On Bilateralism

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1   Japan: Pre-modern or Post-modern?

At present there is a certain economic and political tension between Japan and the rest of the world, in particular the United States and Europe. The West's criticisms of Japan is that Japanese society, or Japanese capitalism, is a unique, closed system, and that it encompasses systems in which there are no individuals or subjects. An 'individual' does not necessarily only mean individual persons, but can also point to individual corporations. For example, Japanese companies hold one another's stock, so that a Japanese company can easily take over an American one, but an American company cannot do the same to a Japanese one. Rather than having a centre, a hub of power, Japanese companies support each other in complex ways like this to constitute a system. This is different from a monopoly, and is also different from what is known as collectivism. And this can also be seen to be true on the individual level.

The Enigma of Japanese Power by Karel van Wolferen, a Dutch journalist who has lived in Japan for nearly twenty years, is a major criticism of this state of affairs. This is a very well-researched book which examines bureaucracy and industry, and it basically concludes that Japanese society is not Western, or modern. Meaning, in other words, that Japan is pre-modern.

On the other hand, there are some who take the view that the Japanese system is not a deviation from true capitalism, and might even be its ultimate form. And, moving away from its economy, there are many who praise Japanese society very highly. For instance, Japan is a favourite of science fiction writers: the film *Blade Runner* is set in Japan, and the Canadian writer William Gibson has also taken it as a setting for his work. Or rather, these people see Japan itself as sci-fi, and Japanese people as resembling humans of the future. They see us almost as cyborgs. In their eyes, Japan and the Japanese provide the most fitting model for the people and society of the future.

So, one way of understanding Japan is to look to it as a country or a people already embodying the world of the future, while another is to criticise it as being pre-modern because it is a system that lacks subjects. In other words, one side credits it with being post-modern, while the other criticises it for being pre-modern. Actually, these are not separate things. The post-modern and the pre-modern in Japan are two sides of the same coin. And so, indeed, are these praises and criticisms of the country, since they both recognise that it lacks something which the West sees as modern, and praise or criticise that lack. In some respects, these attitudes could interchange at any time: they are never unambiguous.

Over such outside assessments, however, I think that what is really important is to consider for ourselves the conditions with which we are faced. I previously discussed this matter in the essay "Postmodernism and Criticism" (*Hihyō to posto-modan*, 1984). Today, I would like to make a few points as a preface to taking these ideas further.

2 Modern Subjectivity in Japan

When we think of how modernity or the modern subject emerged in Japan, we tend to concentrate on Western thought or Christianity. Christianity undoubtedly

formed the basis of modern thought and modern literature in Japan. But we must also consider the foundation on which it was established.

For example, Japanese Christianity in the Meiji period was different from the Christianity that spread among the Japanese on a mass scale during the sixteenth century. Needless to say, it was Protestantism. The same word, "Christianity", can refer to different ideas, and this can be said of Confucianism, or Buddhism as well. Since the Kamakura Period, there have generally been three sects of Buddhism - *Jōdo*, *Zen*, and *Nichiren* - and their followers were of different classes and levels of society. And Confucianism, being basically a discipline of the upper and ruling classes, would have been foreign to the subject classes. Therefore it is nearly meaningless to refer to "Buddhism" or "Confucianism" without looking each time at their historical context, their significance to different classes and levels or society.

Speaking of Meiji Christianity, there was a man named Uchimura Kanzō, who wrote the books *How I Became a Christian* and *Representative Men of Japan*, in English. In these, he makes a link between being a Christian, and being a *samurai*. He also says that for him, Christianity was like a branch that grew from the "trunk" of Wang Yang Ming's Neo-Confucianism (*Yōmeigaku*). In this case, it would be completely unproductive to discuss *samurai* ethics (*bushidō*) or Wang's Neo-Confucianism in their general sense. First of all, there is a real incompatibility between these two philosophies. Groups of samurai were built on the relationship between master and servant: This was a relationship between individuals. These groups emerged with the collapse of the familial society, and were founded on relationships of loyalty not due to clan or blood ties. Because a samurai's morality was vested in a relationship between two individuals, it was unrelated to the hierarchical top or centre of power, and thus his only allegiance was to his immediate master.

