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UNIVERSITY RUIN AND THE CONTESTED USEFULNESS OF THE HUMANITIES IN JAPANESE HIGHER EDUCATION

Abstract: At Japanese universities, the standing of the humanities has declined considerably over the last two decades. This decline is reminiscent of Bill Readings' account of American universities as articulated in his *University in Ruins* (1996). In Readings' analysis, American universities are 'ruined' because they have abandoned their intrinsic cultural mission in a shift that greatly undermines the standing of the humanities. His recommendation in the American context of the time is the adoption of a certain rhythm of disciplinary attachment and detachment, such as giving more weight to short-term collaborative projects on the assumption that every collaboration has a certain half-life. The manner in which Japanese universities are dealing with the shift against the humanities is more complex than Readings' recommendation. While the government's policy makers favor short-term usefulness in a sense superficially similar to Readings' recommendation, scholars in the humanities tend to insist that the usefulness of humanities is undeniable but needs to be evaluated on a longer timescale.

Keywords: the humanities; Japan; higher education; usefulness; short-term; long-term.

The Crisis of Liberal Education

In his *University in Ruins*, Bill Readings variously describes an acute crisis in university education as a consequence of either Americanization or globalization, both of which terms he takes to stand for a tendency to suffer "the generalized imposition of the rule of the cash-nexus" (1996, p. 2) at the expense of traditional culture. According to Readings, the U.S. universities of the 1990s that have succumbed to this tendency are willing to forego the "cultural mission" (Ibid., p. 3) that conventional universities duly fulfill as part of their responsibilities. These "post-historical" (Ibid., p. 6) universities no longer participate "in the historical project for humanity," (Ibid., p. 5) because for them the "notion of culture as the legitimating idea of the modern University has reached the end of its usefulness." (Ibid.) This

shift affects the standing of the humanities in particular. In the humanities, Readings (Ibid.) claims, “the delegitimization of culture is most directly perceived as a threat.” Consequently, Readings (Ibid., p. 166) predicted that “the humanities will in twenty years’ time no longer be centered”, in university education, and his signature catchphrase of “university in ruins” largely refers to the imperiled standing of the humanities within higher education. For Readings, this crisis does not mean the end of university education, however, but affords an opportunity for conventional university education to be restored.

Readings’ sense of the humanities in crisis is closely matched among his contemporaries by a sense of the liberal arts in crisis. Warner Norton Grubb, an educational economist, and Marvin Lazerson, a higher education policy expert, lay the blame for this crisis on the rising tendency to put “the emphasis of formal schooling on preparation for vocation” (2004, p. 1) at the expense of the liberal arts. Universities, once the center of academic learning and research, now pursued a hollow “vocationalism” under which they become a mere conduit toward future employment. According to Grubb and Lazerson (2005, p. 9), this tendency in university management is mirrored in the attitude of students who “come in order to get ahead, to get a credential and licensed, and be valuable in the labor market.” (cf. Yamamoto, 2012, p. 17) As universities and students both share this employment-oriented attitude, they both contribute to the weakened standing of the liberal arts in higher education.¹

Irrespective of whether the humanities or the liberal arts are seen as imperiled, these American authors have diverging recommendations on how to resolve or mitigate this crisis of university education. Readings (1996, p. 129) urges acceptance that “the modern University is a ruined institution” and recommends “a certain pragmatism [...] that tries to make dereferentialization the occasion for detournements and radical lateral shifts.” (Ibid., p. 167) He argues “my description of the current situation may seem to have rather dire consequences for the University in general and for the humanities in particular. However, such is by no means the case. [...] my argument is how it will be given meaning as an institutional system.” (Ibid., p. 166)

The answer to the post-historical university is neither “a return to the Humboldtian ideals of modular community and social functioning” nor “technocratic demands that the University embrace its corporate identity and become more productive, more efficient,” (Ibid., p. 125) but the pursuit of “a certain rhythm of disciplinary attachment and detachment” – such as giving more weight to “supporting short-term collaborative projects of both teaching and research” (Ibid., p. 176) on the assumption that every collaboration has a certain half-life. Grubb and Lazerson

¹ Martha Nussbaum agrees (2009, p. 61) with Grubb and Lazerson: universities tend to de-emphasize the arts and humanities, thereby neglecting the cultivation of students’ critical and imaginative faculties “in favor of an education for economic success.”

