

## **Reconsideration of Humanity in the Problem Area of Groups and the Human Being**

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### **1. Introduction**

When we couple the two words, 'Groups' and 'Human Being', several relationships between these two nouns connected by the conjunction 'and' could be assumed. It is necessary to make clear the problem area to which these two words belong, in order to avoid unnecessary unmanageable arguments.

Suppose, for instance, we say 'mind and body', it seems to be clear that these two connected by 'and' signify a human being as one unified substantial being though having dual principles. However, if we admit, on the one hand, that body is a being which is spatial and temporal, but on the other, that mind is not temporal and not spatial, then it must be questioned whether something that is spatial and temporal can become one unified substance with something that is not spatial and not temporal. In the case of bringing together and bonding two pieces of equal size, there results a new piece of twice the size. We can obtain a medium color by mixing two different colors. But there is nothing intermediate between something dimensional and something dimensionless. Thus, it seems to be impossible to unite such kinds of things substantially.

We do not have any doubts about the properties of the verbal expression 'mind and body'. This is because the conjunction 'and' unites the two nouns anterior and posterior to it in a highly ambiguous and vague way. In other words, the so-called mind and body problem should be noticed conversely as being much harder to solve.

The difficulty of the mind-body problem arises from our natural conviction of totalized self-understanding as integral beings. As a rational being, the human being has a mind whose diagnostic character is self-recognition. But the self-recognition of the human mind is incomplete, or rather, to complete self-recognition remains an objective for the human mind which is subjective. Because of this incompleteness, the self-recognitions of each human mind are on many levels, so that viewpoints for considering human beings are also on various levels. However, if we assume that some complicated machine would be able to substitute for all functions of our body, presupposing the point of view of the human being must be seriously

insufficient, taking into consideration the human being as a knower, — that is, as both a known object and a knowing subject — through clarifying the ambiguity between the human being as a known thing and a knowing subject.<sup>1)</sup>

Although it is possible to unite 'the human being' and 'groups' with 'and', it is not easy for the human being as a knowing subject to recognize its own unconscious objectivizing of an unobjectivizable self. Without losing oneself in the mind-body problem area and abandoning complete self-recognition, how is it possible to admit that the two, to know and to be known, are one, when I know myself? 'Groups' and 'the human being' must be sociological terms contrasting society as a group of human beings with each of the human beings that has an active and passive relationship to the surrounding society, both influencing it and influenced by it. But whether the human being is considered to be a social animal or a rational animal, it is still necessary to avoid a superficial one-sided way of looking at the human being by asking what kind of humanity the very same human being can be thought to have.

The effort to understand the humanity had been made historically at ancient Rome as 'the study of humanity'. It is well known that 'studia humanitatis' was also earnestly pursued in the Renaissance. However, this movement was accompanied by an increasing conviction that the culture of ancient Greece and Rome had been the principle of distinguishing Romans as human beings from 'barbarians', the original meaning of which is those who do not speak Greek. On account of what the word 'humanism' signifies, in the thought of the ancient Romans and most Westerners of recent ages, 'human being' seems to be limited only to the Romans and their cultural descendants.<sup>2)</sup> But now, if we try to consider anything about 'groups and the human being', we cannot escape the attempt to comprehend the human essence in its proper meaning.

## **2. What kind of human beings form a group of human beings?**

There is an argument that a group of human beings is not simply the collectivity of mere individuals in the problem area that is vaguely assumed when the two words, 'group' and 'human being', are connected. Though these two words must belong to the vocabulary of sociology or social psychology, if the environment surrounding each human being or the system incorporating human beings in itself is called human society, it should be questioned whether something called by this name is only the collectivity of mutually independent human beings, or rather a group formed by mutually dependent members and connected in a close relationship. For when we ask what the 'human being' in contraposition to the 'group' or 'society' is, the meanings of these words cannot be understood distinctively.

For example, people gathering at a bus stop to wait and ride in the vehicle make only a collectivity. It would make no difference even if any one of them were not there. On the other hand, 'family', a fundamental unit of social composition, is usually understood as a small group made on the basis of a kinship tied to a consort relation between a husband and a wife, or a blood relationship between parents and children, brothers and sisters, and so on. But in what sense can we say that there is some mutual interdependence in a multicultural society confronting the symbiosis of different cultures?