To give a familiar example, the *yakuza* operate a similar system. In the Yamaguchi-gumi, for instance, although I don't know how they do it now, the former boss Taoka Kazuo had no immediate underlings or troops. What he had was several sub-bosses, who were personally loyal to him, each with their own sub-bosses. The lowest ranks owe their loyalty to their immediate bosses, but not to any of the higher-ups. And unlike the American mafia, the organisation has no need for blood relationships, being practically multi-national. Samurai society was similar, in that one's only master was one's immediate lord. This can be seen, for example, in Mori Ōgai's "The Abe Family" (*Abe Ichizoku*), in which a samurai follows his lord in revolt against the feudal domain. This is the nature of

feudalism, and for this reason it is continuously fraught with elements of instability.

The Tokugawa Shogunate tried to create a centralised government in order to avoid this instability. Confucianism was an important part of this strategy: They tried to define the samurai with a Chinese-style moral code. However, this was to make the samurai into bureaucrats, which obviously was not in accordance with their original, warrior existence. A samurai could not be satisfied with the abstract notion of loyalty to a distant nation-state or sovereign. The ideas of *bushidō* arose as a backlash against this use of Confucianism.

It is often said that Confucianism died out in the Meiji era, but in some ways, Confucian ideas gained strength during this time. Many samurai chose the nation-state, or the constitutional monarch (the Emperor), as their new "master". However, this was simply for form's sake, and already un-samurai-like, because there was no personal relationship. On the other hand, there were those who tried to form a master-servant relationship in the old way, the quintessential example being General Nogi. General Nogi committed "suicide through fidelity" (*junshi*) upon the death of the Emperor Meiji, but this was actually an odd thing to do, for one normally does not commit suicide for the Emperor. Court nobles, for instance, do not do so. However, Nogi had identified the Emperor with the feudal "lord".

Now, it is worth noting that many Meiji Christians, including Uchimura Kanzō, were samurai of the old Shogunate or the Tokugawa troops, a class that was marginalised in the new Meiji system. They were unable to seek a substitute for the erstwhile master-servant relationship in the oligarchy-supported Meiji state or Emperor. So, in a way, they looked for a new lord in the Christian God. In English, the word 'subject' also means to be subservient, or subordinate, as in: "I am subject to [my] Lord." That is, one achieves subjectivity by being subservient to a master. A 'subject' may seem to have an independent self, but in truth it is a self that arises only through subservience to something else. There is a certain dialectic hidden here. In the West, Christian subjectivity was bolstered by the Reformation, and then later, once its origins had been forgotten, gave rise to the idea of an independent, autonomous subject. It is still clear, however, that subjectivity emerged as a condition of being subservient to God.

Psychoanalysts like Lacan attempt to explicate the formation of the subject without recourse to such history. However, in doing this, Lacan brazenly makes use of the dialectic of the master and the slave, which Hegel uses to explain

Christianity, and thus the formation of the subject cannot be separated from Western history. Of course, this does not mean that psychoanalysis does not work in Japan, which has a different history. But, as I will explain later, psychoanalysis demands to uncover a 'history' that is neither merely an individual's personal history, nor that of historians.

In Uchimura's case, he made himself subject to God. What is more, like a samurai, he gave his personal fealty. This meant that he was not subject to any power except God's. He was not subject to the Japanese state, nor to the Emperor, the reason being that he was directly subject to a greater lord. And so Uchimura was forced out of his teaching post at the First High School (*Dai Ichi Kōtō Gakkō*, or *Ichikō*) for irreverence, at failing to salute a box containing the Imperial Rescript on Education. And in his journalistic career, he left the *Yorozu Chōhō* newspaper together with the Anarchist Kōtoku Shūsui because of his opposition to the Russo-Japanese War.

Meanwhile, many other Christians became Humanists or Socialists. Instead of seeking that master-servant relationship, they began to see themselves as autonomous subjects. At this stage their consciousness could be considered modern. But they lacked the independence of Uchimura, who soon grew isolated. The so-called Taishō Humanists thought of themselves as subjects, but in fact, they lacked the intense subjectivity of Uchimura. There are very few people who have his sort of subjectivity, which is a direct subservience to God.

What we can now say is that it was actually the feudal classes that sustained the modern subjectivity of the Meiji period. By "the feudal classes", I do not only mean the samurai. For instance, at the time of the Russo-Japanese War, the poet Yosano Akiko wrote the poem "Thou Shalt Not Die" (*Kimi shinitamō koto nakare*) for her brother. This is not anti-war in the modern, humanist sense. In the poem she says: We, of Osaka's merchant families, do not learn to die in battle, it is not in our nature; therefore, brother, you must not die in this war. Rather, this is resistance against the modern state, arising from a feudal class identity. This is another kind of subjectivity that is made possible by such an identity, although it differs from Uchimura's. The men and women that Ōgai depicted in his historical stories had this same subjectivity. Nakano Shigeharu also wrote about this. (See "Self, Class, Status" (*Jiko, kaikyū, mibun*)).