for their part recommend putting stress on the liberal arts, integrating “vocational purpose with broader civic, intellectual, and moral goals.” (2005, p. 2)

In the two decades since Readings’ analysis, the standing of the humanities at Japanese universities has declined precipitously, largely in accordance with Readings’ prediction that the humanities were going to be marginalised in higher education. In Japan, this crisis came to a head in 2015 with the publication of a directive by the culture ministry which urged that the humanities be abolished or reshaped across much of the higher education sector. Much of the discourse on the humanities in Japanese higher education – especially after the directive of 2015 – has centered on the contested notion of usefulness. While government policy makers attack the humanities for their alleged lack of usefulness, the kind of usefulness advocated in government proposals is predicated entirely on vocational terms. The strongest defense of the humanities in this discourse on their usefulness has been to point out that usefulness on purely vocational terms is a short-term goal benefiting only business and industry, whereas the usefulness of the humanities lies in their long-term benefits that accrue to society at large.

Change of Japanese Universities under American Influence

Throughout the postwar period, Japanese universities have been shaped by U.S. influences. Two historical moments of this period stand out in which the American influence was decisive: the second half of the 1940s and the 1990s. In the immediate aftermath of World War II, the American influence occasioned Japanese universities to heighten the standing of the humanities as a mainstay of culture, while the American influence of the 1990s drove Japanese universities to diminish the standing of the humanities as an impediment to useful studies. Consequently, the present situation of Japanese universities – along a continuous line extending from the 1990s – corresponds to that of American universities, dubbed “ruined institutions” by Readings.

The first decisive American influence on Japanese universities dates to the period following World War II when Japan, having unconditionally surrendered to the Allied Forces, was under the control of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (hereafter SCAP). The SCAP’s mission lay in overseeing Japan’s reconstruction, making sure that the defeated nation broke with its feudal, ultra-nationalistic, militaristic, authoritarian ideals, and laying the groundwork of a liberal democracy. This project required the restructuring of the education system under U.S. guidance, so in 1946 the SCAP brought into the country a group of American educators, named the United States Education Mission to Japan. They were to advise and consult with General Headquarters (hereafter GHQ) of the SCAP and with Japanese educators concerning education in postwar Japan, towards the aim of constructing a democratic and peaceful nation. The Mission determined that Japan’s prewar university curricula had offered students “too little

opportunity for general education, too early and too narrow a specialization, and too great a vocational or professional emphasis.” (*The United States Education Mission to Japan*, 1946, p. 52) Based on this determination, and drawing on a Harvard report on “General Education in a Free Society” (1945), the Mission recommended an emphasis on general education in university education, stating that “a broader humanistic attitude should be cultivated to provide more background for free thought.” (Ibid.) In accordance with this recommendation, the Act on School Education (*gakkokyoikuho*) was passed in 1947. This Act defines the universities’ remit as “the core of scholarly activities” (MEXT 1947) so that universities can cultivate their specialized scholarly activities with a view to developing intellectual, moral, and applied faculties. Furthermore, the Act affirms that universities must broadly disseminate the fruits of these endeavors, so that they can contribute to the enrichment and prosperity of society. These provisions closely reflect the recommendations issued by the United States Education Mission to Japan, and the legitimation of culture – in line with the Humboldtian model – as well, heightened the standing of the humanities. The standards for establishing universities adopted in 1956 require that the first half of the undergraduate curriculum (four years) be made up by the courses in general education, including the humanities.

In stark contrast to these developments, the second decisive American influence on Japanese universities at the turn to the 21st century caused Japanese universities to diminish the humanities. The idea of fostering a broader humanistic attitude in the light of culture, including the humanities, has since been replaced by a narrow focus on developing the skills in demand by business and industry.

