Professor Masuzawa suggests that the study of religion should conduct its own research with an alternative manner of critique, one that is quite different from the conventional ways of undertaking the study of religion. As an example, she demonstrates her work of investigation of a discursive history and its comparative and classificatory logic of the word ‘world religion’. She calls it a work of theory that does not concern itself with methodology. Such a non-methodological critique, in her view, is not a deprivation of the integrity of conventional approaches but it may imply new tasks, and urge new alliances and inventions. Her explanation of this suggestion is that the ‘world religions’ have not only shaped the study of religion and infiltrated ordinary languages, but also included an aspect of the formation of modern European identity. It has done so not merely as a descriptive concept but also as a particular ethos, a pluralist ideology, logic of classification, and a form of knowledge.

While it is outside my ambition—to examine the emergence of ‘world religions’ in modern European thought—to comment on her project, I generally agree with her analytical critique on the issue of ‘theory and method.’ However, reading her article I realised that I have sympathy with the concerns and issues she raises from quite a different locus. Describing the fact that in Western intellectual history a new concept of religion has emerged in Christian Europe, as a consequence of the decline of monotheism and its rejection of plurality, Professor Masuzawa makes the point that in the commotion the rest of the world has also been reshuffled and recast to the extent of a new ‘map’ having been drawn. In this context, my finding is that I belong to the reshuffled ‘rest.’

My response as such is not a comment on Professor Masuzawa’s presentation. My aim is rather to demonstrate my own concerns in sympathy with hers. So, it is a practical and personal wish to be in her
'new alliance', even if I belong with different 'language' to the 'rest' of the world.

*World Religions and Folk Belief*

Let me draw attention to the word 'religion' (*jongkyo*) which we use nowadays in Korea. As vocabulary, the term 'religion' is quite generally used not only in Korea but also in China and Japan. Yet 'religion' is not a word that 'belongs' to our culture and tradition. It was instead an alien term that was imported by Japan from the Western countries in the late nineteenth century. In the Korean language we had no word that corresponded to the term 'religion'. However, we had no other way to accommodate it except by translating it as 'religion'. This was certainly in part the consequence of Japan's and the Western countries' pressure through armed power that forced us to open the door toward Western culture and 'modernity'. Therefore, the term religion existed as an enforced and indeed a never 'experienced' word until Korea became engaged in the process of modernisation in the late nineteenth century.¹

Even though it has become domesticated in Korea through such a historical process, the translated word 'religion' soon entered everyday usage as an ordinary word. It became a useful conceptual term in building the apparatus of a modern epistemology in our academism. But the concept of religion never succeeded in incorporating our experience fully, and it has been utilised as an inappropriate measure and criterion in the description and understanding of our traditional belief culture. It is unavoidable, therefore, to reach the point where the empirical reality of traditional religious experience and its expression is distorted, devalued, and confused by such a newly enforced word as 'religion'. But we have to use the word to describe our religious experience, because the term has so effectively usurped upon our ordinary language in our daily life.²