However, such examples are obviously exceptional, and few. My point was that we must not look at ideas such as Confucianism or *bushidō* in isolation from the classes of people who held them, and their modes of transmission. It was only

since the Meiji period that such ideas came to be thought of as an example for all people. In fact, from the Meiji period onward, there was a Confucianisation of the national populace. The fifth year of Meiji (1872) saw the promulgation of laws for both conscription and compulsory education. Conscription meant taking people from classes that had previously never contemplated dying in war, to serve as soldiers. Peasants and merchants of the Edo period did not learn that they must die for the state. In that case, they had to be transformed: Schools and the army were educational institutions to this end. There was a need to form a new body of "citizens". Confucian ideology was disseminated throughout the public for this purpose.

Of course, this Meiji Confucianism differed from the Confucianism of the Edo period, which in turn differed completely from Confucianism in China. And that, too, changed from Confucius' original, de-centralising philosophy which was repressed by the first Qin Emperor, to the national ideology of the centralised state. Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucianism (*Shushigaku*) was the ideology of the class of scholar-bureaucrats comprised by the Chinese imperial examinations, and was merely formulaic for samurai in Japan, who did not have the same learning. Also, in China and Korea, Confucianism persevered as an ideology that was rooted in and reinforced strict exogamy, and in that respect, Confucianism reached Japan in name only. Excepting a minority in the *samurai* or village headman (*shōya*) classes, the Japanese had nothing to do with Confucianism. So we can see that, on a popular level, Confucianism became more widespread during the Meiji period than ever before.

For example, a true patriarchal system (*kafuchōsei*) was only properly established in Japan with the Civil Code of Meiji 31 (1898). The major theme of Naturalist literature was the struggle against the patriarchal stem family (*ie*). But it was not only the struggle with the family that was modern, but the also the strengthening of the patriarchal system itself, which took place alongside the rise of modern capitalism. It was commonly believed that it existed in the Meiji period and before, and many people still think that now. This is because they neglect to take note of class differences. The Naturalist writers did comprise many from the headman class. They naturally had some Confucian learning, and the farming villages they saw were indeed undergoing a transformation by the forces of industrial capitalism. But not just literature, but written records in general tend to be from the samurai, merchant, or upper peasant classes, and official documents are written in the legal mode, so as long as you rely on these sources, it is impossible to see how things really were. This is why anthropologists since Yanagita Kunio have sought history without recourse to documents. Many

insights have resulted from their work, but there remains little documentary evidence convincing enough to move historians.

That said, there happens to be one source, written by a foreigner: a short treatise called "European Culture and Japanese Culture" (*Yōroppa Bunka to Nihon Bunka*, published by Iwanami Bunko), by the missionary Luís Fróis. Fróis arrived in Japan with Francisco Xavier, and is famous for his *History of Japan*. In "European Culture and Japanese Culture", he compares Japan with Europe and lists points of difference. I believe it was written shortly before the Tokugawa period, around 1580. Here are a few excerpts:

> In Europe, the supreme honour and treasure of young women is their chastity and the preservation of their purity; in Japan, women never worry about their virginity. Without it, they lose neither their honour nor the opportunity to wed.

> In Europe, property is shared between spouses; in Japan, each owns his or her own. A woman sometimes lends hers to her husband, at high interest.

> In Europe, repudiating a woman is a serious sin and the greatest dishonour; in Japan, one may repudiate as many as one pleases. The women do not lose their honour for this, nor their marriageability.

> In Europe, it is normal for a man to repudiate a woman; in Japan, the women often repudiate the men.

> In Europe, the seclusion of daughters and maidens is important and rigourous; in Japan, daughters go out for the whole day, or many, wherever they want to, without telling their parents.

> In Europe, a wife cannot go out without her husband's permission; Japanese wives are free to go where they please without informing their husbands.