This radical change in the fortunes of general education, including the humanities, first manifested itself in 1991 with the deregulation of the standards that govern the establishment of universities. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (*monbukagakusho*, hereafter MEXT) decided to rescind the provision that universities must offer courses in general education. As a consequence, numerous universities began to abandon such courses, emphasizing instead a focus on training in marketable skills.²

A further change was subsequently brought about by the reform of national universities. As part of the national government, national universities were directly run by the government until March 2004, and were transformed into national university corporations (*kokuritsu-daigaku-hojin*) in April 2004. Every national university corporation has since operated as a self-governing corporation with

2 MEXT and the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (*keizaisangyosho*, hereafter METI) were in agreement on pursuing economic development through partnerships between industry and universities, citing globalization and market forces as the overriding rationale.

legal personhood, allegedly becoming more independent and more autonomous with respect to enhancing its education and research activities.³

In the same year as establishing national university corporations, MEXT also implemented the approval assessment system,⁴ which every university must periodically undergo. Through the approval assessment system, MEXT aims to assure the quality of university education and research, along with the associated administration and management. Under this system, the government's control over universities has markedly increased, restricting their alleged independence and autonomy. In addition, all national university corporations are obliged to submit their medium-term objectives and plans to MEXT every six years, which are then evaluated for re-budgeting. Consequently, the government effectively controls the national university corporations – contrary to the alleged ideal – as the allocation of subsidies is contingent on the evaluation of a university's medium-term objectives and plans. The rigid control of the government over universities is nearly absolute today.

Moreover, MEXT defines its evaluation criteria at will, allowing the government to intervene arbitrarily in the preparation of every national university corporation's medium-term objectives and plans. For example, the Central Council of Education (*chuo-kyoiku-shingikai*, hereafter CCE), an advisory committee to MEXT, prescribed the minimum requirements for a student to be awarded a bachelor's degree in 2008. CCE's report on "Building Undergraduate Education" defined "the ability required for university graduates" (*gakushiryoku*) as follows: (1) skills employable in society as well as at place of work; (2) self-controlled and cooperative attitude; (3) creative and integral ability to think on the basis of specialist knowledge and insight. (CCE 2008) Every student must obtain this ability in undergraduate education.

In 2012 CCE issued a report titled "Towards a Qualitative Transformation of University Education for Building a New Future – Universities Fostering Lifelong Learning and the Ability to Think Independently and Proactively." According to this report, universities should adopt undergraduate curricula designed to cultivate mental autonomy so that graduates can create a vision for the future of society in unpredictable times. In addition to mastery of the respective subject area, the required capabilities are cognitive; ethical and social; as well as creative and conceptual.

Where do Japanese universities stand today? The country currently has 782 universities (including 86 national university corporations), which are attended by some three million students. (MEXT 2018a) Due to the dwindling birth rate, the total

3 Recently, MEXT announced the launch of the new phase of national university corporation system: more than one national university corporation can compose together a national university corporation so that they can reduce expenses.

4 Several institutions for the approval assessment system were established, such as Japan University Accreditation Agency (*daigaku kijun kyokai*).

population of 18-year-olds almost halved from roughly 2 million to roughly 1 million between 1990 and 2018,⁵ while the number of universities increased from 507 to 782 in the same period. The decreasing university-age population and the increasing number of universities now causes recruitment shortfalls across the country, even as the university entrance rate exceeds 50 per cent of the population.⁶ In addition, universities face difficulties meeting the needs of the labor market and keeping pace with hard-to-predict developments in business and industry. If universities lose their perceived relevance in society, they lose students in the immediate future. All in all, many Japanese universities are now engaged in a struggle for their very survival. (MEXT 2018a)

To sum up, the American influence on Japanese universities since the 1990s greatly diminished the standing of the humanities, which Readings regards as a result of the globalization, and as a sign of universities as ruined institutions at the same time.

Controversy Over the Standing of the Humanities in Universities (2015)

In June 2015, shortly before the submission of the objectives and plans for the third medium-term (2016-2022) was due, MEXT issued a directive titled “A Review of the Organization and Operation of the National University Corporations and Other Higher Educational Institutions.” The directive instructs 86 national university corporations to review their courses in the humanities and social sciences – as well as those in teacher training – at both the undergraduate and the graduate level. According to the directive, national university corporations can better serve society’s needs, especially the demand for human resources, if they discontinue or redesign their courses in the humanities and social sciences. The directive achieved international notoriety for its putative intention to abolish or convert the courses in the humanities and social sciences at national university corporations. (Dean 2015)

In the context of university reform, the government obviously uses the term “society” as a synonym for the interests of business and industry (Yamaguchi 2017, p. 25). In accordance with the government view of “society’s” needs, national university corporations are to contribute to economic growth as directly as possible, by means of technological innovation and industrial promotion.

