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The Concept of Mankind in the Philosophy of History

Risaku Mutai

Broadly speaking, we can consider human existence under three categories: the individual, the nation and mankind. These three categories correspond to the three concepts in logic: the individual, the particular and the universal.

The former are historical concepts with historical meanings, whereas the latter are logical concepts.

In the trio of the individual, the nation and mankind, the individual and the nation are historical concepts, as they denote, in the last analysis, a historical individual or a historical nation. In the past formulations in the philosophy of history, however, the concept of mankind was still far from acquiring its full historical meaning.

Philosophers like Leibnitz, Voltaire, Herder and Hegel, who are the founders of the modern philosophy of history, equated mankind with the idea of Menschheit, which they considered to be the nature or essence of the individual. They did not regard mankind as something that exists really on earth like an individual or a nation. Several philosophers of history like Dilthey, Windelband and Simmel who figured prominently at the outset of the 20th century, followed the same line of reasoning.

Shortly after World War I, however, Spengler wrote *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, which was followed by the philosophy of anxiety of Heidegger, Berdjajew and Jaspers. The philosophy of anxiety is an aspect of the philosophy of human existence. By this philosophy of human existence, the concept of mankind as a mere idea was gradually undermined, so to speak. As a result, nihilistic tendencies appeared. These are the same tendencies, which were already indicated by Nietzsche in his criticism of

modern civilization towards the end of the 19th century.

Mankind, as an actual and historical being, has been in the process of formation in the past 10 years since the end of World War II. Mankind is being gradually formed through the consciousness of its common destiny. This concept stands for a mankind which is the proponent of a movement for world peace, the exponent of the world public opinion and the carrier of international cultural and scientific advancement.

The emergence of mankind as a community, I believe, has changed the concept of mankind in the philosophy of history. Mankind is no longer a mere idea of Menschheit. It is assuming, I think, a real being on earth and a new role in world history.