> *[Translation based on Robin D. Gill's in Topsy-turvy 1585: Paraverse, 2004]*

What class of people did these words depict? As a missionary, Fróis would have encountered people of various classes. The writer Sakaguchi Ango remarked, upon writing a historical novel, that he had to rely on Fróis to know even, for example, what Oda Nobunaga looked like, because Japanese materials made no mention of such details. But in addition to the samurai and monks of the ruling class, Fróis would have been in contact with an even greater number of common people. Thus, I believe he captured details about the Japanese of the time, in particular about women of western Japan, which contemporary Japanese sources would not have thought to record. There is no way that the state of affairs recorded here, just prior to the Edo period, would have changed all of a sudden.

And it did not, as the historian Amino Yoshihiko has also shown. For example, it is often said that divorce was a unilaterally male privilege, for which the man had only to write a "three-line" declaration of separation (*mikudarihan*), whereas for the woman to initiate it, she had to seek refuge in a divorce temple (*enkiridera*). According to the laws of the time, it was indeed the man who was supposed to write the declaration, and that is all we know from historical records. However, I am led to believe that it was actually more common for his wife, or others, to have given him no choice but to do so.

Anthropologists have also uncovered the fact that, not only in the Edo period, but even much later, up until the pre-war period, there was a system in farming villages of dormitories for young men and young women (*wakashū-yado* and *musume-yado*) in which they lived, collectively with others of their gender, in order to select their mates. Sexual relations were naturally free. This sort of thing was common among the general populace. But it was gradually suppressed, as being immoral, or pre-modern. If you only look at, for example, the words and actions of the Taishō "Bluestockings" (*Seitō-ha*), who advocated sexual liberty, or the "modern girls" of the Shōwa era, that gives rise to a serious misunderstanding. What I think, from looking at social classes other than the Westernised, Confucianised intellectuals, is that, historically, there cannot have been a great deal of sexual repression in Japan. And we should probably consider current sexual mores, too, as being not new, but a surfacing of previous customs. In short, outwith the intellectual classes, matters do not appear to have changed much.

Motoori Norinaga wrote of the "Ancient Way" (*inishie no michi*) in the middle of the Edo period. I think it likely that this was not out of an abstract revivalism, but inspired by actual practices he witnessed. Norinaga himself quickly divorced his first wife, and proposed to another divorcee soon after. In his philosophy,

Norinaga looked to the past, but I find it significant that he sought not what once existed and was lost, but things which in some form remained in evidence in his time. Norinaga broadly agrees with Laozi and Zhuangzi, but he criticised their emphasis on nature as opposed to the artificiality of Confucianism, calling the opposition itself an artifice. For him, the Ancient Way was not an ideal, but a fact. That is not to say that the *Kojiki* was factual. In fact, he found more "fact" in a work of fiction like the *Genji Monogatari*. What he meant was that, unlike history based on documents, obscured by Confucian and Buddhist ideas and terminology, the actual lives of people in Japan had not much changed; in other words, that there was no essential patriarchal repression in Japan.

For this reason, he was not a revivalist, and rejected any rapid reforms based on theoretical arguments. A recovery from "repression" back to "nature" is an ideal from Laozi and Zhuangzi. Norinaga's Ancient Way called for a rejection of such extremes. From his point of view, scholars of Japanese culture (*kokugakusha*) of late Tokugawa period such as Hirata Atsutane must have seemed simply "Chinese-minded" (*karagokoro*). Indeed, they even make use of Christian concepts, as transmitted through Chinese sources.

The feminist Takamure Itsue, who took Norinaga's work as a point of departure, attempted to uncover a matriarchal system in ancient Japan. But here, too, there were some ideological exaggerations. This matriarchy was proposed as a direct antithesis to the patriarchal system in place since the Meiji period, but for just that reason, Takamure was tripped up by the Emperor system. In "A Study of Matrilinealism" (*Bokeisei no kenkyū*) we see, although [the content] has now been removed, the peril of linking the argument for the emancipation of women with the Emperor system.

As I have shown, the persistence of certain matriarchal elements through the Edo period does not indicate the existence of a more robust matriarchal system in ancient times. And neither can it be taken in support for the liberation of women in modern times. I rather think the opposite. Although Norinaga advocated the feminine (*tawoyameburi*) and denounced theoretical and moralistic thought as patriarchal, his was a different complaint from the criticisms that emerged against the strictly patriarchal Christianity or Platonism. Conversely, I think that sharing Norinaga's understanding of these issues might be the greatest obstacle to feminism today.