In response to the MEXT directive, the Science Council of Japan (*nihon gakujutsu-kaigi*, hereafter SCJ), a representative organization of Japanese scholars

5 The university-age population, defined as the overall number of 18-year-olds, decreased from 2,010,000 to 1,170,000 between 1990 and 2018. (MEXT 2018a)

6 In 2018, 57.9 per cent of 18-year-old people entered a university or junior college (53.3 per cent entered a university), the highest percentage in Japanese history, while 22.7 per cent of 18-year-old people entered a professional training college, which is also the highest percentage in Japanese history. (MEXT 2018c)

and scientists in all academic fields, published a statement in July 2015 which framed the subsequent discourse in terms of the humanities' alleged lack of usefulness. Titled "On the Future Direction of the University: In Relation to the Departments / Graduate Schools of Teacher Training and Humanities and Social Sciences" the SCJ's (2015, p. 6) statement declares that academics in the humanities and social sciences deserve their dismissive treatment, because they have failed to make a persuasive argument for the contribution their disciplines make to society. However, the same document also mounts a weak defense of the humanities and social sciences for the role they might possibly play: "the university needs to articulate knowledge that is based on a long-term perspective, bolster diversity, and nurture the foundation on which creativity can flourish." (Ibid., p. 2)

In September 2015, MEXT issued a rejoinder to the SCJ statement, claiming that its directive had been misread. According to this follow-up notice, courses in the humanities and social sciences were only to be discontinued in teacher training universities and in faculties with an emphasis on teacher training. Furthermore, the notice specifically denies that MEXT (2015c, p. 2) intended to close humanities and social sciences faculties and graduate schools, or to transform them into science institutions as being of more value to society. The release also denies that MEXT placed exclusive faith in short-term utility, or believed that the humanities and social sciences were irrelevant. It also denies MEXT believed that academic disciplines related to the humanities and social sciences were superfluous to national universities. Seeking to dispel the alleged misunderstanding, MEXT explained that it valued the role of the humanities and social sciences, yet found that compared with other academic fields, their useful contributions to society were much fewer. MEXT ended the communication with the appeal that every discipline should make "proactive proposals" in accordance with social needs.

Regardless of MEXT's assertion that its directive had been misunderstood, 26 national university corporations chose to submit their reform plans to abolish or reduce courses in the humanities in the following months, allegedly to increase the social relevance of their offerings (Maillard 2015). Numerous universities also tried to retain their humanities courses by modifying them, by establishing new courses, or by embedding humanities subjects in science-oriented and / or technology-oriented courses.

Offense and Defense after the Controversy over the Usefulness of the Humanities

The controversy of 2015 over the usefulness of the humanities has had a lasting effect on university reform, irrespective of whether MEXT diminished the standing of the humanities or not. Two conflicting phenomena have emerged since this controversy: a MEXT policy favoring increased reliance on practitioner-teachers in universities, and an ever more voluminous critique of the practice-oriented trend

as voiced especially by humanities scholars. While the former is an offensive bid to diminish the standing of the humanities in pursuit of short-term usefulness, the latter amounts to a defensive attempt at strengthening the standing of the humanities in pursuit of long-term gains.

The reliance on practitioner-teachers is a rapidly increasing trend in Japan's higher education today.⁷ One example of this trend are the new institutions focusing on practical professional education (including vocational training) within the university system, whose launch is scheduled for April 2019.⁸ The criteria for such new establishments emphasize – in a marked departure from those of conventional universities – practical vocational education and close cooperation with industry.

There is also a plan to introduce a new type of university as recommended by the Education Rebuilding Implementation Council (*kyoiku-saisei-jikko-kaigi*, hereafter ERIC), an advisory committee to the Abe Cabinet. In July 2014 ERIC (p. 5) published its fifth recommendation, titled “School System for the Future”, which favors introducing institutions of higher education with a focus on practical vocational education. In May 2016 CCE recommended such a new type of four-year university for career and technical education. The new institutions are to produce

7 In Japanese universities practitioner-teachers were first hired in professional graduate schools (*senmonshoku-daigakuin*), which are modeled on American professional schools. (Iwata, 2015, p. 85) Such hires were approved in a revision of Japan's university establishment standards in 1999, and implemented in 2003. Professional graduate schools offer professional degrees designed to train professionals who will assume leadership roles in various fields. For example, graduate schools of education (*kyoshoku-daigakuin*) were established in 2008, and as of April 2018 there were 54 institutions in operation. At the graduate level, the conventional master's courses offered by teacher training universities and faculties are used to educate professional educators as well as academics specializing in educational sciences. The nation-wide introduction of the new type of graduate schools focused on training school leaders with excellent practical ability has required a complete reorganization of the graduate schools, abandoning other functions of the conventional master's course. The new type of graduate school requires a particular personnel structure, which is quite different from that of the conventional master's course: In professional schools for teacher education, more than forty per cent of the teaching staff must be practical teaching staff with practical experience in the educational field of about twenty years.

