

# The Japanese Concept of Spirituality

Nozomu Sonda

The word “spirituality” is relatively spontaneously and freely used in English conversation and writing. Its Japanese counterpart *seishinsei* (精神性) or *reisei* (靈性), on the other hand, is not as much used; if used at all, it is not well understood or accepted by its audience. Thus, the author decided to investigate the origin of the Japanese concept of spirituality. There are a number of meanings for the English words “spirit” (and “spirituality”). The Japanese equivalent are *seishin* (精神), *tamashii* (魂), *rei* (靈), *kokoro* (心), *seishinsei* (精神性), and *reisei* (靈性). When the original meaning of these Chinese characters were examined, we found that they are not necessarily the same as the concepts we use today but were rather more broadly defined. Further meanings and definitions given by religious and philosophical thoughts were examined, and concepts of spirit based on the newest scientific theories were discussed. While there are many common aspects between the Japanese concept of spirit and that of the Baha’i teachings, the conclusive differences are that (1) the monotheistic and agnostic concepts of God and (2) the concept of progressive revelation through the Manifestations of God are lacking in the Japanese thought. In terms of the “best” Japanese term for “spirituality,” we suggest that *seishinsei* or *reisei* is adequate for the time being. The most important thing is that users have proper understanding of the concept; then, the appropriate term will follow naturally.