3   The Ambiguity of Bilateral Descent

Current thinking among anthropologists and historians is that Ancient Japan was neither matrilineal nor patrilineal, having instead a sort of bilateral descent system. In China and Korea, for example, the patrilineal system means that there is a strict rule of exogamy, that is, not marrying within the clan. This rule existed from ancient times, but in the modern era it was particularly reinforced by Confucianism. In contrast, patriliny was never properly established in Japan. In matrilineal societies such as are found in Polynesia, on the other hand, there are again strict rules. In this respect we can say that, as far as we can tell from historical evidence, descent in Ancient Japan was bilateral, able to be traced through male or female lines.

I think, however, that this ambiguity must seem matrilineal to Chinese, Korean, or even Western eyes. Thus I think it can loosely be referred to as such. In areas that have attained a certain level of civilisation, matrilineal elements are suppressed. Of course, they are restored through imaginative and conceptual ways: in China, for example, Daoism remains deeply rooted among the masses in opposition to Confucianism. But as I mentioned earlier in speaking of Motoori Norinaga, I think the persistence of matrilineal elements in Japan is not a case of such restoration, but of a continuous, active presence. And I believe this happened because kinship structure in Japan was bilateral, not tied to either line.

In ancient times, this bilateralism was evidenced by the phoenomenon, noted by Takamure Itsue in "A Study of Matrilinealism", of one family name being associated with multiple founder-ancestor names. This was then turned on its head to derive everything from the Emperor (see "Reunification of blood" (*Chi no kiitsu*), [Chapter 11 of Oguma Eiji's *The Myth of the Homogenous Nation* (*Tan'itsu minzoku shinwa no kigen*)]). But in fact, up until the Nanboku-cho period (1336-1392), there were plenty of lineages with founders in China or Korea. But I doubt that pedigree was very important to the Japanese. Adoption, [including adult adoption,] was common even in the Edo period, and some merchant families operated a matrilineal system. Any family trees existing today, including the so-called unbroken lineage of the Imperial house, not to mention anything newer, can be considered bogus. In China, on the other hand, there are people who are descended from Confucius, who trace their ancestors back to before the Christian era, and I am inclined to believe them. Not that there is any value in that - people that brandish family trees and pedigrees, in any country, are always both miserable and incompetent.

Yanagita Kunio said that in general, the Japanese did not know, and did not care to know, their ancestors beyond four generations. I think this has something to do with bilateral descent. Legitimacy is meaningless outside of a unilaterally patrilineal system. In a bilateral system, ancestors from both the mother's and the father's side are included. Allowing four generations per century and going back a thousand years, that makes 2^{40}. When you work out how immense a number that is, you will see that anyone can be related to the Emperor, by picking and choosing the most convenient lines. They ignore the less convenient ones. Even supposedly distinguished families end up common if you trace strictly the paternal line back ten generations. There was a scene in a film starring the comic actor Enoken, in which a scroll unrolls to reveal a family tree. At the top is a laughing monkey who looks just like him. That's about how much they're worth.

The so-called unbroken lineage of the Imperial House, for example, was only thought up in the thirteenth century, by nobles (see *Chronicles of the Authentic Lineages of the Divine Emperors* (*Jinnō Shōtōki*)) who were fired up by the notion of legitimacy as espoused in Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucianism (*Shushigaku*). This was "Chinese-mindedness" itself. The idea was perpetuated in the Edo period under the influence of Zhu Xi thought. Norinaga would have considered such a view of Japan, as a state under continuous imperial rule (*kōkoku shikan*), the height of undesirable Sinophilia. Since long ago, the most ardent nationalists have always been the most Sinophile.

Even if there had been a matrilineal system in Ancient Japan, it would not have been a matriarchy, but a power structure in which men made use of matrilineal elements. This is true of the pattern of control in the Emperor system. Conquerors from foreign lands used the matrilineal system to enter the country. The Emperor was named ["tennō"] according to a Chinese Daoist idea, but he was not an absolute ruler like the Emperor of China. Rather, his was a symbolic position that allowed his maternal grandfather to wield power through matriliny. Fujiwara rule took this form, and the Genji of the Kantō region, unrelated by patriliny, claimed the name by taking Minamoto Yoritomo as a stud-horse in a matrilineal system. And as I mentioned before, this was hardly limited to the ruling classes. In those classes of society that have not survived in the written records, matrilineal influences must have been even more significant.