8 Among the applicants for building this new type of institution to be established in April 2019 were 16 professional training colleges, 13 institutions for building professional and vocational universities, and 3 institutions for building professional and vocational junior colleges. Most of them are institutions specialized in the health-care industry, but there are also institutions specialized in industries such as information technology, fashion, and design. In October 2018, MEXT approved only the plan of an institution specialized in the health-care industry for building a professional and vocational university, then in November 2018 the revised plans of two other institutions. One of these two other institutions is an institution specialized in veterinary health-care and submitted a plan for building a professional and vocational junior college. The other institution is specialized in the fashion industry and submitted a plan for building a professional and vocational university. Consequently, three institutions are set up to run professional and vocational universities / junior colleges starting in April 2019.

specialists in industries such as health-care, information technology, social service, and tourism.

The need for more vocational institutions in higher education was explained by Hirokazu Matsuno, then Minister of MEXT, in April 2017 (p. 2), as a necessary response to the heightened rate of change and unpredictability in business and industry. To respond to this challenge, higher education required a new framework which combines the strength of conventional universities (*daigaku*) and junior colleges (*tanki-daigaku*) with the strength of conventional professional training colleges (*senmon-gakko*).

In accordance with Matsuno's view, the Act on School Education was amended in May 2017. Professional and vocational universities (*senmonshoku-daigaku*) with four-year courses and professional and vocational junior colleges (*senmonshoku-tanki-daigaku*) with two-year courses newly join the ranks of higher education institutions, which previously included only universities, junior colleges and colleges of technology. While the conventional institutions will continue to conduct teaching and research in specialized academic disciplines and disseminate advanced knowledge, the newly created institutions are intended to deepen the cooperation with industry, such as the integration of long-term in-company training into the curriculum (Shiobara 2018).

Professional and vocational universities / junior colleges are to offer educational courses to foster practical skills and creativity. They should develop, organize and provide educational courses in coordination with industry: roughly one third of the credits should be earned in practical work outside professional and vocational universities / junior colleges. Professional and vocational universities confer a bachelor's degree on students completing a four-year course, while professional and vocational junior colleges can confer an associate degree on students completing a two-year course. It is assumed most applications for building professional and vocational universities / junior colleges will be tendered by professional training colleges, but the system also allows conventional universities to establish professional and vocational departments within them.

It is notable that professional and vocational universities / junior colleges must secure the appointment of business practitioners as teachers: over 40 per cent of the required number of full-time teachers must be practitioner-teachers with experience handling practical business affairs over five years, and more than half of the required practitioner-teachers should also have research credentials.

The trend for practitioner-teachers in Japanese universities goes further than that. In April 2020, Japan begins to waive the tuition fees of university students from low-income groups. The intention of this measure is to help people from low-income groups achieve greater social mobility as a result of a university education. There are two requirements for such support: eligible students must come from tax-exempt households, and eligible universities must balance academic research with practical education. MEXT stipulates that practitioner-teachers should grant more

than 10 per cent of the credits required towards a bachelor's degree at a university qualified for this support, so this scheme effectively amounts to a policy extending the reliance on practitioner-teachers.

All in all, the reliance on practitioner-teachers is linked to the pursuit of short-term usefulness, and furthers the tendency of diminishing the standing of the humanities. Remarkably, in a certain sense, the respect toward short-term usefulness corresponds to Readings' promotion of the short-term collaborative projects on the assumption that every collaboration has a certain half-life.

Countering this trend, humanities scholars have been foregrounding the humanities' indispensable contribution to the culture that sustains a society, emphasizing their unique, sustained, long-term benefits. Hiroyuki Yamaguchi (2017, p. 221), a philosopher, argues that the broad, general skills to be developed in university education differ from the narrowly conceived practical skills demanded by business and industry; they consist in cultivating the ability to uncover the historical and intellectual context of various issues, to interrogate the assumptions brought to bear on them, to evolve efficient (rational) methods of their resolution, and to reach an understanding with others regarding such resolution. Accordingly, the humanities, philosophy in particular, are preeminently positioned to take the lead in nurturing these abilities.