On the ground that a contributory factor in bringing a group into existence is the sharing of a consciousness of identity by its members, rather than an internal condition such as a mutual dependence among members, another theory is propounded to solve this problem. Those who have a certain consciousness of identity constitute multicultural societies differentiated from others. But the consciousness of identity is divided into the core components and the peripheral. Though the core components are formed when the difference from other groups is clearly recognized, the peripherals are not clearly differentiated by the boundaries between groups. These peripherals can easily be included in the other group. Then gradually the content of the consciousness of identity changes, the borderline disappears, and heterogeneity becomes not inhomogeneous.<sup>3)</sup>

Let us take an ethnic group or the notion of race as an example. Race is thought to be a notion made from the division of human beings indexed by certain characteristics. But the results are not always the same, because it depends on what kind of physical characteristics are used as criteria. Although groupings of black, white and yellow are popular, the basis of such a grouping is exceedingly vague. Referring to the recent report on human genome deciphering, it is clear that the grouping of human beings in terms of race is unscientific. For every human being is hybrid, there is no standard human being with a standard human genome. Or rather, 'hybrid' presupposes the existence of a purebred: the expression itself is inadequate and in need of correction. Whatever nations and races could have some identity as a group would do so not because they form a natural group in terms of purity. If so, it would be an excessively serious problem to explain how a single race could be divided into two nations, or conversely to assume that because of hybridity a multiethnic nation and a racially homogeneous nation are invariant, or again it would be inadequate just to deny racial segregation itself, as far as the existence of essentially unreal groups having identity in themselves were supposed.

If certain physical properties or certain cultural contents really constitute human race or nation, the adoption of foreign culture would be almost impossible. And if foreigners are

absolutely unacceptable to a different society, multiethnic multiculturalism could not find a way for foreigners to coexist in the host society except by urging them to live separately. But considering carefully the unreality of human race or nation and recognizing the group consciousness as substantial reason for the unification of a group, it would be possible to constitute an open society. In this case people can receive the cultural values of another group without losing a sense of the identity of their own group.

At the same time, it should be noted that the existence of foreigners whether acceptable or not for a certain society encourages an awareness of the self-identity of each society. The consciousness of identity for each group of human beings is constituted in the process of the acceptance or exclusion of foreigners. Then, each group of human beings is formed by two kinds of human beings, one is accepted and the other is excluded.

### **3. Humanity and inhumanity.**

If any human society needs these two kinds of human beings in order to establish itself, it can be said that each member of the society would be human and inhuman, as far as foreigners could be treated both as inhuman when excluded and human when accepted. The process by which a group formed by human beings is gradually unified and integrated is also the process by which the group is differentiated into the core and the peripheral. As the formula of Plato's theory of ideas that "it is by the beautiful that beautiful things are beautiful"<sup>4)</sup> suggests, beautiful things are commonly beautiful because of the beautiful itself, but they are not genuinely beautiful because they are also not beautiful in some senses, otherwise they cannot be distinguished from each other on account of something not common among them.

Why, then, are only the members who occupy the central part of the human group thought to possess humanity of a higher degree? As a possible answer it is worth pointing out the inclination of the human group to alienate remote beings, putting oneself at the center, and putting forward the idea that the closer to the center the human being is, the higher level of humanity the human being has. This may be why man is often defined as a social animal. 'Social animal' is a translation of the Latin expression, 'animal sociale', and 'sociale' derives from 'socius', which refers to those beings that have an alliance with each other. Human society is an association of beings who recognize one another to have humanity in common, and keep aliens at the distant periphery.

The definition that man is a social animal is derived from Aristotle. However, he himself wrote as follows: "it is evident that the state is a creation of nature, and that man is by nature a

political animal"<sup>5)</sup>, and further: "he who by nature and not by accident is without a state, is either a bad man or above humanity"<sup>6)</sup>. And a little bit later: "he who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god: he is no part of a state"<sup>7)</sup>. The word 'politikon', though translated into English as 'political', means 'belonging to the state' of ancient Greece. And according to Aristotle, "Every state is a community of some kind, and every community is established with a view to some good; for everyone always acts in order to obtain that which they think good. But, if all communities aim at some good, the state or political community, which is the highest of all, and which embraces all the rest, aims at good in a greater degree than any other, and at the highest good"<sup>8)</sup>.

Aristotle's definition of man, "ho anthropos physei politikon zoon"<sup>9)</sup>, was translated into Latin as, "homo est naturaliter animal civile". It is known that Moerbeke, the Dominican confrere of Thomas Aquinas, translated Aristotle's Politics into Latin about 1260. Thomas Aquinas' commentary on Aristotle's Politics was based on Moerbeke's translation<sup>10)</sup>. Until the revised version called Leonina was published in 1971, all versions of the commentary were issued on the basis of the version altered according to the predilection of humanists, published in 1492<sup>11)</sup>. Anyway, there is a proper Latin expression, 'hominum societas', in the commentary of Thomas Aquinas on the first book of Aristotle's Politics at the relevant sentences. But 'polis' and 'society' are not the same.

Aside from Thomas Aquinas's commentary, although Aristotle wrote that man is by nature a political animal, he also added that "he who by nature and not by accident is without a state, is either a bad man or above humanity" and again "he who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god". The difference between human beings and "bees or any other gregarious animals is evident. Nature, as we often say, makes nothing in vain, and man is the only animal who has the gift of speech"<sup>12)</sup>. For the reason of the power of speech, man is more of a social being than other gregarious animals, and maybe barbarians as well, according to Aristotle.