4   Bilateralism and Alternation

This bilaterality differs from duality. As I mentioned earlier, Confucianism is dominant in China, but it has a "maternal" counterpoint in the form of Daoism. Christianity is rooted in a patriarchal structure, but, in the case of Catholicism, it has many "maternal" doctrines such as Marianism. These complement each other. To give another example, Judaism is extremely patriarchal, but Jewish identity is derived from the maternal line. For the child to be Jewish, what counts is the Jewishness of the mother.

The difference between this sort of duality and bilaterality is that, in the former, identity is preserved, while in the latter, it is irrelevant. Another is that in the former, the matriarchal, which is in opposition to the patriarchal, is recovered through imaginative means, whereas this does not happen in the latter. I find that the best way to understand the nature of bilaterality is to take the example of *kanji* and *kana* usage in Japanese. In the mixed script, *kanji* and *kana* are both allowed. Neither is excluded, and each is an alternate for the other. I have previously considered how this might affect the Japanese mind. I would now like to demonstrate that this alternation of two lines is widespread in Japanese systems, and Japanese thought.

As I alluded to previously, although it is easy to think of the Meiji period as a time of Westernisation through contact with the West, in some respects a process of Sinification also took place. It thus to a certain extent resembled the time in Japan's early history which saw the introduction of Buddhism and the Ritsuryō system. At that time, there was initially a great enthusiasm for the Chinese ways, but people soon tired and began to revert to old practices. But the Chinese ways were not abandoned. Buddhism gained acceptance and became widespread, while old beliefs were also maintained. This contradiction was resolved by the syncretism of Buddhism and Shintō (*shinbutsu shūgō*). In practice, a separation of powers took place that remains today, so that things relating to death are dealt with in Buddhist ways, things about birth and marriage in Shintō. This was not a dual structure, but alternation.

This is also true of the emperor. He was neither unambiguously a native diety (*sumerogi*) nor a Chinese-style emperor. He was always both, and that is why he was able to flourish. As I mentioned earlier, some, like the Emperor Go-Daigo and his advisors, tried to reinstate the ancient direct rule by the Emperor, under the influence of Zhu Xi's philosophy. The idea that an emperor should have actual power was really a Chinese one. Ironically, the "revere the emperor" (*sonnō*)

ideology of the Bakumatsu period was in fact a formalised notion developed by Shogunate scholars of the Mito School of Zhu Xi Confucianism, which was appropriated by anti-Shogunate forces. In the Meiji Constitution, the Emperor's role was modelled after that of the German Emperor. In which case, he ought to have abdicated following defeat in war, as Kaiser Wilhelm II was forced to do after the First World War. But although the Emperor system was prescribed by the Meiji Constitution, the Imperial Rescript on Education also still held sway. In effect, to attempt to disambiguate the existence of the Emperor actually places it in jeopardy.

The early Meiji period saw movements and policies for the abolition of Buddhism and the establishment of State Shintō. This too may seem to have been anti-Western and revivalist, but it was done with the aim of forming a unified nation-state, a modern aim as it were. For true Shintō has nothing to do with the state. In general, the Meiji era moved to resolve this and other bilateral systems. In other words, a patriarchy was erected. This is precisely the essence of modernisation. So, whether it appeared to be a move towards the West or a move towards China, what actually happened in this modernisation was the unification of things which were bilateral. Of course, this results in a dual system, but such duality is not the same as bilateralism.

The *genbun-itchi* movement can also be understood as a part of the move to resolve syncretic states. It originally aimed to abolish kanji, but in fact, it effaced *écriture* as women's writing. *Genbun-itchi* was all about word endings. When the movement chose the *"-da"* ending as the standard one, no matter how close it was to the spoken language, it was still a man's ending. The Meiji writer Higuchi Ichiyō died just before *genbun-itchi* became the norm. I doubt if she would have been able, let alone tried, to write using *"-da"* and *"-dearu"*. *Genbun-itchi* created a neuter writing, neither male nor female, but it was really the domain of men. This was the modern patriarchy. And this resulted in the tradition of women writers (*joryū sakka*), from the "Bluestockings" (*Seitō-ha*) onwards. That is, "women writers" emerged with the dual system which was established once bilaterality had been unified. They mostly wrote in the same style as the *Shirakaba* school, who were men.