According to Naozumi Mitani (2018, p. 140), also a philosopher, the indispensable and eminently useful service provided to society by universities is above anything else the cultivation of critical thinking. In the provision of this service, the humanities, especially philosophy, must take the lead. Mitani conducts a careful examination of "usefulness" as the key term governing the discourse on university reform, such as the assertion that universities must transform themselves according to social requirements and social usefulness. Philosophy cultivates the skills to think within the established goal-oriented framework of business and industry, but it also cultivates the skills to think critically outside of this established framework. The skill of thinking inside the established framework serves a specific goal-oriented purposes, and is useful as a short-term expedient. However, Mitani critiques the tendency to identify usefulness as a short-term goal with the usefulness provided by university education, because he regards the exclusion of any viewpoint outside the established framework as questionable. According to Mitani (*Ibid.*, p. 191), the unique usefulness possessed by the humanities, philosophy in particular, consists in cultivating the ability to think outside the established framework. As philosophy is advanced thinking that must remain open-ended and general-purpose, it cultivates the skills required to deal flexibly with unknown viewpoints, cultivating sensitivity and tolerance for heterogeneous viewpoints. In doing so, philosophy performs an indispensable service to society: it liberates its members from the tyranny of the single authoritative viewpoint. Any university reform which diminishes the humanities must therefore be resisted as a reprehensible attempt to curtail the vital practice of critical thinking. (*Ibid.*, p. 195)

Mitani's stance appears close to Readings' recommendation that we should "treat the University as we treat [one of a lot of: TI] institutions" because "we live in an institution, and we live outside it [at the same time: TI]." (1996, p. 171) Crossing the border of the established framework, which is the crucial strength of the humanities, can contribute to the enrichment and, indeed, continued vitality of a society, however, it can do so only in the long run. Humanities scholars therefore emphasize the long-term usefulness, which seemingly conflicts with Readings' recommendation to encourage short-term collaborative projects.

Unique Usefulness: The Humanities' Potential Resilience in the Posthistorical University?

With or without the metaphor of university ruin, and with or without the expectation that the humanities might be dropped from university curricula (the latter has been prevalent since 2015), Japanese universities steadily proceed along the path of collaboration with business and industry, adjusting to an economy ever more extensively based on knowledge and technology. The exercise of critical judgment as the specificity of universities and of the humanities must continue to sustain society, not merely by maintaining and enriching the status quo but also by resisting and overcoming the status quo.

As a telling symptom of university ruin, and of the imperiled standing of the humanities, Readings points to the loss of culture, whose former place as the legitimizing idea of the modern university has been usurped by "excellence", (Ibid., p. 21) the vacuous replacement for culture under the unfettered sway of the market. (Ibid., p. 38)⁹ As if to illustrate the point, in 2002, MEXT began to sponsor "the 21st Century Centers of Excellence Program," and then the "Global Centers of Excellence Program" in 2007. Due to the gradual reduction of government subsidies in the form of operating funds, every university now has to make the effort to secure such competitive funds combined with vocationally oriented programs.

Grubb and Lazerson (2005, p. 10) indicate that the intellectual and moral traditions associated with liberal education are all but dead today, having survived only in private elite colleges, as these institutions have "the luxury of avoiding explicitly vocationalized undergraduate curriculums." This is to say that other institutions – such as community colleges and state colleges – are now running entirely on vocational curricula.¹⁰ In 2016 MEXT introduced a classification of the national university corporations which is modeled after the American system. (Yamaguchi,

9 Readings states with palpable dismay that "the University of Excellence serves nothing other than itself, another corporation in a world of transnationally exchanged capital." (Ibid., p. 43)

10 Grubb and Lazerson (2005, p. 80) recommend that bridges be built between civic purposes and occupational goals, also between academic education and vocational education. They studied undergraduate curricula, strengthening "both occupational preparation and liberal learning,

2017, p. 22) Each of the 86 national university corporations is now classified in one of three categories: 16 corporations as research universities competing globally, 15 corporations as universities devoted to unique research or teaching programs, and 55 corporations as universities contributing to the local economy. Their national funding is decided based on standards relevant to each category according to these measures since 2016. (MEXT 2015a, p. 10) Universities, whose assessment is directly linked to budgeting, bear a close resemblance to universities, which Readings once called cash-nexus universities.