As for Aristotle's statements, "the power of speech is intended to set forth the expedient and inexpedient, and therefore likewise the just and the unjust. And it is a characteristic of man that he alone has any sense of good and evil, of just and unjust, and the like, and the association of living beings who have this sense makes a family and a state"<sup>13)</sup>. Other beings who do not understand language are differentiated and devalued from this point of view. And besides, if only he who understand language, Greek or Latin or another European language, were thought to be superior, the meaning of 'humanity' cannot be allowed to pass unnoticed, though it may

have been common since ancient Greece and Rome or the age of the so-called Renaissance.

#### 4. Reconsideration of 'Humanity'.

According to the aspects of the political being since Aristotle's definition, human beings who did not belong to the city-state were regarded as barbarians. Barbarians were nothing other than people who do not have a state. But barbarians or savage people do not have humanity, do they? If the humanity common to barbarians could be found, and further, retrospectively from that viewpoint, if people who lived in city-states were thought to have something more human because of their excellence, this must be an inheritance from the ancient humanism whose aim was to make human being much more human (*humanior*) than merely human (*humanus*).

If this aim of humanism could be accomplished in the midst of the human group by alienating peripherals, it is not difficult to find a possible connection between humanism and socialism or totalitarianism. On the other hand, if the *studia humanitatis* as far back as ancient Rome was based on the invention of the existence of something lower than a human being in order to make one's fellows something more than human, it should be consciously avoided as a danger accompanying a fellow feeling.

However, Aristotle also pointed out that another non-political being exists. It was described as above humanity. In the relation to what is above humanity, the human being would be distinguished as political from the being that is not political. Another definition, that man is a rational animal, might provide a clue to considering the relation between human beings and those that are above humanity. That the human being who forms a human group always brings strangers into existence makes sense. On the other hand, at least for Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas as well, human beings could be considered in relation to what is above humanity, that is to say, the divine intellect as the first cause of the intellectual nature of human beings.

According to this viewpoint, each individual human being is not totally dependent on human society, at least he whose consciousness of his own intellectual nature made him prior to the group of human beings and able to establish himself. Although the self-recognition of the human mind are on many levels, and though viewpoints for considering human beings are also on various levels, we can see the manifestation of a still deeper problem and a deeper understanding of humanity and the relationship of human beings to each other.

#### Notes.

- 1) Cf. Hidemi Mizuta, "The human being as a Knowing Subject in Relation to Information", *Hiroshima Interdisciplinary Studies in the Humanities*, 2. (2003)

- 2) It is noteworthy that according to the original meaning of the word the Romans had been assumed to be barbarians even in the age of the Roman Empire from the viewpoint of the ancient Greeks. It is also important to remember that when the Spaniards first met the natives in South America, those American natives were treated not as human beings but dealt with cruelly only because they had different cultures and did not speak any European languages. It is well known that Las Casas, a Spanish Dominican at that time, made efforts to change the situation. For him, 'humanism' must have some other meaning which is not derived from the Latin language.
- 3) Cf. Toshiaki Kozakai, *Collective identity and social fiction, An essay on acculturation and open society* (Tokyo, 2002; in Japanese).
- 4) Burnet, J. (ed.), Plato, *Phaedo*, 100e; tr. by D.Gallop (Oxford, 1975).
- 5) Ross, W.D.(ed.), Aristoteles, *Politica*, A,2,1253a2-3 (Oxford, 1957); tr. by B.Jowett (Princeton, 1984).
- 6) *Ibid.* a4.
- 7) *Ibid.* a27-29. For Aristotle, the 'polis (state)' is thought to be as follows: "Now, that man is more of a political animal than bees or any other gregarious animals is evident. Nature, as we often say, makes nothing in vain, and man is the only animal who has the gift of speech. And whereas mere voice is but an indication of pleasure or pain, and is therefore found in other animals (for their nature attains to the perception of pleasure and pain and the intimation of them to one another, and no further), the power of speech is intended to set forth the expedient and inexpedient, and therefore likewise the just and the unjust. And it is a characteristic of man that he alone has any sense of good and evil, of just and unjust, and the like, and the association of living beings who have this sense makes a family and a state. / Further, the state is by nature clearly prior to the family and to the individual, since the whole is of necessity prior to the part; for example, if the whole body be destroyed, there will be no foot or hand, except homonymously, as we might speak of a stone hand; for when destroyed the hand will be no better than that. But things are defined by their function and power; and we ought not to say that they are the same when they no longer have their proper quality, but only that they are homonymous. The proof that the state is a creation of nature and prior to the individuals is that the individual, when isolated, is not self-sufficing; and therefore he is like a part in relation to the whole." (*Politics* 1,2,1253a7-27.)
- 8) *Id.* 1.1.1252a1f.
- 9) *Id.* 1,2,1253a2.
- 10) Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII P.M. edita*, t.48, *Sententia libri politicorum* (1971).
- 11) Cf. Torrell, J-P., *Saint Thomas Aquinas* (tr. by Robert Royal, 1996).
- 12) Cf. above (7).
- 13) Cf. above (7).