5 The Pragmatism of Bilateralism

To reiterate, what happened in the "modernisation" of the Meiji period onwards was a resolving of bilateral systems. This manifested as Westernisation, and as Sinification, and also as a strengthening of patriarchy. These things are not inconsistent with modernisation. Both Christianity and Confucianism are very patriarchal in their thought. For instance, their god is always "Father". What began in the Meiji period was centralisation, and the construction of a citizenry, which absorbed the various classes into the new centralised state. The modern subject, or the Oedipal subject comes into being in the midst of centralised, patriarchal thought. I think that Meiji modernisation, in any form, manifested as an expansion of patriarchal thought and systems, such that they prompted the formation of the modern subject. At the same time, there was a movement to recover the matriarchal through imaginative means. In literature, for example, this means fantastical stories like Izumi Kyōka, in contrast to Naturalist writing like Shimazaki Tōson.

But this is not yet "modern". The modern subject forms when it forgets the subordinate origins of its subjectivity, and apprehends itself as an autonomous subjectivity. This probably happened during the Taishō period, in what is generally referred to as Taishō Humanism. On the other hand, it also corresponded to the Japanese forgetting the threat of subjugation by the West after the Russo-Japanese War, and beginning to see Japan as a world power no longer part of Asia, or a "civilised nation" on equal footing with the West. But just when this modernity became self-evident, the aforementioned bilaterality started to show.

At this time, for example, "modernity critique" (*kindai hihan*) became frequent. This was unlike the revivalist or the anti-foreign movements of the Meiji period, because it presupposed modernity. All of the ideas which later came to be called "overcoming the modern" (*kindai no chōkoku*) were proposed in the Taishō period. For instance, the philosopher Nishida Kitarō wrote in "An Inquiry into the Good" (*Zen no kenkyū*) of something like the "pure experience" which forms the basis of modern subject-object dualism. He seems to derive this from Zen, but it need not necessarily be so. I think it ought to be considered characteristic of the Taishō period.

In literature, this period saw the emergence of writers who clearly differed from the Meiji men such as Sōseki, Ōgai, Yanagita, and Uchimura, whose subjectivity was clear. These new writers were strangely cosmopolitan - as in Hiratsuka

Raichō's line, "My Rodin is in France" - but in some way spineless, almost like molluscs. The most important of these were the I-novel (*shishōsetsu*) writers.

Although an I-novel revolves around the "I", there is actually no subject. And because structure has been rejected for being an artifice, the plot may as well not exist. In Shiga Naoya for instance, the mood is the subject. Shiga was a disciple of Uchimura, but while Uchimura was a subject by virtue of being subject to God, Shiga put the cart before the horse by subjecting himself to feeling. In Shiga there is the conflict with the father, which appears Oedipal, but then there is a "natural" "feeling" of "reconciliation". That is, he becomes one with "nature", which is more fundamental than "father".

This runs parallel to Nishida Kitarō's philosophy. Nishida and Shiga were both "Meiji" men, with a certain strength. But to Taishō and later eyes, this sort of thing became something obviously unique to Japan. This was typified by Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, whose death was taken as a symbol of the end of the Taishō era. In his short story "Smiles of the Gods" (*Kamigami no bishō*), a Japanese spirit appears to a Jesuit missionary in a vision, and tells him how in Japan, all foreign ideas, including Buddhism and Confucianism, were transformed:

> God himself may become a native of this land. China, and India, have changed. The West must also change. We are in the trees. We are in shallow waters, and in the wind that crosses the roses. We are in the setting sun that clings to temple walls. Anywhere, anytime, we are there. Beware. Beware...

It is probably more apt to say that Akutagawa was referring obliquely to what happened to Uchimura's Christianity, rather than to the seventeenth-century Christians. At the same time, he was foretelling what the Marxists, who saw his death as a defeat for petit-bourgeois intellectuals, were to experience seven or eight years later. In Japan, Marxism patriarchally demolished all that characterised the Taishō period and the I-novel, but was in turn, like Meiji Christianity, defeated by something. This was not only due to state oppression. Of course that "something" was not Akutagawa's "native spirits", nor was it Shintō or the "Japanese religion" (*Nihonkyō*).

In psychoanalytic terms, what Nishida and Shiga depicted was a descent from an Oedipal self to a pre-Oedipal narcissism. In simple terms, Lacan's formation of the

subject is inseparable from language, and he called the site of such Oedipal subject formation the Symbolic. Psychosis develops upon a regression from the Symbolic to narcissism. In contrast, Kristeva, who opposed Lacan's patriarchalism, called the pre-verbal, pre-oedipal world the Semiotic, and placed it at the core of her analyses. What is interesting is that Kristeva's theories seem to correspond to the formation of self as described by philosophers and writers in Japan.

