct Sakuta's sociology and examine the moral dualism, and its transformation, in postwar Japanese society, taking into consideration Benedict's and Parsons' original frame of reference that strongly influenced Sakuta's analysis. In the last half, I will argue that Sakuta's sociology can contribute to the general sociocultural theory of solidarity in an age of globalization.