In their approach to the imperiled humanities, are Japanese universities following the recommendations made by either Readings or Grubb and Lazerson, or are they opting for a different route? As the standing of the humanities at Japanese universities declines ever further in accordance with Readings' prediction, the response to this decline is more complex than Readings' recommendation. While the government policy makers favor short-term usefulness in a way that is superficially similar to Readings' recommendation, scholars in the humanities tend to resist compromise and defend the conventional humanities project in terms of their long-term usefulness.

Consequently, humanities scholars in Japan have not followed Readings' (1996, p. 122) recommendation that "we should seek to turn the dereferentialization," which encourages short-term collaborative projects. There are, however, humanities scholars in Japan who attempt to follow Grubb and Lazerson's recommendation, integrating "vocational purpose with broader civic, intellectual, and moral goals."¹¹

Recently, a group of sociologists conducted a survey on whether the humanities in university education were considered useful in the labor market and the workplace. Yuki Honda, the initiator of this project, believes that the survey offers a basis on which we can determine what position the humanities should take relative to the demands of business and industry, while at the same time reflecting the humanities' professional and vocational relevance in universities. The project was started as a response to the criticism leveled by the Science Council of Japan in 2015 that scholars in the humanities and social science had failed to make the case for

particularly by developing programs that integrate academic and professional content and that connect classrooms to the workplace in mutually beneficial ways." (Ibid., p. 82).

11 Not everyone agrees. In 2006, MEXT began to pay a subsidy to universities which adopt programs named "Good Practice" in order to expand career support and career education. Due to a new provision in the revised university establishment standard (2010), all universities are required to provide career guidance. The pedagogy professor Koichiro Komikawa (2018, p. 60) takes exception to this and calls out today's universities as gravediggers of their principles. According to Komikawa, universities today devote their whole energies to socializing their students in the way expected by business and industry so that the graduates will be able to adapt themselves to business and industry. Having transformed themselves into mere agents for business and industry, universities have also betrayed the "core of scholarly activities" to which the Act on School Education commits them. (Ibid., p. 61)

their usefulness to society, (Honda 2018, p. 5) yet it also meant to address the worries that the allegedly useless humanities in university education would be transfigured beyond recognition when coerced to pursue narrowly vocational goals. This project indicates the possibility to bridge the gap between the academic and the vocational in an adequate way, drawing our attention to compatibility and incompatibility of usefulness in the humanities and the usefulness in the employability.

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UNIwersytet w Ruinie a Zakwestionowana Przydatność Nauk Humanistycznych w Japońskim Szkolnictwie Wyższym

Streszczenie: W japońskich uniwersytetach pozycja nauk humanistycznych znacznie spadła w ciągu ostatnich dwóch dekad. Ten spadek przypomina rachunek wystawiony przez Billa Readingsa amerykańskim uniwersytetom, jak to zostało wyartykułowane w jego monografii *University in Ruins* (1996). Według analiz Readingsa amerykańskie uniwersytety są „zrujnowane”, ponieważ wskutek wprowadzonych w nich zmian wewnętrznych porzuciły one swoją misję kulturową, przez co znacznie podważono w nich pozycję nauk humanistycznych. W ówczesnej sytuacji Readings zalecał amerykańskim szkołom wyższym, żeby przyjęły pewien rytm dyscyplinarnego przywiązania i braku przywiązania, innymi słowy, żeby przykładają większą wagę do krótkoterminowych projektów przy założeniu, że każda współpraca trwa tylko pewien okres. Sposób, w jaki japońskie uniwersytety radzą sobie z podobnym przesunięciem w zakresie nauk humanistycznych, jest nieco bardziej złożony. Podczas gdy decydenci rządowi opowiadają się za krótkoterminową użytecznością w sensie tylko z pozoru zbliżonym do rekomendacji Readingsa, uczeni twierdzą, że użyteczność nauk humanistycznych jest niezaprzeczalna, ale należy ją oceniać w dłuższej perspektywie czasowej.

Słowa kluczowe: nauki humanistyczne; Japonia; wyższa edukacja; przydatność; krótkoterminowy; długoterminowy.

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