Today, the best successors of Nishida's philosophy are not in philosophy itself, but are psychopathologists like Kimura Bin. This indicates that Nishida's philosophical analysis is rooted in the Japanese mind. And in general, I find that the Jungian scholars such as Kawai Hayao are better suited to a theory of Japanese culture than the Freudians. However, I cannot agree with such general theories of culture, which do not take history into account.

An important thing to note here is that for Kristeva, the Semiotic corresponds in the West to Marianism, which recovered the feminine through the imagination within a strict, patriarchal and monotheistic religion, and in China to Daoism, which also, as she wrote in *About Chinese Women*, recovered the feminine through imaginative means in opposition to the strict patriarchy of Confucianism. But as we saw earlier with Norinaga, the feminine or matrilineal was never oppressed in Japan. This actually brings up a difficulty in the analysis. I believe that bilateralism holds the key to the problem.

Kristeva also saw the in work of the Fascist writer Céline a poetic language which restored the excess that is rejected in the realm of the symbolic. In some ways, the Japanese "overcoming the modern" was also related to this kind of Fascism, but in Japan, this manifested not in confused and aggressive language, but in a restoration of *écriture féminine*, in the form of waka, as in Yasuda Yojūrō.

However, my point is that it is unproductive to "apply" such analyses without taking history into account. It was only within the context of Meiji modernity, temporarily free from the threatening "other" of the West, that it was possible for Shiga and Nishida to turn to fundamental ideas in the Taishō period. It was also at this time that it became common to discuss theories of Japanese culture, and Japaneseness (*nihonjinron*).

An interesting point is that Akutagawa praised Shiga's I-novels as a modern, or rather post-modern dismantling of the Western, nineteenth-century novel. The I-

novel was generally criticised for being pre-modern, or a relic of feudalism (see Kobayashi Hideo). Thus what I mentioned earlier was already demonstrated at this time; namely, that the post-modern in Japan is also, at the same time, pre-modern. In this sense, it is not far off the mark to see an archetype for post-modernism in Japan in the philosophy of "overcoming the modern".

After the Second World War, the Japanese attempted a so-called "second opening" of the country. Intellectually, the patriarchal Communist Party was dominant. But the Sixties saw the start of modernity-critique, and the "post-war" mindset was dismantled in the Seventies. It was at this time that Japanese post-modernism appeared.

But the rise of post-modernism at this time cannot be entirely attributed to mature capitalism and the consumer society. Neither can it entirely be identified with the deconstruction of patriarchal thought (ie, Platonism and Marxism) in the West. Rather, we ought to ask why the consumer society developed to such a grotesque extent in Japan. In the West, the entrenchment of patriarchal thought, and the resulting modern Oedipal subject (the individual), makes the continuous demand for its deconstruction inevitable. It is just as mistaken to ignore it and to fail to distinguish the West and Japan, as it is to over-differentiate them.

The thing to note about the aforementioned bilateralism is that it is the principle which allows the continuance of the *ie* (stem family), without recourse to identity or affinity through the bloodline. Organisations like Japan's corporations are not composed of individuals, or by familial blood relationships. Despite that, they have a particularly *ie*-like solidarity. This is neither individualism nor collectivism, but a "soft individualism (or collectivism)". There is nothing like it in the West, or in China or Korea. A strong collective is likely to foster conflict and revolt, whereas a strong individual would invite criticisms of individualism. In Japan, neither of these extremes is reached.

However, this configuration of Japanese corporations, termed "corporation capitalism" (*hōjin shihonshugi*), was not always the case. The *zaibatsu* of the pre-war period did not take this form, not to mention in the Meiji period. Nor did corporation capitalism exist in the post-war period: It was something that appeared and developed rapidly from the Seventies onwards, in parallel with what is known as post-modernism in Japan. Therefore, the development of corporation capitalism cannot simply be attributed to a retrograde restoration of the *ie*. The bilateralism of which I speak exists over a much greater extent, and in the detail of history.

When we investigate the "enigma" that configures everything from Japan's power structure to its I-novels, we inevitably come up against the structure afforded by this bilateralism. But we ought not to call it a structure, for it is constantly alternating, never restricted by a unilateral pedigree, pragmatic and floating. And for that reason, it has always metamorphosed in times of historical external pressure. It may well yet undergo further dramatic changes.